

Towards a People's Theology of the Road in an African Township:
A Case Study of the Edendale Road Network
within the Pietermaritzburg District.

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandparents: Saraphinah Ntombikazi Macele-Ngcobo and George “British” Ngcobo, whose influence on my life I will always cherish.

Declaration

Except where otherwise specified in the text, I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted in part or in full to any other university.

Sipho Casper Ngcobo

December, 2017

Acronyms

A. M.	-	Ante Meridian (before noon)
AIC	-	African Instituted Christianity / African Independent Churches
ATR	-	African Traditional Religion
CBD	-	Central Business District
ECOTD	-	Eastern Centre of Transport Development
GEDI	-	The Greater Edendale Development Initiative
ITF	-	International Transport Forum
KTD	-	Kombi Taxi Driver
KTO	-	Kombi Taxi Operator/Owner
KTP	-	Kombi Taxi Passenger
KTP/BP	-	Kombi Taxi Passenger/Bus Passenger
KZNPDOT	-	KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Transport
NDOHA	-	National Department of Home Affairs
NDOT	-	National Department of Transport
NIMSS	-	National Injury Mortality Surveillance System
NRTA	-	National Road Traffic Act
PCCRT	-	Participant Conversation in the Course of Road Travel
PCD	-	Private Car Driver
RAF	-	Road Accident Fund
RETACO	-	Regional Taxi Council
RTPR	-	Road Traffic Police Report
RSAR	-	Road Safety Annual Report
RTMC	-	Road Traffic Management Council
SABC	-	South African Broadcasting Corporation
STATS SA	-	Statistics South Africa
UKZN	-	University of KwaZulu-Natal
USA	-	United States of America

Abstract

One of the legacies of the apartheid era in South Africa is the phenomenon of black townships that exist in the outskirts of urban areas. There is very little development in these townships which means that those who live in them have to make their way to the city centers to survive and make a living. This has given rise to the public transport industry. Millions of people in South Africa use kombi taxis every day. It is no secret that when it comes to these vehicles reckless and dangerous driving is an unfortunate reality. This means that people using them take their lives into their hands every day. The trip from home to work is probably the most dangerous daily experience that ordinary people living in the townships have to face. The vulnerability and helplessness that people feel when on the road causes them to seek help through religious faith. This study focused on one particular township, Edendale, outside the city of Pietermaritzburg. I have experienced the dangers of road travel myself and have always been concerned about the death toll on the roads and interested in the kinds of beliefs, rituals, and other expressions of faith that can be found among commuters. I sought permission from the regional taxi council to undertake this research by traveling on the taxis and conversing with commuters about their faith practices while on the road. I went on numerous taxi trips and cultivated relationships with a wide range of commuters, old and young, male and female, and from a variety of religious persuasions and faiths, as well as taxi drivers themselves. My informants were adherents mainly of Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion. They had many different beliefs, performed a variety of rituals, and used a range of biblical texts if they were Christian. While the majority of them were Christian, most of them Christian or otherwise, reverted to their ancestral religion when it came to invoking help from the supernatural realm. This caused me to investigate further the basic features of a primal worldview and how these found expression in the beliefs, rituals, and other faith practices of my informants. This thesis documents my investigation into the environment of religious faith created by road travel in general and on the road from Edendale into Pietermaritzburg in particular. It outlines the rationale, methodology, and findings of my research, and attempts to theologially reflect on them. It is a “people’s” theology because it expresses the beliefs of ordinary people of Edendale, not the religious professionals of Edendale, and it is a theology of the road because it is done on the roads of Edendale.

Okufingqiwe

Omunye wemiphumela yesikhathi sengcindezelo lapha ezweni lakithi laseNingizimu Afrika, ngukwakiwa kwezindawozo zokuhlala abasebenzi ezibizwa ngokuthi ngamalokishi. Lezizindawo ezitholakala emaphethelweni amadolobha, zamiselwa ukuba kuhlale kuzo abantu abamyama kuphela. Intuthuko kulezizindawo, ihamba ngonyawo lonwabu. Lokhu kusho ukuthi, abantu abahlala kulezizindawo baphoqelekile ukuba bahambe baye emadolobheni ukuze bathole izindlela zokuziphilisa ukuze impilo yabo eqhubekile phambili – bangabulawa ngumphangandlala. Enye yalezizindlela, ngokuthi baqashwe babengabasebenzi. Lokhu kwaholela ekubeni, kube nesidingo semboni yezokuthutha umphakathi. Izigidi zabantu abamnyama ezweni lakithi, basebenzisa amatekisi nsukuzaphuma. Akusiyo imfihlo ukuthi, uma kubukwa ukusebenza kwezithuthi zomphakathi ukushayela ngobudedengu okunobungozi kuyinto evamile. Lokhu kusho ukuthi, izimpilo zabagileli zivamise ukuba sengcupheni yokushabalala. Uhambo lomgibeli, ophokophelele lapho eqashwe khona yiyonanto enobungozi kakhulu ahlangebazana nayo mihla namalanga. Lesisimo sobungozi, nokungavikeleki, kuholela ekutheni abantu bafune usizo kwezenkolo. Lolucwaningo luqondene nendawo eyodwa kuphela, ilokishi lase Edendale engaphandle kwedolobha laseMgungundlovu. Mina qobolwami, njengomunye wabasebenzisa izithuthi zomphakathi sengikuqaphele kaningi ubungozi obukhona ekusebenziseni izithuthi zomphakathi. Lokhu kuholele ekukhathazekeni kwami, ngokuphangalala, kwabagibeli ezingozini zomgwaqo. Kuphinde futhi, kwanginikeza umdlandla wokuba ngifise ukucwaninga ngeqhaza elibanjwa ngezenkolo kulesisimo esibucayi. Ngibesengicela igunya, emkhandlwini owengamele imboni yamatekisi eMgungundlovu namaphethelo ukuba ngenze inhlobo. Ngase ngilithola igunya, lokuba ngixoxe nabagibeli abaphokophele emisebenzini sixoxa ngokholompilo lwabagibeli mayelana nokusebenzisa umgwaqo. Ngehle ngenyuka ngamatekisi, ngakhanda ubudlelwano nabagibeli abehlukene, abadala nabancane, abesilisa nabesifazane, abezinkolo nezinkolelo ezahlukene, kanye nabashayeli bamatekisi. Kubantu engaxoxa nabo kukhona abangamakrestu, yisulumane elilodwa, kanye nabenkolo yendabuko. Lokhu kuveze izinkolelo ezahlukene, nezimpilomasiko ezahlukene, kanye nokusebenzisa amazwi angcwele kulabo abakholelwa nasenkolweni yobukrestu. Yize iningi labo lingamakrestu, abanye babo abakulenkolo nakwezinye izinkolo, bakhombisa ukuthi, bavamile ukubuyela enkolweni yendabuko uma bekholelwa nukuthi bangaluhila usizo kuyomayelana nokuphepha emgwaqweni. Lokhu kubangele ukuba ngicwaninge ngijule ngezinto eziyisisekelo senkolo yendabuko, nangeso elibanzi ebukwa ngayo ngabantu engangixoxa nabo. Ngagxila kakhulu ekutheni, inkolo yendabuko ivela kangakanani ezinkolweni nakuzinkolonimpilo kanye nezindlela ukholo oluvela ngazo ngezenzo zokhololwabantu. Lomqulu wezemfundo uqhakambisa ucaningo lwami esimweni sokuthembela kwezenkolo esibangelwa wukusebenzisa umgwaqo ngokujwayelekile, ikakhulukazi umgwaqo wase Edendale kuyiwa eMgungundlovu. Ubeka ngokuhlelekile isizathu sokwenza lolucwaningo, izindlela engizisebenzisile, nemizamo yami yokuhlaziya ngeso lezenkolo izinto ezavela ngokuxoxa nabagibeli. Ngulwazi lwezenkolo oluveza izinkolelo nezinkolelompilo zabantu abancinyane base Edendale. Akusilo ulwazi lwochwepheshe base Edendale. Kepha ulwazi lwezenkolo, lwasemgwaqweni oluvezwa emigwaqweni yase Edendale.

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Chapter 1

Motivation and background of this study

1.1 Introduction

Road users are the main subjects in this research project. These are the poor commuters and other residents whose only means of transport are the minibus taxis (kombi taxis as the local people would call them), or buses, or sometimes even walking. They constitute the largest group of the most vulnerable employed people in South Africa today, in terms of Road Safety and inconvenience. Theologies of the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads,¹ is an exploratory qualitative case study. It was conceived with such people in mind. It is a critical analysis of religious beliefs and practices of commuters who use this road on a daily basis to get to work.

This study was recognized from its inception as having the potential of becoming a journey of discovery for me (the researcher in this study) and my main supervisor – each of us learning from the ordinary commuting people from diverse religious backgrounds and faiths about the beliefs and rituals that exist amongst the people of Edendale. This is an important quest,² considering the fact that, commuters and other residents all over South Africa travel daily on the country's roads in spite of the fact that they are faced with the reality of the persisting risk of being involved in a road accident.

Theologies of the road could be loosely defined as popular beliefs about God, the divine, ancestors and the supernatural and the various activities that emerge out of these beliefs including prayer, rituals, use of sacred texts and the use of fetishes and amulets, as a result of road usage. This research investigated these theologies in the broadest sense of the word, that is, understandings of God, salvation and spiritual forces and powers of

¹ Feeder roads or access roads are branch roads which connect the various parts of the Edendale Township to the main Edendale Road to and from the city of Pietermaritzburg in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands.

² A self-imposed commitment meant to contribute to the gathering and dissemination of theological knowledge.

“ordinary” people, that is, people without formal theological education that emerged out of the use of the road between the Edendale Township and the city of Pietermaritzburg.

1.2 Motivation and rationale

This study has been motivated by the prevalence of what could be termed popular religious sentiment in the South African situation. The religious belief that is common in most areas of life in Africa becomes more intense where there is perceived to be greater risk or danger to personal safety. The awareness of danger to personal safety becomes especially acute when it comes to travel, where the safety of the home is left and travel is embarked upon. This was highlighted at the level of government when an official of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Transport (KZNPDOT), appeared on Channel One of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC 1) and stated the following:

We are now seeking divine intervention because we have tried everything we can in terms law enforcement, to reduce the scourge of road crashes without much success. Today we are appealing to God to help us in this regard, (SABC1: Gospel Gold, 12th December 2004).

Similarly, a prime time television news bulletin showed an African traditional ritual being performed on a specific part of a road on the North of Durban. The purpose was to “cleanse” the space which was believed to be haunted by the spirits of the people who had died on the same spot. The cleansing ceremony was motivated by a belief that fatal road accidents were persistently occurring on the same spot because victims were not buried according to African customary/religious procedures (SABC 1 Prime Time News Bulletin, 2009).

These two events were of great importance to me – they rekindled my long cherished desire to further my postgraduate studies. The two occurrences had just presented me with an opportunity to enter the field of serious academic research in a very profound way. They made me realize that religion in all its diversity has become a vital part of the remedial activity that takes place as a result of the dangers, challenges and opportunities facing road users all over our country.

I saw this as providing me with an interesting opportunity for theological reflection around popular beliefs concerning road travel. Some of the questions which interested me initially were how, for example, do people understand the notion of divine intervention when it comes to road use? If it is a Christian God who is evoked, what understandings of this God emerge? If it is other divinities, ancestors, or spirits which are evoked, what is the nature of these and how does belief in them impact on the road travelling believers? What must be done to elicit intervention? What kinds of rituals need to be performed? What kinds of prayers need to be uttered? And, what kinds of charms such as amulets need to be worn or displayed on vehicles and what is the significance of these?

I began to ask these questions because it was becoming clear to me that in the case of the project I was embarking on, theology must be seen in the broader sense, that is, not only understandings of God, but of spiritual powers and forces that are perceived to be involved in road travel and the religious beliefs and activities that accompany such travel. The following broader theological questions informed my approach:

- In what ways does the road become the space for religious activity for example, through rituals, prayers and the use of *umuthi* (African medicine)?
- What are the beliefs that underlie such activities? For example, concerning God (the kind of God that is worshipped), ancestors (whether they play a role in providing safety on the road), and other powers that might be involved?
- What understandings of salvation (soteriology) emerge surrounding the road?
- What are the notions of the Spirit (*umoya oyingcwele*) associated with the road (pneumatology)?
- What are the means of protection that are used?
- How do beliefs around road travel impact on the everyday lives of road users?

I was interested especially in the role of people's faith in the carnage that is taking place on the roads and to investigate how ordinary people understand these things in the light of their diverse faiths.

Originally the kinds of questions that perplexed me were to do with how an all-powerful God could allow such carnage of the roads. However it soon became clear to me that it was not my task to get into the mind of God on such issues as this was impossible! I decided it would be easier to get into the mind of people about what they believed about God concerning such matters. This, after all, is the task of theology. And it is easier to ask questions about what people think in a particular locality than what they think around the whole country. So, this is why I decided to choose the Edendale Township. Moreover, I chose it because I live there. I belong to one of those families which have lived in Edendale for more than nine decades (close to 94 years to be exact). I understand, especially, from my field work experience that I am dealing with two sensitive issues – Road Safety and other people’s religious beliefs and practices. It is for this reason that in the next section I will disclose my social context. But before that, I think it is necessary to explain why I chose the ‘ordinary’ people of Edendale to be the subject of this study.

1.3 Location of the research – Edendale

Edendale is one of the many townships in South Africa that were meant to be dormitory settlements or dormitory suburbs by the colonialists and the architects of apartheid. The destiny of all the economic active black people living in such areas was to be that of a labouring class³, daily commuting to a nearby city and its Central Business District (CBD)⁴ to get to work. Edendale is about ten kilometers from the Pietermaritzburg CBD. The ‘ordinary’ people of Edendale can either walk (not an easy alternative for many), or use public transport. Being outside the CBD and deliberately prevented by apartheid policies⁵ to engage in any economic activity within the CBD, save from being less paid

³ Sheila Mentjies, “Edendale 1851 – 1930: Farmers to Townspeople, Market to Labour Reserve”, in Laband, J. P. and Haswell, R. F. eds., 1988. *Pietermaritzburg, 1838 – 1988: A New Portrait of an African City*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press (pp. 66 – 69).

⁴ STIPAE: SA, Spatial Transformation in the Post-Apartheid Era: S A. STIPAE: S A [online]. Available from: <http://www.impuscentrum.be/southafrica/glossary.asp> - Central Business District is the area where there is a concentration of business activity in any urban area. It is also referred to as Inner City [accessed 14 May 2015].

⁵ Apartheid operated at three distinct levels: ‘Grand Apartheid’s vision was to create separate nation-states for each of the black ethnic groups. ‘Urban Apartheid’ involved the spatial separation of the four racial groups according to the population registration act of 1950 into group areas according to the group areas act of 1950. ‘Petty Apartheid’ involved detailed social and economic segregation. See footnote 4 above for web reference.

workers, these people of Edendale are still suffering from the effects of past experience of having been cut off from services and [decent work] opportunities⁶. They have no option but to use public transport.

This means putting their lives in the hands of people (kombi taxi and bus drivers), who themselves are put under pressure by operators/owners to make money out of them. The operators/owners themselves are put under pressure by the international companies which sell motor vehicles to them at exorbitant prices. Add to this a continual rise in the global fuel prices. In the final analysis, all these burdens are passed on to the commuters, including the burden of being exposed to danger in the course of road travel.

1.4 My social context

I am a black male South African citizen, a full-time Post-Graduate and off-campus student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My grand-parents first came to live in Edendale during the late 1920s. My family and I are still living in the same plot occupied by grand parents in those early years. I am one of sixteen living third generation off-springs from our grand parents. I attended local schools for primary and secondary education and spent two years at *Ohlange* High School (at *Inanda* North of Durban) before I wrote my final matriculation examination. During my secondary education years at Georgetown High school⁷, a school colleague and I (as neighbours), walked about 12km every day for three years to and from school. Although there were municipal buses as well as buses owned by Indian entrepreneurs, the main reason for us walking to and from school was the fact that both our families (like many in Edendale) could not afford bus transport fare. Kombi taxis had not yet started operating in Edendale during the early 1970s.

⁶ Stiefel, M. and Wolfe, M., 1994: *A Voice for the excluded: Popular participation in development: utopia or necessity?* London: Zed Books.

⁷ This school is located in a part of Edendale that was usually referred to as “Edendale Proper” (*yise Edendale yangempela*) or the ‘town’ (*kusethawini*) by some of the students whose family homes were situated around this school. These were boastful sentiments echoed as a result of the fact that this was the only area for black people with tarred roads, a number of shops close to each other, a YMCA hall which also catered for social activities such as Ball-Room dancing, table tennis and boxing (to mention just a few), the then only and popular Wardly Stadium for black people in Edendale, modern houses (a number of home owners had title deeds) and a number of church buildings for various denominations. These developments made some people believe that their world was better-off than the rest of us who lived in the other parts of Edendale.

I am a theology and a sociology graduate of the then University of Natal (before it became the University of KwaZulu-Natal). It was during my post graduate studies in sociology that I was introduced into the field of transport development. I was in a programme sponsored by the National Department of Transport (NDOT). It was facilitated by the Eastern Centre of Transport Development (ECOTD), headed by the head of the School of Civil Engineering (Howard College Durban). Students in this programme came from the then University of Natal and Technical colleges around Durban, including one or two students from Stellenbosch University. We were all doing research work on various transport related issues.

In an Honours programme, I did a study on problems associated with public transport (from a sociological perspective) in the Greater Edendale area including the *Vulindlela* (formerly, Zwartkop) area. In a Masters programme, I did a study on the impact of the introduction of bicycle transport for school children and farm workers in two rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal (*Ezingolweni* – between Harding and Portshepstone and at Muden – about 19km outside of Greytown). The perspectives used in the ECODT programme to investigate transport related issues included those from civil engineering, law, economics, agriculture and sociology. However, a theological perspective was missing in this mix.

1.5 The phenomenon of the road

Roads are associated with travel which is in turn linked with the conditions of both vulnerability and wellbeing. Being “on the road” means being vulnerable to attack, vehicle-breakdown, road accidents, car-hijacking and many other possible harmful things. At the same time the daily movement (on the roads), made possible by the modern road infrastructure is vital for people’s economic and social wellbeing and survival. This paradoxical situation means that while we cannot live (safely) with the road (as a result of the perils of the road), we also cannot live without it. In other words roads are both life giving and life taking at the same time.

While my investigation has been about theologies surrounding a particular physical road, that is, the Edendale Road, and its selected feeder roads, it is important to note that there

is great symbolic significance attached to roads. Roads, real or imaginary, are full of theological meaning. They not only become metaphors for the journey of life, but in the Bible become places for the special interventions of God. There are many biblical stories referring to God's special intervention during travel. For example, in the Gospel of Luke,⁸ the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is presented as a dangerous road which became the focus of Jesus' famous parable of the Good Samaritan who tended the wounds of the hapless traveller who had become the victim of crime while travelling on it. Again, in the Gospel of Luke⁹ the road to Emmaus becomes the place where Jesus walks with his disciples in a 'disguised' form after his death and resurrection. In the Acts of the Apostles the story of the conversion of Saul, who became Paul the Apostle,¹⁰ occurred on the road to Damascus and is a critical event in the history of Christianity. In the Bible we even have reference to reckless and dangerous driving on the roads, even though in this instance the vehicles were chariots and not motor cars. In one of the passages in the Old Testament we are told that: "The driving is like that of Jehu, son of Nimshi, he drives like a madman" (2Kings, 9: 20). This text rather appropriately describes a common attitude of many drivers on our modern South African roads!

In the West this attitude has led (among other things), to the emergence and the popularity of the cult of Saint Christopher. He is believed to have carried the Christ child across a river and thus became the patron Saint of travel¹¹. Saint Christopher medallions throughout the world are hung on cars by some travellers for protection and against the dangers of the road.

In our own era people have taken up the metaphor of the road to illustrate Christian life. M. Scott Peck's popular book – *The Road Less-Travelled*¹² is a well known example. Peck continues the metaphor in: *Further along the Road Less- Travelled*¹³. Three other works have used the metaphor of the road to illustrate Christian life: John Bunyan's

⁸ See Luke 10:20-37.

⁹ Luke, 24:13-35.

¹⁰ Acts, 9:1-19.

¹¹ See Thomson, J. Anderson with Aukofer Clare (2011): *Why we believe in god(s): A concise guide to the science of faith*.

¹² Peck, M. Scott, 1978: *The Road Less Travelled: Rider*.

¹³ Peck, M. Scott, 1993: *Further along the Road Less Travelled: Simon and Schuster*.

classic¹⁴ – *The Pilgrims Progress*, Basil Hume’s book¹⁵ – *To Be a Pilgrim*, and Walter Hilton’s classic¹⁶ – *The Scale of Perfection* which describes travelling the road to Jerusalem as a metaphor for the road to spiritual perfection. Bunyan’s book is about how a Christian should equip or prepare him-self or her-self spiritually on the journey from this world to that which is to come through the example of a pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem. Hilton’s book demonstrates how a soul should behave in practice and in purpose if it wants to be reformed. The tangential significance of these books for this study is that the success of the pilgrims on their journeys depends on them embracing and entertaining specific religious beliefs and practices on the road of life. Hume is more specific in this regard. For him success on the road of life for “all people of God [who] are on pilgrimage, is dependent upon feeling the strength of Christ’s presence and the encouragement of his teaching” (1984: p.20).

In Islam there is the famous pilgrimage to Mecca to perform the Hajj¹⁷, which, in Wikipedia, is described as:

...an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and the largest gathering of Muslim people in the world every year. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, and a religious duty which must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so at least once in his or her lifetime. The state of being physically and financially capable of performing the Hajj is called *istita'ah*, and a Muslim who fulfills this condition is called a *mustati*. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to God (Allah in the Arabic language), (Hajj – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, p.1).

One of the most important facts closely related to this study in the above quote is the idea that for a Muslim to be able to perform the Hajj he or she must be “physically and financially capable....” The context of this study suggests that a persistent occurrence of road accidents is essentially a threat to the physical capability of road users to travel to get to work. Arguably, it is also a threat to ordinary commuting people’s financial capability to survive. The above considerations make it even more appropriate for a

¹⁴ Bunyan, J., 1960, *The Pilgrims Progress: in the similitude of a dream*: Oxford: Clarendon Press.

¹⁵ Hume, B., OSB, 1984, *to be a Pilgrim: a spiritual notebook*: England (Middle-green): Saint Paul Publication.

¹⁶ Hilton, W., 1991, *The Scale of Perfection: the classics of western spirituality*, New York: Paulist Press.

¹⁷ According to Hamza Yusuf, “Pilgrims with a Purpose”: in Hajj – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [online] accessed on 01/04/2014, ‘the word Hajj means “to intend a journey” which connotes both the outward act of a journey and the inward act of intentions’, pp.1-13.

theology of the road to be articulated by people (in this case the people of Edendale) who are themselves also faced with such threats on a daily basis.

1.6 Public transport in South Africa

When South Africans talk about public transport they are usually referring to buses, trains and kombi taxis, that is, those means of transport which are made available for use by everyone and have fixed routes. Although it can be argued that at the present moment kombi taxis, in particular, are not a public means because they are organized by private individuals or entrepreneurs and that passengers are charged an economically determined market price, they are nevertheless referred to as a means of public transport by both road users and the South African government.

Kombi taxis are an important means of transport for the majority of the commuters and other residents in townships like Edendale. Those who use them are the people who cannot afford to buy their own motor cars. The above two groups constitute the majority of people living in townships such as Edendale. One of the features of transport planning under apartheid that continues to impact on commuters today is brought to our attention by Trevor Wills who points out that “the city of Pietermaritzburg has an essentially radial pattern of transport, requiring often that workers travel into the city [in order to get to] for example, the Mkhondeni industrial area”¹⁸. This means that anyone who lives in Edendale and uses public transport to get to work cannot travel from Edendale to the suburbs or to an industrial area like Mkhondeni without first traveling to the city centre.

The poor working groups, including domestic workers and other general labourers are the most affected by this kind of adverse planning. This is because it leads to far-reaching problems for them. They are burdened with a high travelling cost; they spend a longer time travelling to and from work; and their exposure to the dangers of the road increases as a result of an unavoidable extension of travelling time.

¹⁸ Trevor Wills, “From Rickshaws to Minibus Taxis”, in Laband, J. P. and Haswell, R. F. eds., 1988, *Pietermaritzburg 1838 – 1988: A New Portrait of an African City*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press (p. 138).

1.7 Road Accidents in South Africa.

1.7.1 The dangers of road travel in the eyes of the general public.

Road accidents have become a huge issue in South Africa today. People through the entire spectrum of society have felt the effect of road accidents in one way or another. Road accidents constantly impact on the normal functioning of society and its institutions. Instead of transport “bridging the gaps between social and economic institutions” (Roebuck, 1999: 1), injured or killed people are either cut off permanently or their “mobility is restricted” (White Paper on Transport Policy: 1996). Needless to say – road accidents have an enormous negative influence on the economy of the country.

1.7.2 Some Hard Facts about Road Accidents in South Africa

In South Africa, data on road traffic accident deaths is collected, stored and analyzed by a variety of agencies. One of the agencies involved is the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC). This agency collects data from the road accident report forms which are filled in by the police each time an accident has been reported. Another agency is the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS). It produces information on non-natural deaths and these include road traffic accident deaths from selected mortuaries. Another agency is the Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). This collects information from the country’s death notification system from the National Department of Home Affairs (NDOHA).¹⁹

Some of the information presented below is from Stats SA and the rest comes from sources which also relied on the three agencies mentioned above. The statistics are as follows:

- Nearly forty people (40) are killed on South African roads each day²⁰.
- Over one thousand (1000) people die each month on South African roads²¹.

¹⁹ Stats SA, 2001-2006, *Road Traffic Accident Deaths in South Africa: evidence from death notification*, report no. 03-09-07, 2009.

²⁰ Sources: *Prime Time Television News*, (2008), Johannesburg, E-TV, 19h00. RTMC: 2012 - report. National Department of Transport, (January 2012): *Address by MEC for Transport S. Ndebele*, Release - 2011/2012 festive season road accident statistics.

- More than fourteen thousand (14,000) people are killed every year on South African roads²².
- 1st of December, 2013 to the 30th of December 2013: 1,184 people killed nationwide in 987 road accidents²³.
- 1st of December, 2012 to the 16th of January, 2013: 1,465 people killed on South African Roads²⁴.
- 1st of December, 2011 to the 10th of January, 2012: 1,230 people killed on South African Roads²⁵.
- 1st of December, 2010 to the 11th of January, 2011: 1,704 people killed on South African roads²⁶.

Easter road deaths:²⁷

- 2014: 193 people killed on South African roads
- 2013: 241 people killed on South African roads
- 2012: 217 people killed on South African roads

The following snippets are meant to give a sense of how road accidents occur as reported by Arrive Alive online under the heading – “Road Safety in the media”.

- Four people have died, another person is in a critical condition and three people have sustained serious injuries after a head on collision on Edendale Road near Henley Dam in the early hours of this morning²⁸.
- 12 people killed in North West in a collision between two minibus taxis on the N12 outside Klerksdorp – a taxi was overtaking a truck when it collided head on

²¹ The Automobile Association of South Africa (AA), (January 2013): *Endangered Wild life*, Report by Gary Ronald [online], Available @ www.ewt.org.za.

²² Stats SA Report 2012.

²³ Independent Newspapers, (2013): *Preliminary Report*, by Acting Transport Minister, Ben Martins, [online] Available @ www.iol.co.za/news/s-a.

²⁴ RTMC Report

²⁵ RTMC Report

²⁶ RTMC Report

²⁷ *Prime Time Television- News*, (2014) Johannesburg, E-TV, 19h00, April 24th

²⁸ Arrive Alive (26 May, 2013), *Pietermaritzburg – Article* by Derrick Banks, [online], Available @ www.arrivealive.co.za

with another taxi, 24 people killed in Hex River bus smash (police report – 2013)²⁹.

- Residents from Mdansane’s zone 18 walk down the ‘road of death’ and put speed bumps after a fourth person was killed on the same road by a speeding car (despatchonline.mht and arrive alive.co.za)³⁰.

Although media reporters do not give us the same figures related to the yearly cost of these road accidents, it is clear from what we have they are indeed very costly. In a newspaper business article, Lisa Stein stated that:

South Africa is ranked worst out of thirty six (36) [countries] by the International Transport Forum’s (ITF) latest Road Safety Annual Report (RSAR), according to which the cost of South Africa’s road crashes is estimated to be R307 Billion each year - (Lisa Stein, *Business Report*, in Mail & Guardian Newspaper, 23 May 2013, Johannesburg) .

All of this indicates the huge cost that is involved because of road accidents. This includes fatalities, injuries, damage to the economy, emergency services, insurance claims and payments from the Road Accident Fund (RAF), payments for medical claims and future loss earnings. The question which obviously needs to be asked is this one: what are the causes of this high level of road accidents.

1.7.3 Different Views on the Phenomenon of Road accidents

The most popular view on the causes of road accidents is driver negligence which can be rectified by stricter laws that should be enforced and also harsh penalties that should be meted out. The supporters of this view believe that an intensive study of the road accident data would suggest measures that can be taken immediately³¹. In South Africa this is the most prominent view and is supported by legislation such as the National Road Traffic Act (NRTA) 93, of 1996 as amended, as well as by the popular Arrive Alive campaign with slogans such as: Zero Tolerance, Drive Awake, Speed kills and Do Not Drink and Drive. According to Cohen, this view is based on “The conventional belief that a motorist and his [or her] vehicle are functionally independent, the former operating

²⁹ Arrive Alive, (2 December, 2013), *Police Report* [online], Available @ www.arrivealive.co.za

³⁰ Arrive Live (2013), *Police report*’ [online], Available @ www.arrivealive.co.za

³¹ See for example Chapter 1, in John Cohen and Barbara Preston, (1968), *Causes and Prevention of Road Accidents: Differing Approaches*

and manipulating the later, [and], this has profoundly influenced the content of driver instruction” (Cohen and Preston, 1968: p.29).

An alternative view is that:

We must stop thinking of a driver and vehicle as separate units – a driver in full control of himself [or herself] [and] in charge of a passive mechanism. Instead, we must think of the modern driver as a *Centaur*, a hybrid which moves in a continuously changing traffic context. A driver at the wheel undergoes complex changes, instinctive self-regulation of movement is wholly or partly switched off and this opens the door to undesirable risk and hazard - (Cohen and Preston, 1968: p. 13).

This suggests that driving a vehicle has a social aspect in it. This might be in the sense that both a driver and a vehicle ought to be understood as “active participants”. This makes sense when considering the fact that “loss of control” of the vehicle by a driver is usually the first thing that is suspected when a road accident has occurred. Cohen identifies the following four social features as possible causes of road accidents in this regard. Firstly there is what he calls “A ‘stooge’ effect” whereby:

The vehicle is used by its owner as a means of self-inflation. Some men...are apt to treat their vehicles as they treat their dogs, in relation to which they imagine themselves to be superman. The dog must obey all his master’s whims, cringe when necessary, fawn on him [or her], run and bark to welcome its owner, and guard the owner from attack. By comparison with the dog, the master [or mistress] is somebody. In similar fashion, by comparison with his [or her] car the owner is somebody and especially, when he [or she] is in the car with hands at the wheel and the foot at the accelerator, he [or she] becomes somebody. Everyone is literally empowered by his [or her] car to a degree which might be intoxicating, and enabled not only to travel at a breathtaking speed but also to push aside or crush any human being or animal that dares to stand in the way. Fantasies of the hero or demigod are not far away. (Cohen and Preston, 1968, p. 27-8)

The second is what Cohen calls “The symbolic significance of a car” for its owner or anyone who drives it. In this case, Cohen explains: “the car is a mark of prestige and status, it is mobile and constantly on show, a spectacle in hundred places, and not unshakably fixed to one spot like a house” – (Cohen and Preston, 1968: p. 28).

The third social feature is to do with:

The significance of the vehicle appears as a loved object on which a man may lavish more money, time, energy and affection than on his wife and children and a car is an enlargement or extension of the self (Cohen and Preston, 1968: p.28).

Finally Cohen talks about the “transcendental” or “sacred cow” effect. He explains this social feature by saying that:

A modern motor car show carries all the trappings which in any other epoch would form part of religious festival. It has colours, lights, priests (salesmen), priestesses (fashion models), a ritual and a liturgy and, worshippers (buyers), who eagerly await a revelation from an oracle the first rumour about the new models”. (Cohen and Preston, 1968: p. 29)

These observations are not made for an African context but they clearly resonate with it in many ways. The fact that relatively very few people own motor vehicles makes ownership of them highly sought after. A car becomes a symbol of affluence and power, in many ways a sign of arrival into the middle class.

Another perspective which little is said about is that of the role played by television movies / or Hollywood films in particular, in promoting road accidents. This perspective has been articulated by Thami Masemola in a Sunday news paper article in this way:

The need for speed car-culture films of the 1960s and 1970s tapped into the American ‘myth’ of the open road, where cars performed feats that defied science and logic. Hollywood knows that most of us viewers love a good car chase and thus cashes in on our gullibility by popularizing more ‘myths’ than facts about motor vehicles – (City Press, 30 March, 2014).

Before I look at this matter in some detail, it is important for me to clarify the manner in which Masemola has used the word myth in his article. According to Stein and Stein,

Myths are religious narratives or stories that provide the basis for religious beliefs and practices. This is especially true when people experience things they cannot understand and cannot control and when they question the existence and meaning of disaster, illness and death....Although anthropologists and other folklorists use the term myth to refer to a religious story, the term is frequently used in a negative sense – when people think of myths as false stories, stories told by primitive peoples or untrue reports or beliefs – (Stein, R. L. and Stein P. L. 2005: pp. 31 & 34).

Masemola has therefore, used the word myth in his newspaper article in a negative sense, that is, by suggesting that the “American myth of the open road” is actually based on false beliefs. The following are some of the false beliefs which according to Masemola, are popularized by Hollywood films:

- A head-on-collision will flip one of the cars on its side or cause it to fly over the other with no serious damage to this car driven by a good guy.

- You can out-drive cops in a busy city centre – it’s not impossible to get away in a heavy –city-traffic
- A car will land intact after flying over an obstacle – a car driven by a good tough guy [for example a “James Bond” type figure], cannot be destroyed after landing on hard ground.
- A car will jump far after ramping off something – even fly over broken bridges and remain intact afterwards.

Although it has not yet been mentioned that these false beliefs are actually contributing to road accidents anywhere in the world, nevertheless, when they are considered with the social features mentioned above, they probably have an influence on a driver’s behaviour on the road. It is also important to mention that the above insights around the psychology of cars and driving are only tangentially related to the subject of reasons for road accidents. Other issues such as poor vehicle maintenance, poor driver training, corrupt licensing practices that lead to drivers buying licenses without being properly trained, pressures on taxi drivers to make a profit for taxi owners and abuse of alcohol amongst others, are all considered to contribute to the carnage on the roads.

1.7.4 Measures to Curb Road Accidents

The South African government through its NDOT, nine provincial departments of transport, various local government departments of transport and other state agencies has put in place a wide range of measures in its attempts to counter the scourge of road accidents in South Africa. The initiative leading in this regard is the drafting and implementation of the National Road Traffic Act (NRTA), Act 93 of 1996 as amended. There are three chapters in this act dealing specifically with issues related to Road Safety³².

³² The National Road Traffic Act 8 of 1988 w e f 1 August 2000 – proclamation R47/GG21425/200000731 - NRT amendment act 21 of 1999 – w e f 1 August 2000 – proc R48/GG 21425/200000731 – w e f 20 November 2010 – proc 61/GG33742/20101110 – NRTA act 20 OF 2003 - NRTA act 64 of 2008 – w e f 20 November 2010 – proc 60/GG33742/20101110. The act provides for road traffic matters which shall apply uniformly throughout the Republic of South Africa and for matters connected therewith. In the March 2011 Road Traffic Report 29 Chapter vii deals with Road Safety and specifically with the powers and functions of the Chief Executive Officer. Chapter x is concerned with matters pertaining to accidents and accident reports, that is, duties of a driver in the event of accident and the requirement of a garage to keep record of a motor vehicle brought for repairs after being involved in a road accident. Chapter xi is concerned with

After the above legislative measure, there is the Arrive Alive Campaign³³. This has been in operation for more than ten years. Other initiatives include the introduction of Road Safety as part of the Life Skills curriculum at all schools, the establishment of community Road Safety forums based on the philosophy that says: “Road Safety is everybody’s business” (Arrive Alive online), canvassing voluntary traffic observers by encouraging all South Africans to be active participants by joining the government’s programme at www.rtmc.co.za or by calling the RTMC centre on 0861 400 800 to report traffic offenders (Arrive Alive online).

There are many other initiatives but the last one I can mention here is the involvement of all religious groups / or formations / faiths in the country to participate in interfaith prayer services and other religious related activities. This is done as a result of the understanding that religion is indeed an indispensable part of the remedial activity in response to problems associated with road travel.

1.8 A Brief History of Edendale

Edendale is riddled with serious socioeconomic problems today because of both the colonial and apartheid systems. The colonial structure introduced and practiced oppression and the marginalization of black people in all parts of South Africa as we know it today. The apartheid system came into being and then ‘perfected’ the same ideas of keeping black people under the yoke of oppression and marginalization. It is because of this understanding that I have decided to begin the history of Edendale from the colonial era and particularly in 1851, that is, thirteen years after the British colonial capital of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, was established. In 1851, one hundred Christian families with their non Christian relatives purchased and settled on the farm Welverdiend (an Afrikaans word for – “a well-deserved or perfect place to earn a living”), renamed Edendale (“a valley of delight or happiness”)³⁴.

rules pertaining to behaviour on the road, reckless and negligent driving, inconsiderate driving, driving under the influence of alcohol or drug with narcotic effect.

³³ See Arrive Alive, [online], Available @ www.arrivealive.co.za

³⁴ See Sheila Meintjes, in Laband and Haswell: Pietermaritzburg 1838 – 1988: *A New Portrait of an African City*, 1988, p. 66. According to Meintjes, “these Christians under the leadership and guidance of their missionary James Allison, had broken with the Wesleyan Missionary Society and had moved out of its

For these people adopting Christianity and moving away from their African traditional beliefs and practices had substantially transformed their lives so much that at Edendale they became the first group of black people to own land in Natal. In a very short time they became the suppliers of vegetables and maize for the Pietermaritzburg market – the main centre of economic activity then (Mentjies, p. 66). Those with trading entrepreneurial skills amongst them, eager for profit, started their own trading ventures (Meintjes, p. 67). Other black people from rural areas moved into Edendale and the population grew to such an extent that overcrowding and slum conditions developed and the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA) responded by making Edendale a peri-urban area, contrary to the wishes of the Edendale residents who wanted their area to be granted municipal status (Meintjes, p. 67).

The plea for Edendale to be granted municipal status was incompatible with the colonialists' idea that the destiny of all African was that of a [cheap] labouring class and that the Edendale Christians with their education and skills were to be the vanguard of a disciplined labour force (Meintjes, P. 69). In order to achieve this goal we are told that legislative and some other dubious measures were used to block the advancement of Edendale farmers in such a way that the market, as the centre of economic activity became “the charmed ring” exclusively held by white farmers (Laband, p. xxxi).

Laband tells us that:

By 1910, migrant labour was becoming a norm among black people and the destruction of black agricultural independence, industrial competition from Africans and the pattern of a dominant and prosperous white landowning class and a dependent black labouring class had been secured in the Natal Midlands. (p. 134)

The significant thing for this study about the arrival of different groups of black people in Edendale is that adherents to the Christian faith brought with them religious beliefs and practices. Similarly, non Christians from rural areas also brought with them African traditional religious beliefs and practices. One could even go further and argue that what

mission station at *Indaleni* near Richmond in the Natal Midlands, with the purpose of starting their own mission station near Pietermaritzburg. They were farmers and artisans skilled in agriculture and industrial development”.

is generally referred to as “syncretism” (the mixing of beliefs and practices from different faiths) by many scholars also found its place as people continued to live under difficult and uncertain conditions in Edendale. According to the sociological functionalist perspective on religion, one of the ways in which religion plays the role of promoting social stability is that “it helps to reconcile people to the hardships and inequalities of their society” (Cunningham, Boulton and Popenoe, 1998: p. 325)³⁵.

Apartheid introduced even more legislative measures which turned the lives of black people upside down. This happened not only to black people in Edendale but to African people all over South Africa. One of the legislative measures used by apartheid was the group areas Act of 1950³⁶.

With the demise of the municipality owned buses in the middle of the 1980s, kombi taxis became an important means of transport for the inhabitants of Edendale. It has been estimated that today the kombi taxi industry carries over 60% of South Africa’s commuters, the majority of whom are of the lower economic class. The wealthy individuals drive their own cars for safety and inconvenience. Most of the people in the lower economic class have no skills demanded by the modern economic market place. Those who are lucky to be employed have to spend nearly 40% of their income on public transport. This is especially true for those who are employed in the suburbs and industrial areas outside the Pietermaritzburg CBD, because they must travel to the city centre and then from there travel again to their places of work. Add to this the burden of a high transport cost, the responsibility of paying rent, electricity and water bills, the cost

³⁵ Popenoe, D., Cunningham, P. and Boulton, B., 1998, *Sociology: First South African Edition*. Port Elizabeth: Prentice Hall, South Africa. ‘The poor and marginalized people often need a special reason to conform to the dictates of a social order that has placed them at the bottom of a social ladder, religion provides beliefs that may include a particularly stringent moral code and a strong emphasis on salvation and the hereafter’ (p. 325).

³⁶ See Wikipedia [online], Available @ www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_Areas_Act. In this web site, we learn that, “The Group Areas Act was the title of three acts of the parliament of South Africa enacted under the apartheid government. The acts assigned racial groups to differential residential and business sections in urban areas in a system of apartheid. An effect of this law was to exclude black people from living in the most developed areas which were restricted to whites. It caused many black people to have to commute large distances from their homes in order to be able to get to work. Pass laws required that black people carry pass books to enter the ‘white’ parts of the country. The Native (Urban Areas Act) Act of 1923 provided that all Africans, other than those exempted, had to live in a location or new suburbs (townships), often far from the place of work.

of food, clothing, school fees and health care and one has a situation that is arguably extremely burdensome to many residents in Edendale.

After the dawn of a democratic form of government in South Africa in 1994, a new initiative was created in December 2004 by the uMsunduzi Municipality. This initiative is known as: The Greater Edendale Development Initiative (GEDI). It has been presented as:

A revolutionary transformative approach from the apartheid form of planning and development of historically repressed and neglected township (Edendale) into an urban Pietermaritzburg of high quality - (Msunduzi Municipality, GEDI webpage).

As far as transport planning is concerned, it is acknowledged in this initiative that:

The Edendale Township and the city of Pietermaritzburg are linked by a dual carriage way which is more popular known as the Edendale Corridor. And, that this route serves not only as a path for economic growth but also as a connection between the various outlying areas in the North, including *Vulindlela*, to the city – (Msunduzi Municipality, GEDI webpage).

Through GEDI, the uMsunduzi Municipality aims to transform Edendale by turning it into an exclusive integrated post apartheid city within a city. The local government officials have argued that such an initiative is necessary because “Edendale has a population of about 300,000 people which constitutes 36% of the total population of the city of Pietermaritzburg” (Msunduzi Municipality, GEDI webpage).

1.9 Conclusion

I have attempted in this chapter to set the scene by describing my own background and motivation for the study, outlining some of the socio-cultural dynamics of road travel, and touching on the socio-economic, geographical, and political history of the Edendale Township.

Chapter two will discuss issues around peoples’ theologies in general. Chapter three covers research design and methodology. Chapter four presents the findings of the research. Chapter five involves the analysis and interpretation of the data which has emerged. Chapter six investigates the extent to which the beliefs of the people concur or not with the orthodox position of their traditions. Chapter seven discusses the idea that

primal religion ought to be seen as the primary reference point for theologies of the road, and chapter eight attempts to summarize and outline the basic features of a peoples' theology of the road.

Chapter 2

Setting the scene on some emergent issues around a People's theology of the road

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to define the notion of a people's theology using ideas that have emerged on the topic especially in the area of contextual theology; reflect on roads as places of death, faith, and life, using, among other things, a poem composed by the famous Nigerian poet and playwright Wole Soyinka; and then enter the controversial terrain of issues around the economics of witchcraft and superstition when it comes to road travel.

2.2 A Theology of the Road as a People's Theology

A people's theology as understood in this study has to do with all the religious beliefs and activities that take place as a result of travel on the Edendale road and its feeder roads including prayers, wearing of amulets, use of traditional African medicine, evocation of divinities/spirits/ancestors, as well as understanding the nature of the deity and the nature of the relationship between people and the deity or deities. The assumption here is that ordinary people of faith do their own theology and that this theology is as valid as theology that is being done by the so-called "professionals".

"People's" theology is associated with "popular" theology. It is not quite the same as theology related to a particular agenda – for example, Liberation Theology of which the *Kairos Document* is an example, or Feminist Theology. Neither is it specifically to do with the needs of a particular class of people – for example, *Minjung Theology* in Korea or *Dalit Theology* in India, or the search for identity, for example African Theology. Most of these theologies are done with a specific agenda in mind and do not constitute the religious beliefs and practices of the broader public involved in everyday activities, like travelling to and from work to meet social and economic needs.

There is not a great deal of work that has been done on People's Theology as such in South Africa. Certainly, the *Kairos Document* and its accompanying documents (*The Damascus Road and, The Belhar Confession*) were presented as people's documents, but they all involved highly trained theologians and were responses to a specific political phenomenon, that is apartheid. Philpott's (1993) *Jesus is Tricky, God is undemocratic* is an interesting attempt to describe the theology of ordinary people in an African township during the apartheid era. Oduyoye has describe a people's theology as "theology from below" (1986: p.108), and reflecting on what she calls "A reorientation of primal religion" (pp.51 – 61).

... if we are trying to understand how God has always been and how God continues to be active in Africa's history, the market women of West Africa may be the immediate symbols of the fetters of injustice, behind them is the cotton industry of Manchester and the cotton pickers around the world (Oduyoye, [1990] pp.60-1).

In other words, the market women with their experience of suffering are able to produce a theology from "below". Oduyoye's description however, once again reveals a particular political agenda, including issues of economic injustice and gender equality. While such a theology might be included in the broader rubric of a people's theology, it does not constitute a people's theology in the broadest sense. Philpott perhaps comes closest to a definition of a people's theology when stating that,

...the first purpose of theology is to 'help discover symbols for communicating reality'. The second purpose is 'to equip people to hold dialogue with the world'. The third purpose is 'mission,'...a process by which we build a community of communities under the inspiration of God's sovereign rule (Pobee, 1992 cited in: Philpott 1993, pp.13-14).

According to Philpott (1993) the impediment in the realization of the above purposes is the fact that "[there] is no space for the views and opinions of those usually excluded from the theological enterprise, the exploited and marginalized of society, those who do theology but seldom write it". (p.15)

Philpott (1993) is of the opinion that this lack of space is due to the fact that "Members of the oppressed community are often invisible participants in society [and moreover], they are not only invisible, but their knowledge and practices, their wisdom and experience are also invisible and undervalued" (p.17).

Attempts have been made to counter the marginalizing attitude towards ordinary people. According to West (1991) “[there] is a growing recognition that ‘the people’ must be allowed to speak for themselves. For too long: the ‘experts’ have spoken on their behalf or, worse, prescribed for them” (p.143). Ekblad takes up this idea of ‘allowing people to speak for themselves’ when he states the following: “If biblical theology is to speak to the heart of today’s ‘tax collectors and sinners’ they must be included in a major way in that theology’s elaboration” (2003:p.3). For Ekblad when trained theologians do this “...they will be setting up an encounter between God and the people to reflect on their lives, the scriptures and each other’s experiences and viewpoints” (p.5). The significance of this collaboration between ordinary people and professional theologians is highlighted by Jennings in this way:

‘Ordinary reader’ means at least four overlapping things: 1) interpretation of biblical material, textual or otherwise by 2) persons who are from politically, socially and economically poorer groupings, who 3) are often not very literate in the official languages of their societies and who 4) are often not theologically trained and therefore pre-critical in their interpretation of scripture – (Jennings as cited in: West 2007 p. 49).

Once again, these definitions are not entirely suitable for the purposes of this study. While the understanding of texts especially bible texts is relevant for this study, it constitutes a very small part of this research. The truth of the matter is that the notion of a people’s theology still needs to be examined in the South African context. This study will attempt to do this by focusing on the quotidian reality of road travel faced by people of all ages and from all walks of life attempting to survive in a modern economy. Such theology is not limited to a particular religion or denomination, but is characteristic of all religious beliefs and practices that come out of experiences where the possibility of death and injury is a constant reality of road travel. A people’s theology thus developed will not be tied to a particular agenda of any kind, except, perhaps, in this case, one that is to do with issues around road travel. It is a people’s theology because ordinary people are doing it, indeed one could say, are forced to do it because of their circumstances. Such a people’s theology of the road takes seriously all the issues that have perplexed and challenged humankind from time immemorial, no matter what their religious background. Questions such as: What is the nature of God? What is the nature of salvation? Why

does God allow suffering and death? How is it that innocent people die? Is there life after death? How can death be overcome?

Just as these issues come to the fore wherever danger is present so, the experience of road travel being one of the most dangerous exercises that people in an African township have to go through, provides an ideal opportunity for a people's theology of the road to be made manifest. The manifestations of a people's theology of the road by commuters who participated in this study, affirm some of the constructions of a people's theology that are found in literary works about this subject. For instance, Alwynlau³⁷, reflecting on the theme of "the reign of God as a world/other redeeming project cum phenomenon which the church has unwittingly turned 'on its head' into a post world/self-focused endeavour" (2007: p.1), suggests the following three characteristics of a people's theology:

1. A people's theology is a contextual theology done from the ground up, beginning with experience, using all available resources by/and or with those who's sweat and tears have fallen on it (p.1).
2. A people's theology is a covenantal theology, one which calls us to be faithful to the deal we've been graciously given or the story we're part of. This (Gospel) story, when told and lived and shared, is the vehicle of God's restoration of our personhood (pp. 2-3).
3. A people's theology, alas, is also a protective theology of the watchful love of God (p. 3).

All the above three elements are also present in the construction of a people's theology of the road by the informants who participated in this study. However, there is one more thing which is missing from the above elements – the idea that road travel also seems to bring out the worst in people, in other words vices. The data has revealed that there is selfishness as manifest in reckless driving, carelessness, jealousy, impatience, lack of concern, lack of respect, indeed lack of all the virtues which are in line with "...a covenantal theology, one which calls us to be faithful to the story we are part

³⁷Alwynlau: *Constructing a People's Theology*: [Online], available from <http://alwynlau.blogdrive.com/archive/454.html> [Accessed: 25/03/2011].

of’(Alwynlau: p. 2). The manifestations of lack of all the virtues that has come up in this study falls under one rubric – sin in the malevolent side of people. However, because the informants have made it clear that road travel also throws up salvation as well (in the benevolent side of people), it is then possible to talk about the idea that a people’s theology of the road is also a theology of sin and salvation.

Another emerging construction of a people’s theology can be deduced from the prayers and praises of Afua Kuma.³⁸ According to Middleton, Darren J. N. (2009), “Drawing on imagery from her local environment, Madam Kuma...lists many epithets for Jesus including:

- Chief of all chiefs,
- Great Doctor,
- The Fertile Forest Land,
- He the sharpest of all great swords; has made the forest safe for hunters.
- Jesus blockades the road of death with wisdom and power.
- Jesus is the victor over spirits.

Similarly, the informants in this study have drawn from their local environment (the Edendale Road and its feeder roads including cultural resources from Christian religion, African Traditional Religion and Islamic Religion), to construct a people’s theology of the road which is based on what the people themselves think, believe, and have said about road travel and what it means to their faith. Even though Afua Kuma’s focus appears to be only on the Jesus, both her and the informants in this study seem to be reflecting on similar matters – matters of life and death that impact on ordinary people in a broad sense, and especially about religious matters – about God, prayer, the spiritual world, the meaning of culture and tradition and many more issues which constitute basic elements of theology. I now give the final word about the nature of a people’s theology to Pathil and Paikada, who have stated that:

³⁸ *Jesus of the Deep Forest: Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma*, Acra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers, 1981. [Online], available from <http://thejesusquestion.org/2014/09/01/Afrocan-names-of-jesus/> -: [Accessed on 28/07/2018].

While traditional theology almost exclusively deals with faith, morals, the church etc...and the presentation is from the clerical perspective, people's theology is theologizing on the condition of the people, particularly the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. This is in a way the humanization of theology (Pathil, Kuncheria and Paikada, Mathew; Eds. 2007: p.29).

The issue that has not been made clear in the above quotation however, is: who is doing the theologizing on the condition of the people? In other words, which perspective is needed for this enterprise? Is it the theologian's perspective? Or is it the people's perspective? Or is it both perspectives that are needed. The stance taken in this study is that both perspectives are needed in the articulation of a people's theology.

2.3 The Road as a Site of Death, Life and Faith

It is common knowledge that all over the world people are killed on the roads every day as a result of road accidents. The locations on the road where people lose their lives become sacred spaces. People respond differently to the existence of such spaces – where many say the body of a loved one has been separated from the soul. Usually, the body of a victim of a road accident is taken away to be buried in a convenient place but some kind of memorial symbol is left there, especially if the person who passed away is a Christian.

There are a few theories or beliefs linked to what happens to the soul of a person who died on the road. Such sites become places where the spirits of deceased people will linger and the belief may arise that these spirits may cause further road accidents. This may involve the belief that these spirits must be removed or appeased in some way through the performance of a religious ceremony.

Slater (2004) in his article: *Encountering God: personal reflection on 'geographer as pilgrim'*, considers the death spot (the waiting room at the Bologna railway station in Italy) - as 'a memorial site because [he] went there to pay [his] respects to [his] two friends who had lost their lives there and unexpectedly experienced the presence of God instead' (p.248). Slater goes on and states that "A place of death like the Bologna railway station needs to be properly memorialized or sacralized – despite remaining a

railway station, and...this is a common reflection of people's reaction to tragic and unexpected death." (p.250)

He then adds this additional piece of information about the common presence of such memorial sites in many countries all over the world:

In Britain today, and in many other countries, it [a memorialized site] is seen most commonly in the sites of fatal road accidents, where flowers and messages are sometimes deposited by friends and relatives at the site of the accident for several years after the event, rather than, or in addition to, the victim's burial place (Kong 1999, Hartig and Dunn 1998 as cited in: Slater, 2004 p.250).

For Slater such sites are nothing less than pilgrimage sites for those who lost their loved ones at these strange places (many places of fatal road accidents are not conventionally sacred or religious), although he concedes that such sites are spaces of remembrance and not conventional pilgrimage spaces. Eade and Sallnow as cited in Slater (2004) have referred to such sites as "...holy places where heaven and earth intersect" (p.249).

Again, Slater says "it is the spirit of God which is encountered in these death spots – the spirit which is weeping for God's children who died tragically and who need to be remembered" (pp.248-9). This in a way is in contrast to the perceived appearance of capricious spirits referred to above.

In his article: "No Danger No Delay" Green-Simms states that: "...the road is the site of movement, livelihood and death that brings to light both the possibilities and impossibilities of progress" and so, "the mixture of violence and the will to survival exists in the postcolonial urban periphery"³⁹.

The belief in the god Ogun as being associated with the road is picked up by Wole Soyinka. "For Soyinka", says Green-Simms (2010), "the road, associated with its patron god Ogun – also the god of metal, iron, now technology and transition – is a site of both creation and destruction" (p.53). This quote is in reference to the examination (by Green-Simms) of Soyinka's poem "Death in the Dawn" where Soyinka articulates the

³⁹ Green-Simms, Lindsey 2010 "No Danger No Delay": 'Wole Soyinka and the perils of the road', *Journal of Postcolonial writing*, 46: 1, 53–64 (online) Available @ www.informaworld.com

psychological consequences of road accidents. This poem is a powerful statement of what faces so many commuters in Africa, including South Africa today.

“Death in the Dawn”⁴⁰

Traveler, you must set out at dawn. And wipe your feet upon the dog-nose wetness of earth.

Let sunrise quench your lamps, and watch faint brush prickling in the sky light cottoned feet to break the early earthworm on the hoe. Now shadows stretch with sap not twilight’s death and sad prostration.

This soft kindling, soft receding breeds racing joys and apprehensions for a naked day, burdened hulks retract, stoop to the mist in faceless throng to wake the silent markets – swift, mute processions on grey byways...

On this counterpane, it was – sudden winter at the death of dawn’s lone trumpeter, cascades of white feather-flakes, but it proved a futile rite. Propitiation sped grimly on, before. The right foot for joy, the left, dread and the mother prayed, child may you ever walk when the road waits, famished.

Traveller, you must set forth at dawn. I promise marvels of the holy hour presages as the white cock’s flapped perverse impalement – as who would dare the wrathful wings of man’s progression...

But such another wraith! Brother, silenced in the startled hug of your invention – is this mocked grimace – this closed contortion - I?

Green-Simms begins his analysis of the above poem by first mentioning the following words which he says Soyinka used as a preamble to describe the event that inspired him to write this poem in the first place.

Driving to Lagos one morning a white cockerel flew out of the dusk and smashed itself against my windscreen. A mile further I came across a motor accident and a freshly dead man in the smash - (Green-Simms 2010 p.55).

Green-Simms goes on and states that:

The poem opens, like Soyinka’s journey, at dawn, a time of hope and promise, a time filled with the potential for productivity and action. Yet it is precisely at this ‘holy hour’ when the markets open and people are preparing for their day that the cockerel’s ‘perverse impalement’ smashes into the poet’s windshield. The cockerel stalls the day’s progress and serves as a warning sign for the far more insidious crash that the poet witnesses further down the road (Green-Simms 2010 p.55).

There are resonances in the above quotation with what faces many commuting ordinary people in South Africa today. They also start their travel journey to get to work as early as 05h00 A.M – at the darker stage of twilight. I am here referring to domestic workers working in the different suburbs of Pietermaritzburg, people whose daily job is to clean

⁴⁰ Soyinka, Wole. 1967: “Death in the Dawn” and “Idanre”: *Selected Poems*, London: Methuen.

offices, the malls, bank buildings, shops, hospitals, clinics and buildings belonging to institutions of higher learning. I am also referring to people working for the various industries whose work start time is usually 06h00 A.M. Kombi taxi drivers are also included in this group because their work start time is about 04h30 A.M. Of course there are other commuters who are employed in some of the government departments which provide special services to members of the public.

Another similarity is to do with signs of danger or disaster waiting to happen. There might be no cockerel flying out of the dusk and smashing itself against a windscreen of a kombi taxi. However, disaster related signs such as the overloading of passengers, speeding, disrespect for the road traffic rules and regulations including the use of vehicles which are not road worthy and drinking and driving are more likely to be prevalent. The existence of these danger related signs suggests that commuters might be characterized by what Schivelbusch (1977) as cited in: Green-Simms (2010) calls “an acute awareness of the ever-present disaster” (p.56) waiting to happen in the course of road travel.

However, activities like switching on radio programmes in the course of road travel (such as the most popular *uKhozi* F M, *iGagasi* F M, *uMgungundlovu* F M and to a lesser extent the “new kid on the block” – Channel 104 F M), the playing of various genres of music (including gospel music, Jazz music, *uMaskandi* music, R and B music, Pop music and *Kwaito* music) and even silence (where there is no verbal communication between the travellers, including a driver during some of the trips and each person seems to be self-absorbed and uncommunicative) suggest that road travel has also become what Schivelbusch, in Green-Simms, has called “a part of normal, daily life” (p.56). According to Green-Simms, activities such as the above “...formed what Freud would call a stimulus shield, which acted as a preventative mechanism to buffer the effects of trauma” (p. 56) - in this case, the trauma of the possibility of being involved in a road accident.

Green-Simms concludes his reflection on the poem “Death in the Dawn” by making this final statement:

If I am correct in recognizing the poet’s identification with the mangled automobile, then the poem is not a tale of man against technology, but rather a reflection on an entire system of roads, drivers, and automobiles that has failed itself – (Green-Simms 2010 pp.55-6).

The above quote is in reference to the fact that ‘as the poem ends, the poet [Soyinka] addresses the man whom he sees in the crash as: “Brother, / silenced in the startled hug of / your invention – is this mocked grimaced / this closed contortion – I?” (p.55). Similarly, a people’s theology of the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads is not a tale of ordinary people against “modern” or “scientific” understandings of the causes and activities related to the prevention of road accidents, but rather a reflection on what the people themselves think, believe, and have said about road travel and what this means to their faith.

2.3.1 Issues related to modernity and capitalism, witchcraft and the supernatural

Road travel in an African township such as Edendale cannot be separated from the mobility of modern capitalism. Where modern capitalism intersects with an African cosmology there seems inevitably to emerge “signs and wonders” of the supernatural that often overflow into whispers of witchcraft.⁴¹ In their book *Mobile Africa: changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*, Bruijn, Van Dijk and Foeken (2001) assert that “witchcraft is associated with population mobility which in itself is a modern phenomenon” (p.38). They cite the following example:

In the Sukuma district of Tanzania, rumours about Gambosh a type of witchcraft which appears at night in the form of rapidly moving bright lights, are well known. These moving bright lights can easily be mistaken for buses. While normal buses have a definite shape and usually travel on well-

⁴¹ (Comaroff, John L. and Comaroff J. (1991) *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ashforth Adam (2005) *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Geschiere, P. (2008) *Readings in Modernity in Africa*, London: International African Institute. Ellis S. (2004) *Worlds of Power: religious thought and political practice in Africa*: London: Hurst. Haar G. T. “Ritual Communication: a study of African Christian communities in Beljimer district of Amsterdam” pp. 163-188, in: Harvey G. (2005) ed. *Ritual and Religious Belief: A Reader*, London: Equinox. African authors who support this are: Obiwulu Alosius C. (2011) *Occult Power and Africa’s Socio-Economic Problems*, Enugu: Delta Publication (pp. 69-84) [an online - Google publication]. Sarma, B. A. (2007) *Beliefs and Character: Theology and Ethics of Road Safety in Nigeria: A Paper Presented at the Jos-Bukuru Theological Society on October 8, 2007*, [online] Available @ www.tenn.org.indexfiles.sarma.html. Turaki Yusufu (2013) *African Traditional Religious System as a Basis for understanding Spiritual Warfare*, [online] Abstracted 27/ 05/ 2014 www.lausannemovement.htm.

marked routes, Gambosh have no definite characteristics at all apart from their bright lights. They are said to cruise through the bush, often at dangerous speeds. They allegedly collect unsuspecting passengers en route, and transport them to unknown distant locations....Any hapless man, woman or child who encounters Gambosh is in danger of disappearing for ever – (Bruijn, Van Dijk and Foeken 2001 p.37).

According to Doumbia and Doumbia (2004) in their book: *The Way of the Elders: West African Spirituality and Tradition* – “the wearing of charms and talismans is especially common when it comes to travel” (p.47). This suggests that Cleansing and portable charms are therefore, deemed vital for all kinds of travelers including road users. The Doumbia’s have this to say about what they call “travel signs”:

West Africans begin any journey with a lot of preparation. Equipping oneself with the proper protective process is more important than bringing along food or clothing. The first step is to divine what dangers may await a traveler, the diviners will tell what sacrifices to make before departure. The second step is to make the appropriate sacrifices and secure the necessary charms – (2004: p.80).

This is not the end of the process: “When West Africans exit their homes they pour water at the door and step over it to ensure a peaceful journey - one must not step back into the home after this ritual” (p.80). In Stein and Stein, protective rituals with respect to road use and travel are discussed.

Among the Yoruba of Nigeria in West Africa, Ogun is the god of iron. More recently, Ogun has been associated with cars and trucks. It is common for taxi drivers to decorate their cars with his symbols and even on occasion to offer an animal sacrifice to him asking for protection – (Stein and Stein 2005 p.88).

Winzler (2008) provides us with some fascinating insights about the notion of what he calls “bad death” [in *isiZulu* tradition it is usually referred to as – *ukufa ngesihluku*] and people’s beliefs and their different responses to it. One of the prevailing beliefs related to “bad death” according to Winzler is that “the soul of a person who died in a bad way will become an especially dangerous spirits” (p.162). This suggests that something needs to be done in order to prevent bad things from affecting the lives of people on their travel journeys. However, Winzler also says that some East Asian people believe bad death can be put to magical use. For instance, license plate numbers of vehicles involved in fatal accidents are regarded as likely source for winning the lottery and oil rendered from the body of a murdered person is a potent medicine for those who engage in sorcery (p.168). The above views by Winzler reinforce the notion that is held by a number of scholars (for

example the Comaroffs 1991, Ter Haar 2005, Geschiere 2008, Ashforth 2005, including African scholars such as Awolalu 1976, Sarma 2007, Obiwulu 2011 and Turaki, 2013) that African witchcraft and other African traditional religious beliefs and practices have not died as people modernize. This is clarified by Awolalu in the following way:

The adherents of indigenous religion are very conservative, resisting the influence of modernism heralded by the colonial era, including the introduction of Islam, Christianity, Western Education and improved medical facilities. They cherish their tradition...their religion is quite meaningful to them. They hold tenaciously to their covenant that binds them together – (Awolalu, J. O., 1976 p.1 as cited In: *Studies in Comparative Religion*, vol. 10, no. 2, World Wisdom, [online] accessed 27/04/2014, available @ www.studiesincomparativereligion.com).

2.3.2 Issues around fatalism, faith and patterns of behaviour on the road

Kayani, King and Fleiter (2011) assert that “There is an overlap between fatalism and superstition both conceptually and in practice” (p.3). They begin by making a distinction between what they call “empirical fatalism” and “theological fatalism” (p.3). “Empirical fatalism” for Elder as cited in Kayani *et al.* (2011) “is a belief that observed events occur for no comprehensible reason and cannot be controlled”, while “theological fatalism is the belief that God or some moral order such as *Karma* controls a person’s destiny and the outcome of his [or her] actions”⁴². “Superstition” on the other hand, “is a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation”⁴³. The overlap between these is explained in this way:

Like theological fatalism, superstition involves a belief in the working of supernatural forces which could include magic, spirits, ancestors, or just vague concepts like ‘luck’. The main difference from theological fatalism is that there is no ‘all-powerful supernatural agent’ (e.g. God) involved, and in fact the effects of magic are often attributed to ordinary (though malevolent) human beings. The second area of overlap concerns the actions taken by people acting superstitiously, who may invoke religious acts and powers as a way of countering possible malevolent acts or bad luck. This can give the appearance of religion to a practice which is essentially magical – (Kayani *et al.* 2011, p.3).

It is clear from the above that both fatalism and superstition have serious implications for Road Safety. But before we can dwell on those implications, it is important to note here that although there does not seem to be much literature related to religious beliefs and practices and the road environment, some interesting research in this regard can be found

⁴² Elder, 1966 p.229 in: Kayani, Ahsan., King, Mark J., and Fleiter, Judy J., 2011, *Fatalism and Road Safety in Developing Countries, with a focus on Parkistan*: Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety, 22 (2), pp.41-7 (Online), Available @ www.eprints.qut.edu.au/41818/

⁴³ Foster and Kokko, 2009: p.31, in Kayani *et al.* 2011, p. 3.

in the web. For instance, in 2007 and again in 2011 Kayani, King and Fleiter used an anthropological approach to try and understand attitudes and behaviour on the road linked to fatalism. In the 2007 study between 25 and 35 participants were interviewed individually by using a semi-structured interview format in Lahore and Islamabad, Pakistan. The participants included police officers, policy makers and general drivers. The study sought to shed light on the religious and socio-cultural determinants of risky road use in Pakistan. It was envisaged that this would help to improve the education of general road users so that they will be less likely to attribute road accidents to chance or fate. The significance of this approach lies in the suggestion that the more we attribute road accidents to some supernatural cause, the less we will take into account the fact of human error and the less responsible we will be on the road. This study together with three other related studies conducted in Ivory Coast by Dongo (1997), in Nigeria by Sarma (2007), and in South Africa by Venter (2009) all came to a similar conclusion, that is, that fatalistic beliefs and mystical powers influence the cause of road accidents and consequently open the space for people to take more risks and neglect safety measures on the road. Some of the examples given by (Sarma 2007) of such fatalistic beliefs include a belief that the use of bible verses or words from scripture such as “I am covered by the blood of Jesus”, by drivers in vehicles can prevent road accidents.

Kayani *et al.* (2011) also explain how superstitions have been shown to play a role in Road Safety by stating that,

Superstition may take the form of attributing misfortunes like road crashes to transgression of taboos, actions of ancestors, jealousy from others, and what Westerners call witchcraft. Drivers take precautions which include the use of spells, rituals, amulets and other magical objects. If they experience a road crash in spite of this magical precaution, they may believe that witches, wizards, secret societies or demons are responsible (p.4).

Moreover, the existence of superstitious beliefs among certain South African taxi drovers has also been cited by Kayani *et al.* Hence, according to the three authors mentioned above:

A study to evaluate superstition, risk-taking and risk perception among South African taxi drivers found that a considerable proportion of drivers believed in destiny, witchcraft, or evil spirits as possible causes of road traffic accidents. Participants also reported that protective medicines,

consulting traditional healers or prophets, and cleansing procedures could be effective means to avoid future accidents (Kayani *et al.*, (2011:p.4).

The three authors above further maintain that “Research into the psychology of fatalism indicates that a fatalistic belief may have benefits on its own right, or as a compensatory mechanism”, and they suggest that this is due to the fact that “attributing responsibility [for a road accident] to an external agency (God or another supernatural being), avoids feelings of guilt about personal responsibility...and it can also be comforting”⁴⁴ [to an offender against the road traffic rules and regulations].

While these kinds of explanations for the beliefs and actions of road users may be appropriate from a psychological point of view they have little value from a theological point of view. Theology is not psychology. We need to take seriously the beliefs of the people that are using the road and not simply explain them from a psychological point of view. Neither can these beliefs be trivialized by referring to them as “superstitious” or “fatalistic”. They are real and they profoundly affect the lives of those who have them so they need to be taken seriously and attempts need to be made to understand them. This is the task of theology.

2.4 Recapitulating the three main issues above

The three main points of what have been discussed above which I am going to state again are that: 1) the road is seen as a site of death, life and faith. 2) The reality of witchcraft beliefs as well as beliefs in the supernatural in our modern world and that, those beliefs affect the lives of people who believe in them. And 3) the reality of fatalistic and superstitious beliefs and that they also affect the lives of those who believe in them. I am recapping the above issues because they seem to contain themes or they themselves are themes that underlie the six characteristics of the primal worldview which have been suggested by Harold Turner, and they are as follows:

- Firstly, a sense of kinship with nature in which animals and plants, no less than human beings have their own spiritual existence and place in the universe, as independent parts of the whole.
- Secondly, the deep sense that humankind is finite and weak and in need of a supernatural power.

⁴⁴ Kayani, *et al.*, 2011:p.5.

- Thirdly, that humankind is not alone in the universe, that there is a spiritual world of powers and beings more ultimate than itself. This is a personalized universe where the appropriate question is not what causes things to happen but who causes things to happen.
- Fourthly; that human beings can enter into relationships, with the benevolent spirit world.
- Fifthly, an acute sense of the afterlife usually expressed in belief in and respect for the ancestors who may be referred to as the “living dead”.
- Sixthly; that humans live in a sacramental universe where there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual and that the physical can act as a vehicle for the spiritual.⁴⁵

I will do a more detailed discussion on all these six characteristics in chapter seven – a chapter in which I deal with Primal religion as the primary reference point for a theology of the road. It is sufficient for me at this stage to present the above characteristics and to point out that they recur as characteristics in most of the forthcoming chapter especially in chapter four – the chapter on the presentation of data (the findings).

2.5 Conclusion

Road travel in Africa can be separated neither from the modern economy nor from an African worldview. Where these two come together, there occurs a powerful mix of dangerous forces that impact on the lives of road travelers demanding forms of explanation, prediction, and control. The ever present reality of death or injury through road accidents needs to be accounted for, causes need to be understood, protection needs to be sought, preventive measures need to be put in place, remedial actions need to be taken, lessons need to be learned, faith needs to be practiced.

In this chapter I have attempted to set the scene for investigating the kinds of theologies that exist amongst people using the road by highlighting a broad range of issues that are associated with these theologies and describing the conditions of road travel that give rise to the making of a theology of the road. I have attempted to paint in broad strokes the meaning of a people’s theology, the existential experience of road travel in Africa and the kind of beliefs and sentiments that are associated with this. I have also touched on research that has been done elsewhere on beliefs associated with road travel. I have also emphasized that the task of this research project is to describe in broad strokes a theology of the road, to understand where it is coming from, how it is being formulated, and what

⁴⁵ Quoted in Kwame Bediako, 1993, *Christianity in Africa – The renewal of non – western religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

it is doing for the people experiencing the exigencies of road travel. The next chapter will focus on the design and methodology used, as well as the different phases adopted for the research process including strategies used at the beginning and at the end of fieldwork.

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework, design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter is divided into six parts, including three main parts and three related parts at the end. In the first of the main parts the discussion has to do with the theoretical framework, the second describes the research design and the third with methodological issues such as population and sampling, description of field work, seeking patronage, and the interviewing process involving a three phased approach. I begin the last three parts by discussing assumptions specific to this study followed by limitations and ethical considerations.

The field site linked to this study is the Edendale Road together with some of its selected feeder roads including taxi ranks, people's residences and some of their places of work. The primary research question is: What are the essential components of a theology of road as practiced by the travelers using the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads? - Sub questions are: What are the fundamental beliefs that constitute a theology of the road? Where do these beliefs come from? How do they impact the lives of the people who have them?

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on three assumptions: Firstly, that theology is to do with reflection on beliefs about God, gods, ancestors, and supernatural powers associated with the unseen world (and the relationship of the divine with human kind). Secondly, that people who feature in this research will probably be operating with a worldview that takes seriously the existence of spiritual reality. Thirdly, that theology is not only done by scholars and academics but that it is also done by "ordinary" believers who have faith.

For the purposes of this study, theology is not only done by adherents to the Christian faith but by believers who adhere to different religious formations and faiths. This means

that the raw data of this research (the subject of my next chapter) are the religious beliefs and practices of people coming out of their experiences of travel on the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads concerning all the issues that emerge from their religious faith. This in turn has largely determined the methodology for this project which is based on a participatory model. Philpott's definition of participatory research (PR) is appropriate in this regard.

Participatory Research is the process by which the "raw" and somewhat unformed or at least, unexpressed knowledge of ordinary people is brought into the open and incorporated into a connectable whole (Philpott, 1993:p. 24).

The suitability of this model for this study lies in what Henning (2004) describes in one of her articulations of interpretive theory of knowledge as: "...a communal process informed by participating [ordinary] people and scrutinized and / or endorsed by others" (p.20). The significance of understanding participatory research as a "communal process" is expressed by Philpott in this manner:

[Ordinary] members of the...community are often invisible participants of society, the superfluous unknown people...yet they are usually the majority of society....Not only are they invisible, but their knowledge and practices, their wisdom and experience are also invisible and undervalued (Philpott, 1993:p.29).

I have mentioned above that this study is also premised on the belief that theology is not only done by scholars and academics but that it is also done by "ordinary" believers who have faith. Similarly, participatory research also supports the cause of ordinary people in that according to Mandakini (2014) "it recognizes average people as researchers themselves in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival" (p.95).

Use of a participatory model in this study is motivated by two considerations. Firstly, in the words of Philpott (1993): "...to make the invisible visible, to hear, understand, and, learn from those who are usually excluded from the enterprise of the production of theological knowledge" (p.17). Secondly, the motivation to use the participatory model arises out of the choice to use a methodology which I describe as – Participant Conversation in the Course of Road Travel (PCCRT) with respect to data collection. This methodology is a form of travel which is compatible with all the stages related to

field work including entering the field, seeking patronage, canvassing possible participants, conducting interviews and leaving the field.

Participant Conversation in the Course of Road Travel is also compatible with the participatory model in a number of ways. Firstly, getting close to “ordinary” people and creating rapport is not that difficult when using the same means of transport as everyone else on a daily basis and when I also have a polite way of starting a conversation. Secondly, it makes the task of bringing out into the open the “raw” data or the unexpressed knowledge of “ordinary” people less difficult when people finally recognize me as one of them – as a result of travelling with them and of making it clear from the very beginning that my intention is to learn from them. Thirdly, this method in relation to Philpott’s understanding of the significance of a “communal process”, presents the opportunity for my study to be a channel through which people might not only be taken seriously, but that their religious beliefs and practices and their experience of road travel might also be taken seriously.

3.3 Research design

This is an exploratory study using qualitative methods to uncover the nature of people’s religious beliefs, practices and perspectives, with respect to their daily use of the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads. In other words, the study has been conducted by using an open ended questionnaire with consistently formatted interview questions, in order to explore issues pertaining to theologies of the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads, and understanding the phenomenon of travel by public transport. The study is based on a single case study design and participatory theory approach. The reason for a single case study design is that the Edendale Road together with its selected feeder roads constitutes a small commonplace situation which is accessible to me as the researcher. In other words, this road represents a typical case amongst many roads or cases in South Africa today.

3.4 Methodology

My main concern in this section is to discuss specific techniques I adopted for this study before and after entering the field – techniques for gathering data⁴⁶. It is for this reason therefore that I begin the discussion below by focusing on issues related to the population of this study and the sampling procedure which I followed.

3.4.1 Population and Sampling

The population of this study included people without formal theological training, aged between 18 and 60 years, who were adherents to Christian faith, Muslim faith, Islam, African Traditional Religion or any other faith detectable within the Edendale Township, and people who use the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads daily for the purposes of meeting their social and economic needs. Initially, the sample size was anticipated to be between 50 and 60 participants. The main reason for this is that I wanted to build up a record of a variety of responses of Edendale Road users from different religious formations and faiths. I was able to achieve this through interviews, in spite of the fact that not all road users who had made a commitment to participate fully in the study honored their promise. However, my target was met because 53 (25 females and 28 males) road users, participated fully in the study and only seven (two males and five females) failed to comply with the promise to participate and they stopped answering their phones when I tried to contact them.

I met one of the five women in a kombi taxi from Edendale to Pietermaritzburg in February 2012. After introducing my-self and expressing a desire to have a conversation with her about the work that I was involved in at a later stage, she agreed to give me her cell-phone number and then suggested that I could visit her place of work during lunch time after making an appointment. Three days later I arrived at her place of work and discovered that she had invited four other women colleagues to participate in the discussion. She then explained to me that all five of them belong to the same Pentecostal church. After what seemed to me like a promising first contact, one of these women then suggested that in her opinion their pastor would be the most appropriate person with

⁴⁶ See Neuman, W. L. (1997) *Social Research Methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (p.60).

whom I could discuss religious beliefs and practices related to travel. I explained to them that in my study I was focusing on ordinary church members and not on church leaders like pastors and priests. And I explained why in as simple a manner as possible. They all seemed to agree that I should make another appointment so that I could interview them individually. The woman who had suggested the idea that I should interview their pastor also insisted that I should call her when making appointments for interviews with each member of their group. A week later I contacted her telephonically on several occasions and she did not answer her phone until I decided to give up. The two males who also did not honor their promise to participate in this study were members of two different African Christian churches. I met one these males at a shopping complex in Edendale. Two days later, I met the second one at a taxi rank also in Edendale. After I had explained the purposes and aims of my study they each seemed very eager to participate fully – proof of this is that they each provided me with their contact cell-phone numbers. One of them never answered his phone later on when I tried to contact him. The other one answered his phone and agreed to meet me at his house. In our second meeting at his place of residence he seemed worried about this: “Some members of my church have asked me – ‘what do these people want from our church?’”. That was the last time I had contact with him – he never answered his phone when I called and on two occasions I visited his house he was not available and there was no clear indication of when he could be available.

The fifty three (53) commuters who participated in the study are members of the following religious communities: Faith Mission Church 7, African Christian Church 4, Rastafarian Religion 1, Islamic Religion 1, Nazareth Baptist Church (*amaNazarethaakwaShembe*) 3, Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission Church (*KwaMasango*) 1, African Christian Gospel Church 1, Zionist Church 6, Anglican Church 2, Roman Catholic Church 3, Dutch Reformed Church 1, Presbyterian Church 3, Lutheran Church 2, UNC Lutheran Church 1, African Traditional Religion 5, Universal Kingdom of God 2, Church of the Twelve Apostles (*abaPostoli*) 3, Welcome Church 1, Will of God Ministries 1, Christ for All Nations 2, Assembly of God 1, Jehovah’s Witnesses 1 and Salvation Army 1.

These numbers of participants from each religious community were determined by the willingness of road users to participate in the study. The people who participated in this study are employed in various categories of jobs, for example, security guards, domestic workers, nurses, teachers, construction workers, shop assistants, and general workers. Others are self employed, and others still are kombi taxi drivers and / or kombi taxi operators.

3.4.2 Description of field work – seeking patronage

Before conducting interviews, I entered the field site on the 14th of November, 2011 in possession of a letter of introduction (signed by both my main supervisor and the co-supervisor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal – Pietermaritzburg campus). The purpose of entering the field at that time was for me to acquire patronage from the key stakeholders within the kombi taxi industry, especially those associated with kombi taxis using the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads – kombi taxis used by people who travel from the Edendale Township to the city of Pietermaritzburg to get to work.

The first task I had set out for myself was to find at least one person who will direct me to the right places where local associations conduct their business. Such a person happened to be the rank manager at the Edendale Hospital kombi taxi and bus rank. It was this person who gave me direction as to where I could find the Dambuza Local Taxi Association offices, as well as the Caluza Local Taxi Association offices. Both areas known as KwaDambuza and KwaCaluza, together with about eight other areas are sections of the Edendale Township. It was at the Caluza Local Taxi Association office where I was informed that it would be to my best interest to seek permission from the Regional Taxi Council (RETACO) offices in Pietermaritzburg.

Two reasons were given for this: 1) some of the local taxi associations do not seem to have offices or fixed places where they conduct their business. 2) RETACO as the umbrella body has authority to grant me permission that will cover all the areas identified in my research project as potential field sites.

At RETACO, I was asked to submit a formal letter of request. I submitted the letter two days later after briefing my supervisors about my journey up to that point. Two weeks later I received a letter inviting me to make a presentation before the full council on the 29th of November 2011. I did the presentation on the set date accompanied by the co-supervisor. His presence was in my opinion invaluable for two reasons: 1) it gave me the much needed support, and 2) it created a sense that our institution (UKZN) and us, its representatives have respect for the kombi taxi industry in and the people associated with it. I deduced this from the manner in which we were welcomed and the way council members listened to my presentation, asked questions and their willingness to allow their area of business to be exposed to the scrutiny of theological research.

Although acquiring patronage took longer than I had anticipated – I was pleased when I eventually received the letter to this effect on the second week of January 2012. This was four weeks after I had officially entered the field for the first time. The wait was worthwhile because it gave me the opportunity to reflect on the journey (in relation to the study) I had travelled up to that point, as well as on the journey ahead. This was important because it made me aware of some of the mistakes I had made in the early stages, as well as the progress made.

3.4.3. The interview process

Participants in this study were interviewed individually in Pietermaritzburg, as well as in Edendale using a semi-structured interview format to obtain detailed information. The most convenient sites were the main taxi ranks where there is usually an accumulation of people seeking to get transport in both the above areas. The ranking system which operates on the principle of first come first served – the first driver to arrive at a rank is the first driver to leave with a full load of passengers, made it possible for me to interact with the target group for the study including drivers and passengers. This presented me with the opportunity to introduce myself and the research work I was intending to do amongst them. The most convenient sites for conducting interviews in both Pietermaritzburg and Edendale were determined by each person's preference and these included mostly places of residence and places of work.

3.5 The use of a Phased Approach

In this study a phased approach was used for the following reasons: firstly, there was a need to find appropriate subjects, that is, regular people travelling to get to work. Secondly, there was the necessity to devise means of getting participants to talk about their religious beliefs and practices concerning road use. Thirdly, such information about religious beliefs and practices of road users needed to be recorded, processed and reflected upon. Initially, the plan was that a voice recorder would be used to capture responses from participants during the interview process. However, the idea of using a voice recorder was abandoned after I had realized that its use had the effect of alienating me from people who had originally agreed to participate fully in the study. Seven potential participants never answered their phones again to confirm the dates and times for interviews. This happened at the beginning of the interview process, after I had requested to record interviews using a voice recorder. I then decided that taking hand written notes would be a better option because it is less intimidating.

3.5.1 Phase 1

This initial phase involved making use of a questionnaire in order to ascertain the following (1): Who is using the Edendale road and its selected feeder roads on a regular basis? (2) What means of transport is being used? (3) Where do people travel from and to? (4) Who is willing to participate in the study?

In order to be able to gain this information from taxi drivers and commuters, I started travelling on kombi taxis for some time because these are probably the most popular means of transport. I undertook 286 return kombi taxi trips with effect from January 2011 to November 2014. As far as gaining information from pedestrians, general drivers and other potential participants, I visited the relevant sites. These planned contact entailed seeking cooperation of all stakeholders who were affected by this project in one way or another. A formal letter of introduction with the relevant information about me as a full-time PhD student doing research work and the academic institution of origin (UKZN), the study aims and objectives and, methods used ensured that this cooperation was elicited.

3.5.1.1 The Questions I Asked

- How often do you use the Edendale Road and or its feeder roads - e. g. every day, or every week or every month? (*Ingabe uvamise ukuwusebenzisa kangakanani umgwaqo wase Edendale nemifakela yawo – isibonelo, zonke izinsuku, wonke amasonto noma zonke izinyanga?*)
- What is your main means of transport - car, bus, taxi, bicycle or walking? (*Uhloboluni lwesithuthi ovamise ukulusebenzisa – yimoto, yibhasi, yitekisi, yibhayisekili noma ukuhamba ngezinyawo?*)
- What is the main purpose of your travel on the Edendale Road – work, shopping, both work and shopping or other – can you specify? (*Ingabe yini imbhangela yokusebenzisa kwakho umgwaqo wasw Edendale – umsebenzi, ukuthenga, yikho kokubili noma ngokunye - ungacacisa?*)
- Which religious faith do you adhere to – Christian, Muslim, African Traditional Religion or other? (*Iyiphi inkolo ozimbhandakanya nayo – ngeyobuKrestu, ngeyobuMuslim, ngeyendabuko noma ngenye?*)
- Are you a member of a church, mosque or other religious community? (*Ingabe uyilo yini ilunga lebandla lenkolo ozimbhndzkznya nayo, noma ilunga lethempeli noma ilunga lanoma umphakathi wenkolo yakho?*)
- How much risk do you think there is in travelling on the Edendale Road? (*Ingakanani ingozi ocabanga ukuthi ikhona ngokusebenzisa lomgwaqo?*)
- What is the exact nature of this risk - accidents, car-highjackings or other – can you specify? (*Ingabe uhloboluni lwengozi ekhona – ingabe ukushayisana kwezithuthi, ukudunwa kwezimoto noma ngokunye-nje – ungacacisa?*)
- Do you believe in any kind of divine assistance to help protect you in your travel on this road? (*Ingabe uyakholelwa yini osizweni oluvela kumdali noma yiluphi*

uhlobo lwemimoya ekutheni uvikeleke ezingozini ngezinkathi osebenzisa ngazo lomgwaqo?

- Are you willing to discuss this any further for about an hour? (*Ungathanda yini ukuba siluxoxe kabanzi loludaba isikhathi esingacishe sibe yihora?*)
- If you agree, I suggest that you name the time and place that will be suitable for both of us and that you may invite a friend, or a neighbour, or a next of kin or anyone to be present during our discussion. (*Uma uvumelana nalokhu ngibona kungakuhle ukuba kube nguwe onquma isikhathi nendawe okuzovumelana nathi sobabili, kanti futhi ungamema umgani wakho noma umakhelwane noma ngomunye wakwenu ozokusekela lapho sesixoxa.*)

3.5.1.2 How and where I asked the questions

The above questions came up in one of the discussions I had with my supervisor (Balcomb A. O), in the early stages of this study before I officially ventured into the field. We both agreed that it was important for me to have the above kinds of questions because they would help me get answers to the four main questions in this phase as mentioned above and they would be crucial for setting the scene for the then forthcoming one hour interviews. I asked these questions mainly in *isiZulu* – the language spoken by most of the people of Edendale. There was only one potential participant with whom I had to ask these questions in English because of the fact that he is an Indian and he adheres to the Muslim faith. With this particular person I asked the questions at his place of work at the Edendale Mall during a lunch break.

This was also the case with the five women I mentioned above, that is, those who failed to comply with their promise to participate and stopped answering their phones – I was at their place of work when I asked them these questions. As for the rest of the other potential participants, it was either at a taxi rank – the main taxi ranks in Pietermaritzburg for kombi taxis using the Edendale Road and its feeder roads, or in Edendale on the road immediately after a taxi trip from the city centre. This was usually after an agreement between me and a potential participant reached while travelling from Pietermaritzburg.

Asking all the ten questions, getting answers and recording them in a note pad was made possible by the fact that most of the answers required were short and some were just one word answers.

However, the latter fact did not mean there would be no problems even if in my opinion they did not seem to be major problems. For instance, someone who knows the person I was interviewing would come along and offer a greeting but then continue talking until he or she is told that we were having an important discussion. By the time the person has excused him-self or her-self the question between us would be – where were we before we were interrupted? Sometimes there would be a need to start all over again!

Most of those interviews took place when people were tired after a long day at work. It was therefore not unusual for someone to suggest in the middle of the interview that maybe we should continue some other time – pleading tiredness. In such cases I learned the value of understanding what the other person says she or he is feeling and to be grateful for the opportunity to be squeezed at an inconvenient moment. Some of the things I regarded as minor problems simply because they had the effect of putting me off for a short while. Some of them were in the form of suggestive remarks such as “how much are ‘they’ going to pay you for doing this job” (a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, March 2012), or “you are going to get a lot of money from the government and you will give us your change each time you buy something, and we will not complain” (an adherent to African Traditional Religion, May 2012) or this question uttered with a worried look on the face “what are you going to do with the information that you will get from us?” (A member of a Pentecostal church: February, 2012).

The latter remark above was in reference to the fact that I had not yet abandoned the idea of using a voice recorder, and I had indicated that I was hoping they would not mind if I record our conversations. When I had recovered from the shock of the first two unexpected remarks I simply told the people concerned that I am a full-time student and that I am doing what I am doing as an academic exercise that will enable the university to judge whether I deserve to pass or fail. With regard to the last question, it appeared to me that the person concerned would not believe me even if I were to swear by her own

ancestors! She appeared to be really concerned. I just told her that the voice recorder would only be used by me and that it would then be kept for a while at the university's archives department. Whether or not she believed me I do not know. What I do know however, is that she is one of the women who eventually participated fully in this study.

3.5.2 Phase 2

Two factors in this phase were critical for the success of the project once patronage had been gained from all key stakeholders in the proposed fields and potential participants have been acquired. The first was to motivate participants to talk about their religious beliefs and practices concerning road use. I had anticipated that the letter of introduction alone as a motivating factor was not going to be enough. In addition to this letter, I borrowed from the grounded theory approach a technique that is known as "Cultivating Relationships"⁴⁷.

The primary reason for using this technique was to gain detailed, credible and relevant information concerning people's religious beliefs and practices and travel. In other words, to ensure, that a wealth of information is passed on to me. According to Simons:

The term 'cultivating' refers to the courting and wooing activities engaged by [researchers] in relation to those they [intend to interview]....Thus, cultivating techniques are employed with the intent of either directly or indirectly gaining a reward (Simons, in: Glaser, 1993 p.4).

The "reward" in the context of this study is a wealth of information about people's religious beliefs and practices and perspectives concerning travel, that is, information I received as a result of field research one-on-one interviews. Developing mutual trust between my-self as a researcher and a potential participant was crucial before interviewing could take place. I took it upon my-self to develop a good relationship with each and every potential participant and then seize on every opportunity to follow up with further conversation.

In instances where there were signs that cooperation would become impossible, I tried another technique which is compatible with the 'cultivating' relationships approach.

⁴⁷ Simons, Odis E. "The Milkman and his customer: a cultivated relationship" Chapter 1, pp.4-31: in Glaser, B. G. (1993) *Examples of Grounded Theory: A Reader*, Mill Valley, C A: Sociology Press.

Neuman refers to this strategy as normalizing social research in the sense that "...an overt social researcher normalizes social research by helping members to redefine social research from something unknown and threatening to something normal and predictable" (1997:p.359). One of the experiences I had in this regard was a concern brought to my attention by a potential participant who informed me that one of his fellow worshippers – a member of the Nazareth Baptist Church had asked him the question "What do these people [outsiders] want from our church?" My immediate response to such a seemingly negative perception of research work and researchers like myself was that I presented this potential participant with what Neuman refers to as the need for a researcher 'to present his or her own biography, explaining field research a little at a time, appearing non threatening'⁴⁸. Thus, when presenting my own biography in this case, I began with my motivation for doing a study of this nature, explaining the significance of having ordinary people from different religious formations and faiths and emphasizing that one of the aims of the study is not to demonize or criticize certain faith communities, but to learn and understand religious beliefs and practices concerning travel from different faith perspectives. The main purpose here was to help a potential participant feel less threatened by my inquiring about their faith and also to help him feel less threatened by field research work as such.

In the interest of cultivating trustworthy relationships, a transparent approach towards potential participants needed to be adopted. Thus the ethical guidelines provided by the UKZN were followed and a letter of consent obtained before an interview was conducted.

The second crucial factor in this phase was an interview schedule with a clear set of questions which guided the interviews. Two approaches were used to attend to the 'raw' data that was sourced through the use of such an interview schedule in the field. In the first instance, the data was recorded as field notes on an A4 180 page notebook. This was done in a jotted form.

⁴⁸ Neuman, 1997, p.359

3.5.3 Phase 3

This last phase involved reflection (the subject of chapter 5 in this study) around the empirical findings. The aim of this was to explore and try to articulate more fully the theologies that emerged from the research. Among the interpretive tools I employed in this phase I will mention only three key ones because the other tools involved general reflection. One of the strategies I used in this phase was adapting Albert Nolan's "Workers and a framework for a theology of work" (1996: p 219), to "Commuters and a framework for a people's theology of the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads". I therefore came up with what I have called – a road travel hermeneutics - an interpretive tool to understand the meanings behind the biblical texts used by my informants with regard to their use of this road.

The first question was this one: Is embarking upon road travel to get to work experienced as a curse or a blessing or both? The second question was something like this: Do the bible texts used by the informants suggest that embarking upon road travel to get to work might also be a curse or a blessing or both? The third question was something like this: How can embarking upon road travel to get to work be changed from being a curse into being a blessing? The fourth question was: How does such redemption of embarking upon road travel to get to work fit into God's redemption?

Another strategy used in this phase as an interpretive tool was Harold Turner's six characteristics of a primal worldview, as quoted in Kwame Bediako (1993). These have already been outlined in the previous chapter. I also used as an interpretive tool in this phase a range of solutions that came up with Allison Howell's informants as regards problem solving solutions to protect themselves from harm in their spiritual journey.⁴⁹ Those problem solving solutions contributed largely in analyzing activities related to the prevention of road accidents.

⁴⁹ See Allison Howell's (1997) work amongst the Kasena of Ghana.

3.6 Assumptions, limitations and ethical considerations

It is generally accepted that studies such as this have certain assumptions and limitations. As far as ethical considerations are concerned Neuman's following observation is important:

The researcher's authority to conduct research, granted by professional communities...the larger society, and [the institution of the researcher's origin] is accompanied by a responsibility to guide, protect, and oversee the interests of people being studied (1997:p.445).

The interests referred to here also include those of the institution under whose name a researcher conducts academic research, in this case the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

3.6.1 Assumptions

The assumptions pertinent to this study therefore, have to do with the following issues:

- The study has been designed and conducted in good faith.
- I paid my own kombi taxi fares for each and every kombi taxi trip during the entire research process.
- I respected the rights and duties of kombi taxi drivers and conductors and thus enabling them to carry out their work in a normal way.
- I never imposed my-self on passengers and other road users during the research process, either by preaching or drawing attention to my-self or forcing everybody to listen to me.
- This study was carried out in a manner that did not in any way undermine the values of the research community, as well as the values of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This means that I never promoted any religious ideas, beliefs and practices during my contact with passengers, kombi taxi operators and their employees because I understood that my task was not to demonize certain religious formations and faiths or their beliefs and practices, but to learn and understand from all members of different religious communities existing within the research study sites.

- I assumed that all the informants were not lying to me – that, each one of them was genuinely telling me what he or she believes to be true and meaningful for their faith.
- I assumed their beliefs to be genuine and that these beliefs constitute a valid theology.

3.6.2 Limitations

The limitations relevant to this study are to do with the following issues:

- It was not possible to canvass an equal number of participants for each and every religious community existing within the Edendale Township. The determining factor in this regard was the willingness of each person canvassed to participate fully in the study. This then resulted in me having to accept the fact that some religious formations and faiths would have more representatives than others.
- There are fewer women than men who participated in the study. This is not consistent with the fact that there are more women headed households today than ever before. Many of these women travel daily on the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads to get to work. More women fall into the category of ‘ordinary’ people of faith than men do – they usually participate in various religious activities under the leadership and guidance of formally or informally trained male theologians because patriarchal tendencies are still more prevalent in the community. This became very clear to me when five women who had initially shown interest in participating in the study later insisted that I interview their pastor, even though I had explained to them that the study was not designed for trained theologians and / or pastors and I also explained the reasons why that decision was taken. The final result was that those potential participants never answered their phones again when I tried to contact them to make appointments for the interviews as they had previously agreed on this.
- A successful completion of an interview involving a willing kombi taxi driver at the relevant taxi ranks in Pietermaritzburg depended on the position of a driver’s taxi in the queue in as far as the ranking system is concerned. I have explained how the ranking system works in one of the previous sections above.

In spite of the above limitations however, the one important factor in all this is that in the end, I was able to build up a reasonable record of a variety of responses of people using the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads.

3.6.3 Ethical considerations

This study was designed and carried out with the commitment to uphold integrity and to take into consideration obligations and demands of the ethics committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as the institution which gave permission for this project to be undertaken, especially with regards to the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality in as far as it is humanly possible, to safeguard the rights of participants. The participants were therefore made aware of the following issues:

- That they were being requested to participate in a research project pertaining to Road Safety issues and theologies of the road.
- That participation was voluntary and that a participant could withdraw from the interview at any point and withdraw his or her consent for the contents of the interview to be used in the research project.
- That the identity of each and every participant will be kept confidential and that a participant's words will be identified only with a code or a disguised name.

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical framework that I used and described my methodology. In the next chapter I will present and discuss my findings.

Chapter 4

Presentation of findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the data emerging out of sixteen (16) field reports. These are the reports which I compiled after each and every week of conducting interviews in the field. The data that is presented come from field reports numbers four (4) to nineteen (19) – sixteen data laden field reports. The first three field reports contain information related to methodological issues in this study – issues which have been dealt with in the previous chapter. An issue of critical importance that needs to be clarified before I proceed is this one: the method I am using in referring to the field reports in relation to the informants' assigned identity, as well as their gender and religion/church affiliations. For example: 4.1 – the first number before a dot (e. g. 4.) represents field report number 4, while the second number after the dot (e. g. 1) represents the first informant interviewed amongst the informants included in field report number 4. These two numbers are then followed by initials such as: KTP for Kombi Taxi Passenger or KTO for Kombi Taxi Operator/owner or KTP/BP for Kombi Taxi Passenger and Bus Passenger (for a person who uses both means of transport in a day respectively) or PCD for Private Car Driver and, KTD for Kombi Taxi Driver. This is followed by (F or M) indicating that the person concerned is either a female or a male. Lastly, the religion/church affiliation of the informant is indicated.

In what follows I will present my findings under three main headings. Firstly what my informants told me about their beliefs concerning the causes of road accidents, secondly what they believed were the remedial actions and solutions to the problem of road accidents, and thirdly what they believed their experiences of road travel taught them spiritually.

4.2 Beliefs about causes of road accidents

My informants' beliefs about the causes of road accidents can be divided into three main categories – those where human beings were the main agents, those in which the main agents were spiritual or supernatural and those where the problems were structural and/or mechanical.

4.2.1 Causes where human beings are the main agents

In this section the issues that are of significant concern to the informants regarding causes of road accidents in the course of road travel were to do with human error, human greed, and human sin.

4.2.1.1 Human error

Human error for my informants is understood as inappropriate or unlawful driver and passenger behaviour which is contrary to road traffic rules and regulations and morality. The informant identified the following cases involving drivers which they feel amount to human error:

Reckless or negligent driving, inconsiderate driving, speeding, overtaking on a wrong side or in an area prohibited to do so, vehicles sliding pass each other with a few centimeters to spare, driving through a red robot, drinking and driving, and use of road unworthy vehicles.⁵⁰

All the instances mentioned above suggest that for the informants human error is understood as failure to obey the road traffic rules and regulations on the part of drivers. In other words, disobedience is a core issue in as far as human error is concerned. The relationship between human error and road accidents is that safety on the road is compromised and thus the lives of other road users are put in great danger.

⁵⁰(8.1 KTP [f] Saint John Apostolic faith Mission: *KwaMasango*; 8.2, 19.4 KTP [f + f] Faith Mission Church; 9.2 KTP [m] Rastafarianism; 9.1 KTP [f] Jehovah's Witnesses; 10.2 KTP/BP, 18.1 KTP [f + m] Anglican Church; 10.3 KTP [m] UNC Lutheran Church; 11.2 KTP, 13.2 [m + f] Zionists: *izayoni* ; 12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church; 12.3 KTP [m] Dutch Reformed Church; 14.1 KTP [f] African Gospel Church; 15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church; 15.3, 18.2 KTP [f + m] Church of the Twelve Apostles: *abaPhostoli*; 16.1 KTP/BP, 19.2 KTP [f + m] African Christian Church; 16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church: *amaNazaretha*; 17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries; 17.4 KTP [m] The Ark of Prophecy: *uMkhumbi*; 18.3, 19.1 KTP [2f] Universal Kingdom of God; and, 19.3 KTP [m] Roman Catholic Church).

Other examples of human error mentioned by the informants are to do with passenger behaviour that is contrary to road traffic rules and regulations and morality. These include “passengers encouraging drivers to speed/praising speeding drivers; passengers asking for space in a kombi taxi already full with other passengers; and an attempt to end one’s life by throwing one-self in front of moving cars during peak hours”.⁵¹

4.2.1.2 Human greed

Human greed in this study refers to excessive longing to make money which consequently leads to safety on the road being compromised. The relationship between human greed and road accidents is that road traffic rules and regulations and ethical considerations are easily ignored in this pursuance of accumulating more income. Cases cited by the informants include the following:

getting more money for each travel trip undertaken appears to be more important than us paying customers; the use of beer or cool-drink empty containers as seats for some passengers; vehicle doors which are partially nonfunctional; unhealthy competition manifested by speeding for the purpose of being the first driver to arrive at the next picking up point for potential passengers; overloading, selfishness, and self centeredness.⁵²

The relationship between human greed and road accidents is that road traffic rules and regulations are grossly undermined. Ethical considerations are also not taken into account and commuters, as well as other road users are put in great danger.

4.2.1.3 Human sin

According to the informants who mentioned human sin as one of the causes of road accidents, two factors seem to constitute human sin on the road for them. The two strands mentioned are witchcraft/sorcery practice – *ukuthwala/ubuthakathi*, and a deliberate flouting of the road traffic rules and regulations. Five informants – all of them drivers, seem to be adamant in believing that witchcraft practice is a sinful act causing road accidents. The first four - three kombi taxi drivers and one private car driver

⁵¹ (13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church; 14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations; and, 17.3 KTP [m] Faith Mission Church)

⁵² (8.2 KTP [f], 17.3 KTD [m] Faith Mission Church; 9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah’s Witnesses; 11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church; 12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church; 12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion; 14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations; 15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church; 16.1 KTP/BP [f] African Christian Church; 17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries; 18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church; 18.3 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God; and, 18.4 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran).

expressed this belief directly to me during interviews. The view of the fifth driver on this matter came to me through a kombi taxi passenger who heard the kombi taxi driver in a kombi taxi she was traveling in expressing the same belief. This is how the beliefs on witchcraft practice as causing road accidents were expressed:

Road accidents are caused by a “dark cloud” – misfortune (*isinyama*) caused by a malevolent competitor within the taxi industry who uses witchcraft to destroy the life of another driver/operator perceived to be more successful in this industry.⁵³ [Again]: Road accidents are caused by the evil intentions of witchcraft practitioners – *izinhloso ezinobusathane zabathakathi*.⁵⁴ [And lastly]: ‘A malevolent driver uses witchcraft to cast a bad spell on another driver perceived to be more successful (a driver who usually manages to have a full load of passengers most of the time). For instance, the target of such witchcraft practice can have the experience of having his safe driving abruptly interrupted by a sudden ‘appearance of a goat or a cow’ out of nowhere, in front of his/her vehicle, and this turn of events may force the driver concerned to crash or collide with other vehicles or an electric pole or something else.’⁵⁵

The second aspect linked to human sin and road travel has to do with the following assertions:

The deliberate use of road unworthy vehicles, drinking and driving and, the use of intoxicating substances usually lead to reckless and inconsiderate driving which in turn put other road users in great danger.⁵⁶ And, a refusal based on Christian grounds, to remove the spirit of a relative killed on the road also makes other road users vulnerable to the risk of experiencing a road accident.⁵⁷

In the first case above there is an understanding suggesting that although drinking and driving and the use of intoxicating substances are matters linked to the breaking of the road traffic rules and regulations, they also ought to be seen as sinful human acts. The use of the word “deliberate” by the informant suggests that such acts are done intentionally by someone who chooses to do the wrong thing instead of doing what the laws of the road demand. Similarly, in the second case, the word “refusal” used by the informant suggests that the person concerned adheres to his/fixed ideas regardless of the appeals from other interested parties.

⁵³ (10.1KTD [m] Presbyterian Church; 14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church)

⁵⁴ (14.2 KTD[m] Christ for All Nations Church; 19.1 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God)

⁵⁵ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

⁵⁶ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

⁵⁷ (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

4.2.2 Causes related to spiritual agency

People using the Edendale Road on a daily basis to get to work also express their concerns about road accidents perceived to be linked to causes related to spiritual agency.

There are neglected wandering spirits of persons killed on the road, either as victims of crime or as casualties in road accidents, and because they have not been buried according to African traditional customary burial procedures, they cause road accidents around the vicinity where they were killed. There is a common tendency of neglecting/failure to perform African traditional rituals such as: *ukubika* – informing one’s own ancestors in the case of acquiring a new or a secondhand vehicle legally, *ukuvala umkhokha* – a traditional ritual meant to prevent violent death of a family member from affecting close relatives of a deceased person, neglecting/failure to occasionally consult with one’s ancestors i.e. to maintain a sustainable close relationship through an incense burning ritual, animal and food sacrifice, lack of consciousness of how one should behave on the road, neglecting to help ancestors who lived a reckless life (*impilo yobuxhwanguxhwangu*) in this world, to have their spirits “purified” through the ritual of incorporating them into the *KwaMasango* faith so that such ancestors do not have a negative/reckless influence on a living relative, especially a driver, witchcraft practice – *ubuthakathi* causing misfortune on the road, the Will of God, angry ancestors and Satanism.⁵⁸

Some informants identified the Will of God as one of the causes of road accidents.

There are road users who do not want to listen to God when he is warning them about the consequences of their unacceptable behaviour on the road. So, God allows road accidents to happen.⁵⁹

Road accidents are a sign that the time for God to take over and rule the world is imminent. Accidents are actually caused by the failure of human beings to relate to each other and the world in the way God had planned from the very beginning.⁶⁰

Road accidents are a sign that other road users have abandoned the ways of God and they do as they please⁶¹

These three accounts of the belief in the will of God suggest that road accidents are in fact manifestations of God’s anger – punishment for rejecting divine will and choosing human will. This is how the three informants who identified Satanism as one of the causes of road accidents presented their accounts of this belief: firstly that “Satanists cause road accidents which kill road travelers so that Satanists can drink the blood of

⁵⁸ (4.1, 5.2 KTO [f], 7.3 KTP [m], 11.2 KTO (m), 12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion; 6.1 KTD [m], 7.1 PCD [m], 16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church: *amaNazaretha*; 7.2 PCD [m] Islamic Religion: Muslim; 8.1 KTP [f] Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission: *KwaMasang*; 9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah’s Witnesses; 11.2 KTP [m], 13.2 KTP [f], 14.4 PCD [m] Zionists: *iZaiyoni*; 12.3 KTP [m] Dutch Reform Church; 14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations; 15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army; 17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries; and, 18.3 KTP [f], 19.1 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God).

⁵⁹ (9.1 KTP [m] Rastafarian Religion)

⁶⁰ (9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah’s Witnesses)

⁶¹ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

road accident victims”⁶². Secondly, “Satanists are evil forces on the road which cause road accidents which result in bad/ horrible/shameful death”⁶³. Thirdly, “Satanists are evil spirits which now and then appear on the road to destroy God’s people”.⁶⁴

4.2.3 Structural, economic and mechanical causes

Five informants raised issues related to the structural, economic, and mechanical aspects in as far as road travel is concerned. However, only one of these informants mentioned matters related to all three aspects. The other four pointed out one or two problems related to one or two of these aspects. I have therefore, decided to present the data in the way that each informant has articulated it. The following is an account of how one of the informants identifies the link between structural, economic and mechanical aspects and the causation of road accidents:

If you look at the hospital – where we are employed, and look at where we live, and the way public transport is organized, you will notice that only a bus service transport is available. All of us who use this service to travel to work come from different parts of *iMbali* Township. Organizing ourselves into groups which can provide full loads of kombi taxi passengers is not feasible. The only alternative would be to be prepared to use at least four kombi taxis for every return trip from home to work and back each and every day. This will mean paying more money for transport and the possibility of arriving late at work due to delays as a result of a lack of direct transport in as far as the use of kombi taxis is concerned. The bus itself is not in a road worthy condition, the threads on some of the tyres are worn out and we are lucky we have not yet had a road accident.⁶⁵

This informant is one of the employees at the Edendale Hospital and is a resident in one of the sections of IMbali Township. All three aspects mentioned above are present in this account; structural, economic and mechanical. The sheer distance travelled, the time it takes to travel and the bad conditions of some of the vehicles increase the chances of road accidents. Vehicles that are mechanically unroadworthy are also more likely to add to congestion and thus more travel time, especially when they break down during peak hours. One informant described the situation as “crazy”.⁶⁶

⁶² (5.1 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church)

⁶³ (15.3 KTP [f] The Church of the Twelve Apostles)

⁶⁴ (17.3 KTP [f] The Will of God Ministries)

⁶⁵ (14.3 KTP [m] Faith Mission Church)

⁶⁶ (16.1 KTP/BP [f] African Christian Church)

4.3 Actions and activities taken to counteract road accidents

Activities related to the prevention of road accidents as articulated by the informants themselves include the use of Christian prayer together with other Christian rituals such as the use of holy water, prayer used along with African traditional rituals, use of African traditional rituals by themselves including consultation with ancestors and the utilization of substances such as traditional herbal medicines – *imithi/izintelezi*, as well as animal sacrifice/offering which also include offering of food and intoxicating and non intoxicating beverages.

4.3.1 Use of Christian Prayer Alone

The informants who clearly indicated that Christian prayer is the most important activity they engage in for the prevention of road accidents said the following:

The only ritual I perform is prayer to God, because the power to protect me on the road rests with God alone.⁶⁷

The only ritual I perform is prayer and nothing else, I pray everywhere to God through Jesus Christ, and prayer gives me the courage to face situations I cannot change and it helps me to focus on the love and goodness of God.⁶⁸

I do not only pray for my own safety, I also pray for all those involved in public transport – owners of buses and taxis, drivers, passengers, and government officials, especially road traffic officials⁶⁹.

I pray for my own safe road usage, for that of my own family members, relatives and friends. I pray everywhere, e.g. on the way to a taxi rank, in a taxi rank, inside a travelling kombi taxi, at work and at home.⁷⁰

Apparently people are so concerned about road accidents that each and every time or moment that avails itself becomes an opportunity to pray for safe road usage. This concern is not unique to passengers; this is shown by this call: “Please pray for this driver” - a message displayed inside one of the kombi taxis⁷¹.

⁶⁷ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

⁶⁸(13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

⁶⁹(14.3 KTP [m] Faith Mission Church)

⁷⁰ 10.3 KTP [m] UNC Lutheran Church, 11.3 KTP (f) & 19.3 KTP [m] Roman Catholic Church, 12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church, 16.3 KTP [f] Anglican Church, 17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries, 17.4 KTP [m] The Ark Church of Prophecy: *uMkhumbi*, 18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church, 18.3 KTP [f] & 19.1 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God, 18.4 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church, and 8.2 KTP [f] & 19.4 KTP [f] Faith mission Church).

⁷¹ (6.1 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

4.3.2 Use of Christian prayer with other rituals

I always pray and do bible reading, especially the prophets, psalms, and I also undertake a lot of reading of other spiritual books.⁷² Prayer follows bible reading and sharing and both these activities help us to understand why we have the problems that we have in our life as road users.⁷³ Some of the rituals I perform in connection with my use of the road include prayer and the use of holy water to sprinkle my vehicle before I drive every morning.⁷⁴ The ritual activities connected with my use of the road are prayer and the wearing of a rosary around my neck.⁷⁵ I pray and mix bathing water with holy water before taking a bath every morning before I travel to work.⁷⁶

4.3.3 Prayer and African traditional rituals

In this section, we have informants who claim to use both Christian prayer and African traditional rituals i.e. both as necessary activities related to the prevention of road accidents, as well as those who said nothing about employing prayer at all. The data for both groups is presented here because the African traditional rituals mentioned in both cases are the same, regardless of whether or not an informant combines Christian prayer with African traditional rituals. Our informants presented us with the following activities - i.e. African traditional rituals, related to the prevention of road accidents: a “thanksgiving feast/ritual – *idili lokubonga*” is explained. It is important to note here that traditional rituals like this one which involves animal sacrifice and as well as dinner/feast offering, including other necessities such as traditional beer, snuff and incense, have to do with consultation with ancestors. This means that one does not just consult with one’s ancestors without at least a burnt offering of incense. This is how an informant (a kombi taxi owner/operator who owns more than four kombi taxis and two family cars) explained the essence of *idili lokubonga* (a thanksgiving feast):

It has become a family tradition that we slaughter and sacrifice a goat for each of our kombi taxis at the end of every year. This is done to give thanks to our ancestors for the protection they have provided during the passing year and also, to ask for the continuation of protection during the coming year. We do the same for the other family cars. The activities pertinent to this ritual essentially include: consultation with ancestors by making use of sweet smelling oblation (incense). Smoke coming from a burning incense is of particular interest when communicating with ancestors; presentation of all that is to be offered – i.e. animal(s) and other necessary offerings, conveying our gratitude to ancestors about what they have done for us and asking them to join us in our celebration of their presence in our family life, once animal(s) have been

⁷² (9.1 KTP [m] Rastafarian Religion)

⁷³ (9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah’s Witnesses)

⁷⁴ (14.4 PCD [m] Faith Healer/Zionist Church)

⁷⁵ (15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church)

⁷⁶ (15.3 KTP [f] Church of the Twelve Apostles)

slaughtered, each vehicle is sprinkled with gall liquid (*ichelwa ngenyongo*) and also with herbal medicines (*izintelezi*) to prevent both natural and unnatural causes of road accidents, because our kombi taxis serve people who adhere to different religious faiths, we do not display any traditional religious symbol inside our kombi taxis; family cars are treated differently – we display gall pouches inflated with air inside them to serve as protective charms; lastly, the next day is a feast day where we celebrate with family members, relatives, neighbours and friends. After the feast, we know that our ancestors are happy with us and that they will continue to protect us when all present had enjoyed them-selves and there was no trouble whatsoever⁷⁷.

Closely related to the activity of “thanksgiving” mentioned above is the ritual known as *ukubika* in isiZulu – i.e. informing one’s ancestors about a recently legally acquired motor vehicle. This is how the informant explained what is involved in this activity which is also related to the prevention of road accidents:

I perform a sweet smelling incense burning ritual, the smoke from the incense must permeate all the parts of the vehicle i.e. both the inside and outside parts. I then inform my ancestors about the vehicle in these words: *nanti ihashi lenu enivumile ukuba ngiligibele* – here is your horse [vehicle] which you have made it possible for me own, I am now asking you to accompany me whenever I am travelling in it. I then slaughter a goat as a gift offering to ancestors. I sprinkle the vehicle with a mixture of goat dung from the entrails, gall liquid and herbal medicines. The gall pouch is then inflated with air, tied with a thin rope and hung/displayed on the steering wheel⁷⁸.

This ritual of *ukubika* is also articulated in a similar manner by another informant.⁷⁹ Another important activity linked to the prevention of road accidents in African Traditional Religion is known as *ukuvala umkhokha* in isiZulu. A better way of understanding what this ritual is all about is to look at the beliefs associated with violent death in African culture. Any violent death, including one caused by a road accident is deemed to be potentially contagious and dangerous for the living relatives of the victim of such death. *Ukuvala umkhokha* – i.e. performing the ritual which is believed to have the effect of preventing violent death from repeatedly and randomly striking at the members of the family of a deceased person is considered very important. This is how the steps involved in the performance of this ritual are explained:

The spirit of a person killed in a road accident for example, must be removed from the scene of the accident and brought home first before it is guided to the grave prepared for the deceased. A branch of the *uMlahlankosi* tree (*carisna anduina*) which has been soaked in herbal medicines (*izintelezi*) for some time before the actual ritual is performed. This branch is used as a “carrier” of the spirit of the deceased person. The spirit is called out and instructed in this way - so and so [name used when the deceased was still alive is mentioned] let us go home where you belong.

⁷⁷ (4.1 KTO [f] Traditional Healer – *Isangoma*, African Traditional Religion)

⁷⁸ (5.2 KTO [f] Traditional Healer – *Isangoma*, African Traditional Religion)

⁷⁹ (11.1 KTO [m] African Traditional Religion)

Similar words are used when the spirit is again moved from home to the grave. At home a hole is dug outside the gate, a red cock is then killed by strangulation [symbolizing the kind of death experienced by the deceased], and buried in the hole together with a knife (preferably an okapi), a bullet and a piece of a vehicle tyre. These are again understood as symbols of violent death experienced by a deceased person. A goat is then slaughtered in order to celebrate the fact that a family spirit has been afforded an opportunity to be united with other family spirits instead of being left wandering on the road⁸⁰.

Sometimes, a different approach is adopted when the ‘presence’ of wandering spirits of people killed on a particular spot on the road is accepted as a communal problem.

Vehicle drivers were willing for some time to part with a few South African white coins as a way of paying a “fine” every time they drive past a certain spot on the road where road accidents had become a common feature. They were doing this on the advice of a traditional healer – *isangoma*, who had divined that road accidents were frequently occurring because of the presence of wandering spirits on that particular part of the road. The payment of the “fine” was a concession meant to appease such troublesome spirits.⁸¹

There is also mention of a ritual known as *ukuziqinisa* – to strengthen oneself against witchcraft attacks (*ubuthakathi*). According to descriptions given by the informants, there seems to be two forms of this ritual. In the first version, the informants are solely concerned with self protection from witchcraft attacks and misfortune. This is a case of what we may call “fighting fire with water”, because a person employs this ritual to protect him-self or her-self and no one is harmed, including the perpetrator of witchcraft attack.

I usually cleanse my body with traditional herbal medicine, because in the road environment only the fittest survive. This ritual helps to ensure that people do not take me for granted, that they treat me with respect. If they do not succeed with their witchcraft attacks, they will leave me alone because they will know that I am not an easy target for *ubuthakathi* – *ngiqinile* – I am ritually strong⁸².

The chances of me being affected by a road accident are very minimal, because *ngiqinile*, – I have been made strong by the use of this ritual and, not a single day passes by without me communicating with God in prayer⁸³.

Two other informants⁸⁴ echo this very same belief.

I use prayer; I sprinkle my vehicle with holy water; and I sometimes also sprinkle it with herbal medicines – *izintelezi*⁸⁵.

⁸⁰ (5.2 KTO [f] Traditional Healer – *Isangoma*, African Traditional Religion)

⁸¹ (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

⁸² (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church)

⁸³ (13.2 KTP [f] Traditional Healer – Zionist Church)

⁸⁴ (14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations; and, 15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army)

⁸⁵ (14.4 PCD [m] Faith Healer – Zionist Church)

The second version of the ritual of *ukuqiniswa* suggests what we may call “protection by vengeance” or “beating a witchcraft attacker at his or her own game”. The informant concerned says: “*sibashaya ngezabo*”.⁸⁶ In other words, a person is strengthened (*ukuqiniswa*) in such a way that any witchcraft attack will in a way simply “bounce back” from the intended target and harm the attacker instead of the attacked. Nine people attested to the fact that they pray to God, consulted ancestors, performed incense burning rituals as a way of inviting ancestors to play an active role in accompanying them on their travels.⁸⁷

Lastly, in this section we also have informants who combine Christian prayer with consultation with ancestors. This consultation includes *ukushisa impepho* (an incense burning ritual), which also involves consultation with ancestors, usually done at *eMsamu* – a sacred dwelling place (a room or a corner inside a house), specifically reserved for family spirits/ancestors and the performance of various traditional rituals.

4.3.4 Consultation with ancestors

Every morning before I travel to work, I burn incense and ask my ancestors to accompany me on my travel trips to work and back. The knowledge that my ancestors are accompanying me helps me to travel free from worry and anxiety⁸⁸.

Protection from the perils on the road depends on a proper consultation with my ancestors, and this in turn leads to freedom from negative effects of improper consultation such as a dark cloud or bad luck – *isinyama*⁸⁹.

Consultation with my ancestors is meant amongst other things, to make them aware about a road travel trip I am about to embark upon, to let my ancestors know about the purpose of the trip, and then to ask them to accompany me and to protect me⁹⁰.

Consultation with ancestors forms the basis of all the other African traditional rituals. It is the foundation for the other rituals in the sense that through it, ancestors are informed of any ritual about to be performed, its purpose and are invited to take part⁹¹.

⁸⁶ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

⁸⁷ (6.1 KTD [m], 7.1 PCD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church; 11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church; 12.3 KTP [m] Dutch Reformed Church; 14.1 KTP [f] African Gospel Church; 16.1 KTP/BP [f], 19.2 KTP [m] African Christian Church; 17.1 KTP [f] Assembly of God; 18.2 KTP [m] The Church of the Twelve Apostles)

⁸⁸ (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

⁸⁹ (4.2 Pedestrian [f] African Traditional Religion)

⁹⁰ (7.3 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion)

⁹¹ (11.1 KTO [m] African Traditional Religion)

4.3.5 The use of biblical texts

Many informants are adherents of the Judeo-Christian religion, so the bible features as the most prominent scripture. Although some of them adhere to African Traditional Religion and even Rastafarian Religion, the use of texts from the bible remains important to them. There is a variety of biblical texts which are used from both Old and New Testaments. I have listed some of these below, using *The New Jerusalem Bible* translation, as well as *The African Bible: Biblical Text of the New American Bible*.

4.3.5.1 Old Testament Texts

The following texts were identified by my informants as ones that had meaning for them, and gave them comfort and revelation. Significantly they were not able to offer any particular interpretation of these texts. They could have been recited as a sort of mantra or may have had some kind of psychological effect on them. Certainly many of them are comforting in nature, reinforcing some fundamental religious truths about the sovereignty, goodness, kindness, and love of the Almighty, the wickedness of human beings, salvation, and hope.

Genesis 6:5, 6:

The Lord God saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that his heart contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long. The Lord God regretted having made human beings on earth⁹².

Deuteronomy 4:7:

What great nation is there that has a god so near as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?⁹³

Psalm 14:1, 2:

Fools say in their hearts, there is no God". Their deeds are loathsome and corrupt; not one does what is right. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the human race, to see if even one is wise, if even one seeks God.⁹⁴

⁹² (17.4 KTP [m] The Ark of Prophecy Church – *umKhumbi*)

⁹³ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

⁹⁴ (15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church)

Psalm 20:7:

Some rely on chariots, others on horses, but we on the name of the Lord our God⁹⁵.

Psalm 23: 1-6:

The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack. In green pastures you let me graze to safe waters you lead me, and you restore my strength. You guide me along the right path for the sake of your name. Even when I walk through a dark valley I fear no harm, for you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage.⁹⁶

Psalm 34: 4:

I sought the Lord, and he answered me, he delivered me from all my fears⁹⁷.

Psalm 43: 5:

Why are you cast down my soul, why groan within me, hope in God.

Isaiah 38: 20:

The Lord will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our life, at the house of the Lord.

Psalm 54: 1, 9:

O God save me by your name, God's name is good.

Often used in combination with Psalm 119: 55:

I think of your name and I keep your law.⁹⁸

Ezekiel 18: 32:

I take no pleasure in the death of anyone declares the Lord Yahweh, so repent and live.

⁹⁵ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

⁹⁶ (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church; 14.1 KTP [f] African Gospel Church; 17.1 KTP [f] Assembly of God; 19.2 KTP [m] African Christian Church)

⁹⁷ (12.3 KTP [m] Dutch Reformed Church)

⁹⁸ (8.2 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church)

Used in combination with Psalm 94: 19:

When anxiety increases in my heart, your consolation calms my soul⁹⁹.

Psalm 127:

O, blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.¹⁰⁰

Psalm 138: 7 is utilized:

Though I walk in the mist of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.¹⁰¹

2Chronicles 20: 3, 5, 6, 9, 12:

Jehoshaphat was frightened and he hastened to consult the Lord... He stood in the house of the Lord and said: Lord, God of our fathers...In your hand is power and might, and no one can withstand you. When evil comes upon us, the sword of judgement...we will stand before you, and, we will cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save! O our God... we are powerless...we are at a loss what to do hence our eyes are turned towards you.¹⁰²

Daniel 3: 95, 96:

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo who sent his angels to deliver the servants that trusted in him... for there is no other God who can rescue like this¹⁰³.

Wisdom 14: 1-5:

Someone else, taking ship to cross the wild waves...but your providence, father; is what steers it; you having opened a pathway even through the sea and a safe way over the waves, showing that you can save, whatever happens.¹⁰⁴

Isaiah 26: 3:

A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace; for its trust in you.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ (8.3 & 9.1 KTP [m] Rastafarian Religion)

¹⁰⁰ 16.3 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

¹⁰¹ (14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations Church)

¹⁰² (15.3 KTP [f] The Church of the Twelve Apostles – *abaPhostoli*)

¹⁰³ (14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church)

¹⁰⁴ (12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church)

¹⁰⁵ 16.1 KTP/BP [f] African Christian Church)

Isaiah 28:16

Everyone who believes in God will not be put in shame.

Joel 2: 32

All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.¹⁰⁶

Isaiah 25: 8

He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the Lord has spoken.

Zephaniah 2: 3:

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law, seek justice, seek humility, perhaps you may be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger .

4.3.5.2 New Testament Texts

Matthew 5: 21, 22:

You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill, and whoever kills will be liable to judgement. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement...¹⁰⁷

Matthew 7: 7, 8:

Ask and it will be given to you, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened.¹⁰⁸

Matthew 11: 28-30:

Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes my yoke is easy and my burden is light.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ (13.2 KTP [f] Zionist Church)

¹⁰⁷ (18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church)

¹⁰⁸ (17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries)

¹⁰⁹ (19.1 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God)

Luke 12: 32:

There is no need to be afraid because it has pleased God to give you the Kingdom.

And also Mark 11: 24:

I tell you therefore, everything you ask and pray for, believe that you have it already and it will be yours¹¹⁰.

John 3: 16, 17:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him¹¹¹.

Romans 4: 13-17:

It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes from faith....For the law produces wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation...¹¹²

Romans 15: 13:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may overflow with, hope.¹¹³

Romans 13: 11-14:

Further, there is this, realize what time it is, that it is now high time to be awakened from sleep, for now your salvation is nearer than when you believed. The night is far gone, the day is near. So, then let us put away the works of darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the weapons of light. Let us walk in loveliness of life, as those who walk in the day, let us not walk in revelry or drunkenness, in immorality and in shamelessness, in contention and in strife. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a man puts on a garment and stop living a life in which your first thought is to gratify the desires of Christ-less human nature.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ (10.2 KTP/BP [f] Anglican Church)

¹¹¹ (19.3 KTP [m] Roman Catholic Church)

¹¹² (13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

¹¹³ (18.2 KTP [m] The Church of the Twelve Apostles)

¹¹⁴ (14.3 KTP [m] Faith Mission Church; 18.4 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

1Peter 5: 8, 9:

Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him strong in faith.¹¹⁵

2Timothy 2:19:

The Lord knows those who are his own.¹¹⁶

2Timothy 3: 1-5:

You may be quite sure that in the last days there will be some difficult times. People will be self-centred and avaricious, boastful, arrogant and rude, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, heartless and intractable, they will be slanderers, profligates, savages and enemies of everything that is good. They will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, preferring their own pleasure to God. They will keep up the outward appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it. Keep away from people like that.¹¹⁷

4.4 The Didactic role of road travel

My informants were quite clear that in spite of the dangers of road travel it provided a learning opportunity about faith and life – from spiritual lessons, to personal morality and ethical considerations such as introspection and need for personal change and transformation as well as broader theological and philosophical issues. Below, I outline what I learned.

4.4.1 What road travel teaches about life

One of the most important lessons that came out is that road travel plays a crucial role in teaching road users to have concern and consideration for other road users.

I do not only pray for myself and those dear to me, but I also pray for other road users as well, including those who sometimes who put our lives in danger by exposing us to unnecessary road accidents.¹¹⁸

The significance of this concern for others is further nuanced by a message displayed inside a kombi taxi driven by one of the informants in this study, calling on all passengers

¹¹⁵ (11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church; 17.3 KTD [m] & 19.4 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church; 18.3 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God)

¹¹⁶ (15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army)

¹¹⁷ (9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah's Witnesses)

¹¹⁸ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

to “Please pray for this driver”.¹¹⁹ This sentiment is also echoed by others. Three of them say “I also pray for all the other road users”¹²⁰.

One of the three informants also raises the issue of claiming one’s rights.

I have learned that as a Christian, the idea of insisting on one’s rights by other passengers is driven by a selfish motive because other people’s rights are usually not taken into account. In other words, insisting on my own rights may impinge on the rights of others¹²¹.

Concern and consideration for others is furthermore enhanced by an attitude of tolerance towards others coupled with a willingness to be a role model for good behaviour on the road.

Some of us need to show tolerance at all times so that those road users who are stubbornly intolerant may learn from us¹²².

Other positive life lessons associated with tolerance are reflected in the following statement:

Strength and courage to persevere, to remain calm and to focus on the most important reason for my traveling, – teaching in one of the most disadvantaged areas while at the same time ensuring my own survival.¹²³

This informant is a resident of the Edendale Township, her travel time (a single trip to school) is almost two hours every working day and the return trip is the same. This area is located far away from many social and economic services. The mode of transport that is affordable for most people is by bus. But it takes more travel time to get to places like the Edendale Hospital and even more to get to work in Pietermaritzburg. Travel time in this case involves walking long distances to the main road in order to catch a bus for most residents. This in turn means that for the people of this area, the level of vulnerability to the dangers related to road travel is very high.¹²⁴

Another lesson involved the kind of ultimate questions that everyone asks in life but do not have the opportunity to do so. “Who am I?” asked one person, “Where do I come

¹¹⁹ (6.2 KTD [m] Universal Kingdom of God)

¹²⁰ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church; 11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church; 18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church)

¹²¹ (18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church)

¹²² (14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church)

¹²³ (16.1 KTP/BP [f] African Christian Church)

¹²⁴ (8.2 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church)

from?” What is my relationship with those around me as well as with those through whom I came into this world?”¹²⁵ Road travel also affords one of the informants an opportunity to learn about love, respect, repentance and transformation.

Stubborn road users learn to change their bad behaviour because of people like me who constantly pray for them, show respect for our work, respect for ourselves and respect for others i.e. we show them love.¹²⁶

For another informant, road travel teaches about community issues such as the need to work together to overcome differences.

Vehicle drivers acting on the advice of a traditional healer, were willing to appease ancestral spirits by dropping a few white coins, each time they passed by a part of the road where the occurrence of road accidents had become a common feature.¹²⁷

For another informant it is a case of a personal issue such as the need to transcend familiar religious beliefs and practices to overcome life’s problems.

Suddenly and within a short space of time, my life was in a mess. One of my work colleagues suggested that I go and see a faith healer – *uMihandazi*, who allegedly had helped a lot of people who had experienced misfortune similar to mine in their lives, including being involved in a road accident.¹²⁸

We are also presented with a perspective which suggests that when life is at risk or threatened by the possibility of road accidents combining rituals from different faiths is necessary because such rituals can complement each other. The informant concerned in this case, says:

I see no reason why I should not use both Christian prayer as well as an African ritual to strengthen myself (*ukuziqiniswa*), in order to protect myself and my passengers from *ubuthakathi* – witchcraft attacks, by devious and jealous people.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

¹²⁶ (18.3 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God)

¹²⁷ (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

¹²⁸ 15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army)

¹²⁹ (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church)

Road travel further teaches about the need to come to terms with suffering and to overcome the temptation to use the road to commit suicide. This is articulated by one of the informants in this way:

I could not continue with my plan of killing myself by throwing myself in front of speeding kombi taxis / or buses during that afternoon¹³⁰.

Lastly, road travel teaches that road users with good behaviour are in fact involved in a mission/calling to inspire others to adopt a lifestyle that can lead to safe road usage. This is how one of the informants has said about this aspect:

Road travel provides an opportunity for considerate drivers who have respect for their work and other road users to be instruments of protection on the road¹³¹.

Another informant suggests that such road users are “called” to inspire others to adopt good behaviour:

I believe it is possible for me to influence others to do, good on the road by making sure that I myself show acceptable behaviour.¹³²

And once again, it is suggested that well behaved drivers are “called” to drive responsibly.

Those of us in our church who have the task of transporting members of the public contribute to the safety of commuters by being examples of good to other drivers¹³³.

4.4.2 Road travel teaches about faith

Road travel helps in deepening the faith.

I have no doubt that using the Edendale Road often strengthens my faith because it helps me to trust in God and to have confidence that the God I believe in cares for me and is always ready to protect me.¹³⁴

The words “trust” and “confidence” suggest a positive faith; while, the words “care” and “protect” give the impression that such positive faith is beneficial to the life of the informant concerned. For some of the informants, there is no doubt that their faith in God

¹³⁰ (13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

¹³¹ (17.2 KTD [m] Will of God Ministries)

¹³² (17.3 KTD [m] Faith Mission Church)

¹³³ (6.1 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

¹³⁴ (8.1 KTP [m] Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission – KwaMasango)

is strengthened.¹³⁵ This leads to personal empowerment. “I am able to cope” said one person, “with the worry of the possibility of being involved in a road accident”¹³⁶.

Road travel also provides an opportunity for God to show his love, mercy and grace¹³⁷ and the working of “God’s miraculous power”¹³⁸. This experience seems to be reinforced by the idea of total dependence on God expressed as follows: “I am usually troubled by an awareness of how vulnerable and powerless I am during travel trips”¹³⁹. This seems to be especially true in the times when “I do not have a choice but to travel in a kombi taxi that is available at any given time, believing that such a choice is not mine but God’s choice for me.”¹⁴⁰

It is also suggested that road travel provides the informants with the opportunity for reflection about various spiritual matters. The following responses might give us a clue with regard to what people are actually saying. The first informant says that road travel teaches her to reflect about “God’s plan of salvation”¹⁴¹. The second informant on the other hand says, “I reflect about what is happening around me”¹⁴². The third informant says road travel provides her with an opportunity to see “the presence of God in a vigilant driver”¹⁴³. This person also said that road travel teaches about concern for the repentance of others. “I usually pray” she says, “that reckless drivers may see the light and change from their bad driving behaviour and start driving with care”¹⁴⁴.

For another group of informants road travel teaches not only about faith in God but also about faith in other spiritual powers and forces. One of them says, “I need powers beyond this world”, including my own ancestors to be able to survive on the road”¹⁴⁵.

¹³⁵ (8.2 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church; 10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church; 10.3 KTP [m] UNC Lutheran Church; 11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church; 12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church; 13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church; 14.2 KTD [m] Christ For All Nations; and, 17.1 KTP [f] Assembly of God).

¹³⁶ (8.2 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church)

¹³⁷ (6.3 KTO [m] Roman Catholic Church; 10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church; 13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

¹³⁸ (10.3 KTP [m] U N C Lutheran)

¹³⁹ (11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church)

¹⁴⁰ (12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church)

¹⁴¹ (9.2 KTP [F] Jehovah’s Witnesses)

¹⁴² (17.2 KTP [f] Assembly of God)

¹⁴³ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

¹⁴⁴ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

¹⁴⁵ (9.1 KTP [m] KTP Rastafarian Religion)

Another one says “I see no reason why I should not use both Christian prayer and African herbal medicines in order to protect myself and my passengers from witchcraft attacks by devious and jealous people”.¹⁴⁶ Another in this group says “The reality of problems associated with road travel compels me to remain constantly in touch with both God and my ancestors”.¹⁴⁷ Three other people supported this view.¹⁴⁸

4.5 Conclusion

While the interview questions were not directly about what my informants believed about the causes and cures of road accidents as such their responses focused quite strongly on these issues. Significantly, their understanding of these things, were oriented towards spiritual and human causes rather than material ones. While material factors such as distances that had to be traveled, time that had to be spent on the road, and the fact of unroadworthy vehicles played a part, in their assessment these were secondary to issues such as sin, selfishness, jealousy, and witchcraft. This indicates that the world appears to my informants as profoundly spiritual and that it needs to be understood as such. This will be picked up again in this study and further unpacked.

But three other things also emerged when the data was presented. Firstly, that my informants saw nothing wrong with mixing elements of ancestral religion with their Christian faith; secondly, the central role of biblical texts in their faith; and thirdly, the strongly didactic role that road travel played in their faith, indicating a fairly sophisticated level of theological reflection on their behalf. They were not concerned, in other words, with simple physical survival. They were also concerned that their lives would be further enriched and improved through their faith. The road, in other words, was indeed producing a genuine theology that included the elements of spiritual explanation, a theory of salvation (theologically understood as soteriology) as well as an ethical dimension. All this is indicative of a theology of the road in the making, which will be explored in further chapters.

¹⁴⁶ (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church)

¹⁴⁷ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

¹⁴⁸ (14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church, 15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army, and 16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

Chapter 5

Data analysis and interpretation

5.1 Introduction

Investigating the theologies of the road in an African township has involved offering the informants the opportunity to reflect on matters of life and death that impact on them in a broad sense, and especially about religious matters – popular beliefs about God, prayer, the *Bible*, the divine, ancestors and the supernatural, ethical and non-ethical behaviour, how we should behave towards others, the meaning of culture and tradition, as well as the spiritual world. The importance of this was emphasized when Edendale Road users were being canvassed to participate in this research project, and once more during the interview process. Everything else that I say in terms of the analysis and interpretation of the data related to all the sections underneath, need to be seen in the light of what the people themselves think, believe, and have said about road travel and what it means to their faith.

I will begin this chapter with an analysis and interpretation of the data related to those causes of road accidents where human beings are the main agents. I will set about this task by firstly, interrogating in some detail the data linked to each of the three aspects of this heading namely: human error, human greed and human sin. The key questions that will serve as a basis for the discussion here include the following:

- What is it that according to the informants themselves constitutes human error, or human greed, or human sin?
- How would I further define each of these categories?
- What is the relationship between human sin, for example, and road accidents?

These and other relevant questions are more likely to give an indication of the theologies (regarding the concept of sin), which are existing amongst the commuting road travelers in Edendale.

The analysis and interpretation will then move to the data related to those perceived causes of road accidents linked to spiritual/religious agency. This will involve issues such as the role of ancestors in the causation of road accidents with special reference to certain African traditional religious beliefs and practices, Satanism and the will of God. I will then do an analysis and interpretation of causes related to the structural aspect, that is, the fact that Edendale is an apartheid creation – a black township that is located far away from the city centre and other places of work, which in turn involves the need for more time spent on travelling. After this, I will turn to the causes of road accidents related to the economic aspect which is tied up with the fact that jobs are usually located far from home and therefore the need to travel to survive. I will conclude this section with an analysis of causes of road accidents linked to the mechanical aspect – this means literally, the state of vehicles themselves.

After this, I will do an analysis and interpretation of the data related to activities associated with the prevention of road accidents. These activities include prayer, consultation with ancestors and other related African traditional rituals. The concern in the analysis which will follow this is to do with the use of specific sacred texts. The intention is to determine the ways (based on those texts) in which the informants articulate their experience of road travel. This is necessitated by the fact that many of the informants in this research project are adherents to the Judeo-Christian religion and the *Bible* features as the most prominent sacred text. Important questions in this regard include the following:

- Which texts are used?
- Why are they used?
- How are they used?
- Is the Bible used by both practitioners of Orthodox Christianity and African Independent Christianity (for example, followers of Isaiah Shembe and followers of John Masango), as well as adherents to African Traditional Religion?

- What is the degree to which the Bible is used by orthodox adherents to the Christian faith as opposed to the followers of African Independent Christianity and / or followers of African Traditional Religion?

I will follow this up by doing an analysis and interpretation of the data related to the didactic role that road travel plays in the lives of commuting believers. There are numerous references from many informants to the way road travel teaches them about faith and about life. It is also apparent from the data that road travel brings out both the best and the worst in people, that is, both the virtues and vices – benevolent as well as malevolent behaviour. In the last section, I will do an analysis of other related issues. These include issues such as the tension between modernity and African religious/customary tradition, syncretism (the overlap and combination of different faiths) and “veneration” as opposed to “worship” of ancestors. The analysis and interpretation of data begins in earnest in the next sections. I will begin with data related to those causes of road accidents where human beings are the main agents.

5.2 Causes where human beings are the main agents

The word “human” has been used by the informants themselves before each of the following words - error, greed and sin. It would appear that this is meant to highlight the idea that any of the above three acts can only be attributed to human beings. There is one important thing to be noted about such a choice. It seems to be calling into question an existing perception amongst some people that African Traditional Religion does not promote personal or moral responsibility, that is, that African Traditional Religion is more about forces in the universe that control events that take place and that need simply to be manipulated through ritual. This raises the question whether practitioners of ATR are aware of the dimension of personal responsibility. In other words, whether the blame (for a road accident for example), must be laid entirely at the feet of unseen forces or whether safe road use also involves responsible behaviour on the part of all road users, whether every road user is personally responsible for his or her own safety on the road, as well as for the safety of other road users. In my analysis and interpretation of the data linked to human error, human greed and human sin below, I seek to demonstrate that there are responses from the informants who adhere to both African Traditional Religion

and Christian Religion at the same time, as well as those who adhere to African Traditional Religion, which suggest a clear understanding of the notion of personal responsibility. I now turn to analysis and interpretation of the data related to human error.

5.2.1 Human error

Human error as a causal factor in road accidents frequently emerged during this research. Behaviour linked to human error include: reckless or negligent driving, inconsiderate driving, overtaking on the side of the road that is prohibited to do so, vehicles sliding past each other with a few centimeters to spare, driving through a red robot, drinking and driving, passengers encouraging drivers to speed, a passenger encouraging overloading by asking for a space in a kombi taxi already full with passengers and a passenger wishing to commit suicide takes steps to throw herself in front of moving vehicles during peak hours. A close look at all these dangerous actions reveals that they are attributed to both drivers and passengers. One of the informants had this to say about the existence of human error on the Edendale Road:

...kombi taxis slide past each other on a daily basis with only a few centimeters to spare. We as passengers are faced with the possibility of an unnecessary road accident happening almost all the time.¹⁴⁹

Another informant also mentioned that: “Some of the drivers on this or any other road behave as if a road belongs to them only. They do not consider other road users at all”.¹⁵⁰

This sentiment was expressed in detail by another informant in this way:

The other day I was in a kombi taxi travelling back home after work. There were three or so cars in front of our kombi when we the robot turned red. The driver of our kombi suddenly decided to move past the cars in front and drove through the red robot. That kind of behaviour is not good for us passengers. But what can we do because even shouts of asking the driver to slow down and ‘we are not in a hurry’ in this case; fell on deaf ears. We were really lucky not to have experienced a road accident that day. Of course not all the kombi taxi drivers are like this, but having an inconsiderate driver even once in a while, sometimes makes travelling on the road very much unbearable.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ (14.1 KTP [f] African Gospel Church)

¹⁵⁰ (9.2 KTP [m] Rastafarian Religion)

¹⁵¹ (17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries)

In listening to the above voices of concern from the informants, one gets a sense that the stated existence of human error in the course of road travel suggests lack of respect for life, lack of respect for other people, lack of respect for property (especially motor vehicles), and lack of respect for societal norms and values – in this case, the road traffic rules and regulations. In other words, moral and physical issues are easily flouted because the need for moral or personal responsibility is not taken seriously.

A quantitative appraisal of the informants who give credence to moral and physical factors in this section, that is, in terms of the informants' religious affiliation reveals that eleven informants (about 22%), adhere to African Independent Churches, seven (about 14%) are members of mainline Christian churches, six (about 12%) belong to Christian churches linked to the “saved” experience and two (about 4%) adhere to a Christian sect (the Jehovah's Witnesses) and the Rastafarian religion respectively. This means that twenty six (about 52%) of all the road users who participated in this study have identified human error as one of the causes of road accidents. Twelve (about 24%) of these informants adhere to both African Traditional Religion and Christian Religion at the same time. This suggests that there is an alternative view to the one mentioned above about personal responsibility not being taken seriously by practitioners of African Traditional Religion. It would appear that such an alternative view is in line with the following views put forward by Cohen and Preston who have stated that:

A driver is someone who has been given rudimentary knowledge of operating the vehicle he or she is permitted to drive. Common sense dictates that such a driver has a responsibility to go beyond such rudimentary knowledge. He or she is expected not only to know how to functionally operate and manipulate a vehicle, but is also expected to have at least some elementary knowledge of his or her own mental and emotional “engine”, that is, how she or himself functions in terms of vigilance and communication in a continuously changing road traffic context¹⁵².

Clearly, the percentage (24%) mentioned above involving the number of the informants who adhere to ATR cannot be used to make a strong case for the existence of the abovementioned alternative view with regard to the situation on the roads throughout South Africa. However, it is also not easy to simply ignore the fact that some of the informants seem to be convinced that personal responsibility is a very important part of

¹⁵² See Cohen John and Preston Barbara, 1968, *Causes and Prevention of Road Accidents*, London: Faber and Faber, p.29.

the African heritage or African way of life. I will now turn to the analysis and interpretation of the data related to human greed.

5.2.2 Human greed

The issue of human greed introduces the notion of morality into the discussion. Thirteen (about 26%) of all the informants in this study have identified human greed as one of the causes of road accidents. Arguably, these informants are raising the issue of the proliferation of immoral behaviour in the course of each road travel trip. This is suggested by the idea that getting more money in each road travel trip is given priority over the safety needs of passengers. The informants support this way of thinking by pointing to speeding and overloading as some of the common manifestations of greed inspired behaviour. This suggests that the informants appear to be aware that self-interest comes before any ethical consideration on the part of drivers. This is how one of the informants (a kombi taxi driver), expresses his understanding of the existence of human greed on the Ededale Road:

Looking at road accidents from the point of view of faith, I can say that one of the words which explain the problem of road accidents is selfishness. Some of us road users are so selfish that we either do not think about the consequences of our unbecoming actions or we simply do not care, as long as we get what we want – money in particular.¹⁵³

A quantitative assessment of the informants who have identified human greed as one of the causes of road accidents reveals the following: five (about 10%) of the informants are people who belong to both Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, four (about 8%) adhere to Mainline Christian churches, two (about 4%) are members of African Independent Churches, one (about 2%) is a member of a Christian sect and finally, and 1 informant (about 2%) is an adherent to African Traditional Religion. The picture that comes out of the above assessment suggests that human greed (a universal religious matter) is a concern in all the religious formations or groups represented in this study.

In *isiZulu*, a greedy person is referred to as *ugombela kwesakhe* – that is, an avaricious person who would casually and deliberately disregard the needs of other people at any given moment without any hesitation. I now turn to the analysis and interpretation of the

¹⁵³ (17.3 KTD [m] Faith Mission Church)

data related to what the informants have referred to as human sin in the course of road travel.

5.2.3 Human sin

The issue of human sin brings together spiritual, material, as well as moral causes of road accidents into the discussion. For instance, six informants¹⁵⁴ identify sorcery (*ubuthakathi*) and witchcraft (*ukuthwala*)¹⁵⁵, as well as neglected spirits on the road as some of the causes of road accidents. This is how one of the informants in this section expands the existence on human sin on the road:

The taxi industry is a very competitive industry. Many people in this industry accept competitiveness as a normal way of doing business. There are however; a few who will do anything to be the only ones who are successful – they will want to take passengers who do not belong to them (we normally work on a first come first served basis), they will swear and curse because they do not want to be surpassed, they will even use black magic and cast bad spells on those they regard as being more successful than them. Such bad spells can make someone targeted to cause a road accident. For instance, I can suddenly see a goat or a cow in front of me from out of nowhere, while I am driving. When I try to avoid hitting the animal in front of me, I can crash on another car or a pole or something else.¹⁵⁶

150 (10.1KTD [m] Presbyterian Church; 14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church; 14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations; 19.1 KTP [f] The Universal Kingdom of God Church; 16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church; and, 12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

151 In the culture of *amaZulu* people, there is a clear distinction between what is referred to as witchcraft and sorcery by anthropologists and other scholars. The two words in *isiZulu* language used to refer to the two phenomena respectively are: *ukuthwala* (witchcraft) and *ubuthakathi* (sorcery). A Sorcerer (*umThakathi*) therefore, is someone who has deliberately chosen to approach an expert sorcerer – someone versed in sorcery (*ubuthakathi*), to buy harmful traditional medicine in order to use it (in the manner prescribed by an expert), against another person. In general, the motive is usually domestic related tensions and jealousies. However, in the case of people within the kombi taxi industry, the motive would be work related and jealousies. The problem here can be understood as also a moral one (beside the fact that the cause of a road accident would be seen as spiritual), because it involves volition – the deliberate exercise of the individual will to gain mystical power for the purposes of harming a particular person. It is characterized by full knowledge of sinful / evil intentions. A diviner (*isanusi*) and / or a medicine woman/man (*umlaphi wendabuko*), is believed to be able to identify the culprit and to cure the problem respectively. Sometimes one person can do both. *Ukuthwala* (witchcraft or bad magic) also involves a malevolent person who has chosen to approach a relevant expert in this field. But the harming or killing is random – it could involve people who are known or people not known to a witchcraft practitioner or even both. Usually, human body parts are the main objects and they are needed from targeted individuals. These are then mixed with other harmful traditional medicines (*imithi emibi*), to create mystical power that will make the possessor of such power invisible – to magically change him-self or her-self into a spirit like being at night so that people in general cannot see or identify the attacker. *Ukuthwala* (witchcraft) is usually attributed to greedy persons, that is, those whose intentions are to seek economic (financial) possessions/power at all cost, even at the cost of harming their own family members. See Mbiti, J. S., 1991, 2nd edition: *Introduction to African Religion*, Oxford: Heinemann, p.168ff. See also Magesa Laurenti, 1997: *African Religion: the moral traditions of abundant life*, Maryknol, NY: Orbis Books, p.197ff.

¹⁵⁶ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

At the same time, one of the six informants mentioned above says that;

It is the neglected spirits of people who have died on the road which cause road accidents. Such spirits cause havoc on the road because of the refusal of Christian relatives to perform rituals related to African traditional burial procedures.¹⁵⁷

This suggests that there are in fact two related causes of road accidents in this case – a spiritual cause in the form of a neglected spirit causing havoc on the road and a moral factor at play, that is, the tendency of refusing to remove the spirit of a relative killed on the road. Such neglect can also be considered as a moral issue in spite of its religious justification, because it puts all road users at the risk of experiencing a road accident. What is also suggested in this case is that there is tension between Christian religious burial beliefs and practices and African traditional religious burial beliefs and practices.

Similarly, another informant in this section also echoes the same sentiment when he identifies human sin with what he refers to as “a deliberate use of a vehicle that is not road worthy”¹⁵⁸. Once again, in this case it would appear that there are also two causes in one, that is, a material cause (a vehicle that is not road worthy), and a moral cause arising from a deliberate use of such a vehicle. Another way of understanding the significance of what the two cases above represent could be by looking at the meaning of morality and ethics in the African context, as put forward by Magesa who has stated that:

...morality and ethics refer to thoughts, words, attitudes, and actual behaviour that promote the force of life. Conversely, when we speak of immorality and destruction, the reference is to those thoughts and attitudes – and, of course, people and other elements of creation – that act against the life force and eventually destroy life itself. The more visible and immediately experiential aspects of the diminishment and destruction of life are wrongdoing (wrong actions), illness and witchcraft. ...wrongdoing relate to the contravention of specific codes of community expectations,....To threaten in any way to break any of the community codes of behaviour, which are in fact moral codes, endangers life, is bad, wrong or “sinful”¹⁵⁹.

The above quote is used by Magesa as an introduction to chapter five of his book where he talks about what he calls “The Enemies of Life”. All the things that have been mentioned by the informants above under the category - human sin, fit in well with Magesa’s articulation of morality and ethics above.

¹⁵⁷ (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

¹⁵⁸ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

¹⁵⁹ Magesa Laurenti, 1997, *African Religion: the moral traditions of abundant life*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, p.161.

A quantitative appraisal of the informants in this section reveals that seven (about 14%) of them are giving credence to human sin as a causal factor in road accidents. Four (about 8%) - adhere to African Independent Churches, one (about 2%) - belongs to African Traditional Religion, and two (about 4%) - come from both orthodox Christianity and a “born again” experience Christian church respectively. The majority of the informants in this section, that is, five in all (about 10%) - is made up of people from both African Independent Churches and African Traditional Religion. It is however, fascinating to see that the one member who adheres to orthodox Christianity is on the side of the latter group in terms of believing in an “enchanted” universe that is full of mystical powers – for example, witchcraft and / or sorcery – (*ukuthwala / ubuthakathi*), including the existence of bothersome spirits. The reality of the existence of such bothersome and dangerous spirits in most areas of African life (road travel life included) is also supported by Mbiti’s¹⁶⁰ assertion that:

... there [are] spirits that cause misfortune, sickness, and even death, [and they] may be used to do these things by human beings who have the power to do so, most often witches, sorcerers, or bad magicians. Thus, it is really people who use these spirits to do harm to their fellow human beings¹⁶¹.

However, I need to exercise some caution here, for the existence of some bothersome spirits on the road does not necessarily mean that all ancestral spirits are simply vindictive towards people including road users and that they are therefore, un-human or subhuman or antihuman. According to Lugg,

...family spirits are the mainstay of family life, and their aid is sought to meet trouble, the Zulu [*umZulu*] does everything to live in the closest association with them and to maintain their goodwill (Lugg, 1975:p.6).

It would therefore appear that even with those family spirits that are allegedly considered to be bothersome (for one reason or another), people who believe in the reality of the

¹⁶⁰ Of course, Mbiti here is not referring to road accidents. He is simply referring to beliefs related to the existence of various spirits in African Religion, as well as answering this question: what do spirits do to people? And Mbiti is simply saying that: “the spirits can do both good and evil to people, just as people do both good and evil to their fellow human beings”. But what is most relevant for the above discussion here is reference by Mbiti to the idea that spirits can also be used by human beings as “tools” to harm other human beings, 1991:pp. 79-80.

¹⁶¹ See Mbiti, John S., 1991, p.80.

existence of such ancestral spirits and in their function as bulwarks of African family life, that is, practitioners of African traditional religious beliefs and practices, do not seem to see them as subhuman – otherwise, they would not be insisting that such spirits need to be appeased. Human beings in general are not usually keen to make peace even with another human person whom they consider as subhuman. People usually make peace when they assume that they will benefit something from a peace deal. Hence, the determination to “do everything to live in closest association with one’s own ancestors and to maintain their goodwill” alluded to by Lugg¹⁶² above. John Mbiti has coined this seemingly paradoxical phrase – the “Living – Dead”,¹⁶³ and he qualifies this by stating that to refer to the ancestors as the living - dead “...indicates also that the departed is not really dead: he [or she] is a living – dead, and can be contacted, invited back and drawn into human circles” (1990:p.148). Mbiti goes on to talk about the recently departed and states that:

The living - dead are still ‘people’, and...because they are still ‘people’, the living – dead are therefore the closest link between men [and women] and God: they know the needs of human beings, they have recently been here with them, and at the same time they have full access to the channels of communication with God directly or...indirectly through their own forebears (Mbiti, 1990:p.82).

This suggests that human sin is essentially an offence against both God and the ancestors. This seems to be one of the main reasons why some of the informants in this study have put forward a number of rituals they say they use to help them make peace with their own ancestors and also to counter the destructive effects of human sin in the course of road travel. Arguably, that is why some of them are also concerned about some people who allegedly “use” Christianity as an “excuse” not to perform rituals related to ATR as mentioned above – an “excuse” whose effect also allegedly contributes in the causation of road accidents.

5.2.4 Issues and concerns related to human agency

Whether the informants are expressing their concerns about human error, or human greed, or human sin as causes of road accidents, or they are simply expressing concerns about all three put together, the important message that seems to be put across is that

¹⁶² See Lugg, H. C., *Life under a Zulu Shield*, Pietermaritzburg, Sutter and Shooter, p.6.

¹⁶³ Mbiti, John S., 1990, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Second Edition, Oxford: Heinemann, p.81.

these causes of road accidents jeopardize the life of the people in their relationship with one another (drivers and passengers), as well as their relationship with the world around them in the course of road travel. In other words, the informants seem to be concerned about morals and values in the course of road travel. Below, I will look at the issues which appear to be of concern to road users in relation to human error, human greed and human sin respectively.

5.2.4.1 Issues of concern related to human error

Firstly, the informants seem to be generally worried about the discrepancy which exists between driving which is in accordance with the road traffic rules and regulations, and driving which is not in accordance with such rules and regulations. Secondly, the perceived discrepancy raises three more important concerns. Each informant is concerned about the fact that his or her own life is put in danger by human beings who are just like him or her. This is followed by concern about each informant's own vulnerability and safety in the course of road travel. This in turn, leads to concern about the impact on the family of a commuter who might be involved in a road accident.

5.2.4.2 Issues and concerns related to human greed

There are three key issues that seem to be perceived to be behind human greed in the course of road travel. The first is to do with the perceived lack of respect for the rights of passengers. The informants are convinced that their own rights as passengers are sometimes, simply ignored and that this is caused by the profit motive. In other words, the informants have no doubt that human greed is fuelled by the desire for accumulating maximum profit possible at all cost, including the cost of undermining the relationship between passengers and operators/drivers – people who undoubtedly need each other. The second issue with regard to human greed is to do with a lack of respect for the road traffic rules and regulations. Once again, the profit motive is perceived to be the driving force behind the flouting of road laws.

The first two issues above as manifestations of human greed lead to the most serious issue – the fact that the safety of passengers is usually undermined under these circumstances. The question that the above issues help to raise is this one: where do

passengers find recourse in all this. Various answers to this question are provided in the section concerned with activities related to the prevention of road accidents further down in this chapter. It is however enough for now to say that the informants seem to have chosen to find recourse in the spiritual/religious world.

5.2.4.3 Issues and concerns related to human sin

Three key related issues can be identified in the data linked to human sin. The first is to do with the fact that some human beings are not yet content with subjecting other human beings (commuters or people travelling to get to work) to road dangers related to human error and all that goes with it. The second key issue is to do with the fact that some human beings are also not yet content with subjecting other human beings to road risk related to human greed. The third is to do with the extent to which some human beings will go to put the lives of other human beings in danger by deploying spiritual forces and power, some of which have been outlined above, for example, sorcery and witchcraft. A major common factor in these three aspects is the issue of vulnerability – human beings are made vulnerable by the existence of human error, by the existence of human greed, and by the existence of human sin. Vulnerability in this sense, then, is a matter of life and death that runs through all the causes of road accidents where human beings are the main agents. The significance of these causes is that they show us what Thomas Brodie has referred to as “...the way people are made... ... a sense of the ultimate nature of people”.¹⁶⁴

5.2.4.4 Summary

It would appear that some of the things that have been identified by the informants under the category human sin, for example, neglected spirits, as well as sorcery and witchcraft are examples of what has been described by David Westerlund¹⁶⁵ ‘as “social (human)” causality’, [that is], ‘relations between living human beings which entail a supra-normal component.’ And those identified under the categories human error and human greed,

¹⁶⁴ (Brodie, T. “Genesis and the Heart: How One of the World’s Great Classics Portrays Human Life” in Jordan, T. (1995) *Spirituality*. Vol. 1 July – August No. 1 (pp.33-37) – Although Brodie was simply talking about people in general and not necessarily talking about commuters, his words appear to be relevant for the whole of this study e.g. causes of road accidents are about “what is worst in people” or “the evil within”, (p. 33) and activities related to the prevention of road accidents are about what is good in people.

¹⁶⁵ See David Westerlund, in Magesa Laurenti, 1997, p.172.

the same author has described ‘as ‘the “natural (mainly physical)” causation’ [that is], ‘the effects of the entities of nature or the effects of physical entities when there is for example, a lack of equilibrium of some basic elements.’ There is also a third explanation – “religious (supra-human)” causation’ which finds relevance in the next section, that is, causes of road accidents related to spiritual/religious agency. However, according to Magesa¹⁶⁶ ‘all the three explanations cannot be seen in Africa as entirely separate, rather, they all constitute stages in the psychological/spiritual awareness of an immoral situation’. Arguably, the identification of human error, human greed and human sin, including all the elements related to each of these, suggests a total (inclusive) psychological/spiritual awareness (on the part of the informants), of causes of road accidents in as far as human beings as the main agents are concerned.

5.3 Causes related to spiritual agency

The responses on the causes of road accidents related to spiritual/religious agency, as identified by the informants in this research project, point to three important parts of religion in general. The first part has to do with beliefs – specifically religious beliefs, as opposed to beliefs in other areas of life such as economics, politics, science and technology. For instance, there is a belief related to African traditional religious/customary burial procedures (religious practices), – that failure to adhere to such a belief is more likely to lead to the causation of a road accident. Again, there is reference to a belief associated with certain African religious/customary practices such as: *ukubika imoto kwabaphansi* – (informing ancestors immediately after purchasing a motor vehicle and before using such vehicle for travel purposes). *Ukuvala umkhokha*, – (breaking the vicious cycle of death in a family which is believed to be caused by the fact that a member of a family has experienced violent death). *Ukulanda umoya welunga lomdeni elifele emgwaqweni* - (removing from the scene of death the spirit of a relative who has died on the road as a result of either a road accident, criminal activity or any other cause). And, *ukulungisa isimo selunga lomdeni eselafa, elaliphila impilo yobuxhwanguxhwangu* – (a reconciliation ritual for an ancestor who lived a reckless life on earth and because of this, such a person is believed to have a bad influence on a living

¹⁶⁶ Magesa Laurenti, 1997, p. 173.

relative, especially a relative who is a driver). The *isiZulu* word *Isixhwanguxhwangi* literally means, (a wicked person – a person whose entire life is characterized by wicked behaviour). The importance of the above beliefs is expressed in the following narrative by one of the informants:

There are neglected wandering spirits of persons killed on the road, either as victims of crime or as casualties in road accidents, and because they have not been buried according to African traditional customary burial procedures, they cause road accidents around the vicinity where they were killed. There is a common tendency of neglecting/failure to perform African traditional rituals such as: *ukubika* – informing one's own ancestors in the case of acquiring a new or a secondhand vehicle legally, *ukuvala umkhokha* – a traditional ritual meant to prevent violent death of a family member from affecting close relatives of a deceased person, neglecting/failure to occasionally consult with one's ancestors i.e. to maintain a sustainable close relationship through an incense burning ritual, animal and food sacrifice.¹⁶⁷

There seems to be no doubt that failure or neglect to abide by African traditional requirements and perform any of these practices is also more likely to lead to the causation of a road accident. Moreover, some of the responses also point to a belief linked to sorcery, witchcraft or angry ancestors:

There are different causes of road accidents; some are due to sheer negligence, other are as a result of mechanical failure, bad weather, disobeying the rules of the road. Yet still, many others are as a result supernatural powers (neglected family spirits) as well as, other human beings employing magical or evil powers.¹⁶⁸

Lack of consciousness (awareness of how a driver behaves on the road) has also been explicitly stated as one of the causes of road accidents related to spiritual/religious agency in the following manner:

As a Muslim, I believe that submission to God would lead me to have a pure mind. This in turn would enable me to become conscious of how I drive, how others drive, how other road users – pedestrians conduct themselves on the road and also me being conscious of any other possible hazardous situation on the road. Now, because I am conscious, I am able to realize that the vehicle I am driving is just a means to help me reach my destination and that it is not an object that I can use as I please. I also become conscious of the fact that a vehicle has also the potential of making me and other road users lose our lives if we treat it as an instrument of my own selfish indulgence. All this begins with submission to God, who wants all of us to live in harmony.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ (4.1, 5.2 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion)

¹⁶⁸ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

¹⁶⁹ (7.2 PCD [m] Islamic Religion: Muslim)

The will of God is also perceived as one of the causes of road accidents: “God allows road accidents to happen because of unacceptable behaviour on the road”.¹⁷⁰ Lastly, Satanism - expressed in the form of a belief that certain spiritual and / or supernatural forces and powers are also more likely to cause road accidents for various reasons has also been put forward in this way: “Satanists are evil forces on the road which cause road accidents which result in bad/ horrible/shameful death”.¹⁷¹ In the above sense, then, beliefs have a function of ‘showing the way people think about the universe and their attitude towards life itself.’¹⁷²

The second part has to do with religious practices and most of them have been mentioned above. It is apparent from the data that there is a need to safeguard and uphold the life of the people (road users) in the course of road travel, and that this is in actual fact a moral obligation. Issues relating to morals and values in this section include right and wrong, good and evil, respect for people and property (vehicles), respect for operators/drivers’ right to succeed in the public transport business, respect for the living - dead (family spirits) and respect for African traditional religious/customary practices.

The third part has to do with the people who are entrusted with the task to conduct religious practices. In this research we have family elders, diviners (*izangoma*) who also act as traditional healers (*abalaphi bendabuko*), and faith healers (*abalaphi bezenkolo*) but popularly known as (*abathandazi*). The following narrative confirms belief in the role of African traditional religious practitioners in the lives of ordinary people:

There was a time in my life when things were not going right for me. I lost my job. I got separated from a woman I was planning to marry. The room I was renting was broken into and many of my belongings were stolen. I had never experienced something like this before in my life. Suddenly and within a short space of time, my life was a mess. One of my former work colleagues suggested that I go and see a faith healer (*umThandazi*). This colleague told me that the faith healer he was recommending had helped a lot of people before, people who had experienced misfortune more or less similar to mine. I visited the faith healer. She performed a divination ritual. Then she told me that the cause of my misfortune was one of my ancestors. The ancestor was not happy about me because I had never bothered to involve my ancestors in my entire adult life. The faith healer then warned me that if I do not do something about this very soon to appease my ancestors, something more terrible will happen to me. She then advised me to go to my family home – where I was born and bred. She asked me to bring the following things to her: *uMulo* (ash

¹⁷⁰ (9.1 KTP [m] Rastafarian Religion)

¹⁷¹ (15.3 KTP [f] The Church of the Twelve Apostles)

¹⁷² Mbiti J. S., 1991, p.11.

which accumulates in a chimney), *iZibi*¹⁷³ (domestic waste which comes from sweeping floors at home), together with a red cock, as well as two red candles. The faith healer told me that she will perform a ritual on my behalf to appease my angry ancestor. I was also told that after the performance of the ritual I will be freed from the misfortune because a harmonious bond will be created between us. I delayed about a week before I went home as instructed. When I had decided on the day I was to leave for home, I went to town to withdraw money from my savings account. On the way to town, the kombi taxi I was traveling in had a tyre burst and it overturned three times before it stopped. Most of the passengers received severe injuries. I do not know how it happened that I and a couple of other passengers got minor injuries. Now, that is the reason why I adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. Later on the faith healer told me that I was lucky to escape the road accident without serious injuries. She further reiterated that any further delay would cause me more suffering and that I might not be so lucky then.¹⁶⁴

One of the ways Mbiti refers to these people is that: “they are human keepers of the African religious heritage,” because for Mbiti “people would not benefit from religion in practical terms without them” (1991: p.12). The fact that some of the informants in this research have mentioned having consulted some of these people suggests that such informants also believe in obtaining benefits from such contacts. The most likely benefit that is expected (in the context of this study) would be a sense of security and protection in the course of road travel.

A quantitative appraisal of the informants who participated in this section, in terms of their religious affiliations is as follows: nine informants (about 18%) in this section adhere to African Independent Christianity. This is the largest group in this section. Two groups in this section occupy second spot respectively – informants who adhere to African Traditional Religion are four in all (about 8%); and informants who belong to the churches characterized by the belief in the “born again” experience – are five in all (about 10%). There are also two informants from orthodox Christianity (about 4%), two from Christian sects (about 4%), one informant (about 2%) from Islamic Religion and one as well (about 2%) from the Rastafarian Religion. This means that there are twenty four informants (about 48%) in all who adhere to a belief that spiritual factors are also responsible for the causation of certain kinds of road accidents. This quantitative analysis presents us with an interesting synopsis. Firstly, the largest group – 14 informants (about 28%), which includes adherents to African Instituted Churches (nine), adherents to

¹⁷³ (15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army) The informant told me that the faith healer gave this explanation about the significance of *uMulo* and *iZibi* with regard to relationship between the living relatives and their ancestors: “these things constitutes *insila yasekhaya* (family “dirt” in a positive sense) in the sense that they and all the other family belongings including clothing and every household item are a part of *insila yasekhaya* because they have been permeated by the aura of family spirits.

African Traditional Religion (four), as well as an adherent to the Rastafarian Religion (one), constitutes more than half of the total number (24) of the informants in this section. These are the religious groups (with the exception of those who adhere to African Traditional Religion), which according to Ukpong¹⁷⁴ are characterized by “...the rejection of the western form of Christianity (not Christianity itself), and replacing it with an African form of Christianity” (p. 530). The significance of this rejection and replacing is that in an African form of Christianity, belief in an “enchanted” universe that is full of different kinds of spiritual agents, besides the Supreme Being, – e.g. ancestors, spirits and evil forces, is clearly entertained. This leads to concerns about the spiritual causes of road accidents. At the same time, we also have informants who believe in the “born again” experience who belong to such churches as the Salvation Army (Evangelicals), who believe that angry ancestors do cause road accidents, and Christian sects such as Jehovah’s Witnesses who believe that witchcraft and sorcery (*ukuthwala nobubuthakathi*) can cause road accidents. Although the above concerns come from people who believe that Christ has saved them from their traditional religion which they now see as sinful or demonic, it is clear however, that when it comes to road travel, that is, situations of real danger, African beliefs begin to surface again. In the next section, I will do an analysis and interpretation of the data related to structural, economic and mechanical aspects.

5.4 Structural, economic and mechanical aspects

Some of the informants in this research project have also identified what could be called the material aspects of road accidents as opposed to the spiritual aspects. By this I mean the structural, economic and mechanical aspects of road accidents. By structural is meant the fact that Edendale is an apartheid creation, that is, a township reserved (in terms of the defunct Group Areas Act), for black people that is located far away from the city centre and other places of work which involves the need for more time spent traveling. The economic aspect is tied up with the fact that jobs are usually located far from home and therefore the need to travel to survive. Neither of these is directly related

¹⁷⁴ See Ukpong Justin, “Inculturation Theology in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Developments”, in Phiri Isabel Apuwo, and Werner Dietrich, 2013, eds., *The Hand-book of Theological Education in Africa*, Dorpspruit: Custer Publications, pp. 530 – 541.

to road accidents but they are indirectly related. By mechanical is meant literally the state of the vehicles themselves.

A quantitative appraisal of the data in this regard reveals that five informants (about 10%), of all the informants in this research project show that they are concerned about problems created by either one, or two, or all three aspects. Out of the five informants, four of them (about 8%), are concerned about the contribution of the mechanical aspect to road accidents. Concerns about the contribution made by structural and economic aspects come from three informants (about 6%) respectively. Three informants in this section adhere to African Independent Christianity and the other two come from Christian churches which promote belief in the “born again” experience. However, the most important question here is this one: what are all these five informants really concerned about with regard to material aspects – regardless of the differences in their religious backgrounds. Roebuck¹⁷⁵ has argued that answers to this question can be found in understanding the fact that as “transport includes all aspects of movement of people and goods from one place to another over any distance, it has impacts or effects on people making trips – i.e. system users”. System users in this study include kombi taxi operators/drivers, and commuters. One of the major impacts has to do with trials or discomforts to people making trips in the course of road travel.

It would appear that the data presented by the informants in this section suggest the following concerns: 1) the discomfort of spending more time than is necessary travelling to get to work, 2) the heartache of travelling in a kombi taxi or a bus that is not road worthy, 3) the inconvenience of being stuck in a road traffic congestion, 4) the hardship of knowing that you need to accept and endure all the trials in the course of road travel because of the need to travel to survive, 5) the difficulty of knowing that there is a possibility of being confronted with the same problems more often in the course of road travel, and 6) the discomfort of knowing that each and every day you embark upon travel to get to work, there is risk of being in danger of a road accident. All these issues and concerns have been unambiguously linked by the informants in this section to the

¹⁷⁵ Roebuck C. S., 2001, Head of The Eastern Centre of Transport Development (ECOTD) *Handout Notes on Transport Development*, Durban: Howard College, p.3.

structural, economical and mechanical aspects of road travel. One of the informants gave the following narrative with regard to the contribution of the above material factors to the causation of road accidents:

If you look at the hospital – where we are employed, and look at where we live, and the way public transport is organized, you will notice that only a bus service transport is available. All of us who use this service to travel to work come from different parts of *iMbali* Township. Organizing ourselves into groups which can provide full loads of kombi taxi passengers is not feasible. The only alternative would be to be prepared to use at least four kombi taxis for every return trip from home to work and back each and every day. This will mean paying more money for transport and the possibility of arriving late at work due to delays as a result of a lack of direct transport in as far as the use of kombi taxis is concerned. The bus itself is not in a road worthy condition, the threads on some of the tyres are worn out and we are lucky we have not yet had a road accident.¹⁷⁶

The last important point which needs to be highlighted in this section is the fact that only five informants clearly factored structural, economic and mechanical causes of road accidents. I say “clearly”, because there are other informants who have also factored these aspects indirectly, which suggests that more than five informants are aware of these aspects. The main reason for responding indirectly to the three important issues seems to be that the informants were focusing on the direction of religious/spiritual issues, because that is what the study demanded from them. Above all, they might also have been thinking in these terms because the subject under discussion has also to do with ultimate questions such as death and dying. An important question which arises because of such a small percentage of people (about 10%) who factored structural, economic and material aspects as other causes of road accidents is this: would such a small percentage factor these causes of road accidents, if this research project were to be done in a western country such as Britain, U.S.A, or Australia, that is, in a secularized society where people mostly have a “disenchanted” worldview, that is, that their understanding of the causes of road accidents is biased toward a “modern” or “scientific” perspective and not a spiritual perspective?

In order to bring the discussion closer to home (South Africa), let me put this same question in this way: would such a small percentage believe in these material causes of road accidents if this study were to be done amongst white South Africans as well as

¹⁷⁶ (14.3 KTP/BP [m] Faith Mission Church)

people of all races who totally support the “Arrive-alive” Road Safety campaign. Arguably, the percentage of people who would factor structural, economic and mechanical aspects would be higher than the mere 10% we have above. There might be some people who wear amulets like Saint Christopher bracelets or pendants or have a rosary hanging from their rear view mirror, but most will probably say even this is mere superstition. Balcomb makes the following observation concerning this hypothesis:

‘What seems also apparent here is that there does not seem to be a contradiction in the minds of the informants, between the material (i.e. mechanical, economic and mechanical) causes of road accidents and the spiritual causes. The fact that there are material aspects to the causes of road accidents does not mean that the spiritual aspects do not exist and vice versa. This says something about the ability of African road users to bring together the material and the spiritual universes without seeing a contradiction between them. There is an unrestricted flow of consciousness between these universes’ that is not apparent in the “disenchanted” universe that characterizes a secularized western perspective (Balcomb, A. O., private conversation 13 May, 2017).

I now turn to the analysis and interpretation of the data linked to activities related to the prevention of road accidents.

5.5 Activities related to the prevention of road accidents

When it comes to the activities related to the prevention of road accidents the research reveals a range of responses from road users. In this section I will follow the work of Allison Howell in her work amongst the Kasena of Ghana¹⁷⁷. She identified a range of solutions that her informants came up with as regards problem solving solutions and protecting themselves from harm in their spiritual journey. These she categorized as follows: 1) “orthodox” solutions which were to do with accepted practice in mainstream religion such as Christianity and Islam such as the use of prayer, bible texts and texts from spiritual books, and holy water, including what the informant who is an adherent to the Muslim faith calls “correct consciousness,¹⁷⁸” that is, being consciously aware of what is happening around you in the course of road travel. 2) [African] “traditional” solutions and 3) “Synthetic” solutions. She coined this term as an intentional alternative to the term “syncretism” which has perjorative connotations as it is usually associated with some form of mixing of religious faiths, as if there is such a thing as a

¹⁷⁷ See Howell, Allison M., 1997, vol. 2, *The Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People: the Kasena and the Christian gospel*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 252-4.

¹⁷⁸ (7.2 PCD [m] Islamic Religion)

religious faith that is pure and unadulterated. Synthetism refers to a situation “where people use Muslim or Christian forms, but without their content or objective, such as using a rosary or holy water with a traditional intent”. In other words, when traditional solutions do not meet their needs they turn to Christian solutions. But this does not mean that they are actually mixing the traditional and the Christian. All the activities related to the prevention of road accidents which emerged from this research project can be understood in terms of primary safety, that is, ‘that part of the strategy of safety making things “safe” so that accidents do not occur in the first place’,¹⁷⁹ regardless in which of the categories mentioned above each activity may be classified. Underneath, I will discuss the activities that the informants undertake under each of the three solutions mentioned above respectively.

5.5.1 “Orthodox” solutions

To reiterate what has been stated above, “orthodox” solutions have to do with accepted practice in mainstream religion such as Christianity and Islam such as the use of prayer, bible texts, spiritual books, and holy water, including being consciously aware of what is happening around you in the course of road travel. A quantitative appraisal of the informants involved in this section reveals that twenty three people (about 46%), out of fifty four, that is, the total number of people who participated in this research project, identified the following “orthodox” solutions for dealing with problems associated with road travel: the use of Christian prayer alone, the use of Christian prayer, bible texts, and spiritual books, the use of Christian prayer and bible texts sharing, the use of prayer and holy water, the use of prayer and a rosary, as well as, “correct consciousness” as described above. Seventeen informants (about 34%) use Christian prayer alone, while five informants (about 10%) use a combination of prayer, bible texts and spiritual books, or prayer and holy water, or prayer and a rosary. One informant (about 2%) uses what in Islamic religion is called “correct consciousness” – being consciously aware of what is happening around you in the course of road travel. Nine informants (about 18%) are members of mainline churches, seven (about 14%) belong to those churches which

¹⁷⁹ Roebuck C. S. and Marcus T., 2000 “South African Transport Conference Paper, Presented in Pretoria, July 2001”, *Transport Challenges for the Small Trader: is public transport the answer*, Durban: University of Natal – School of Civil Engineering, p.6.

believe in the “saved” experience, four (about 8%) adhere to African Independent Christianity, two (about 4%) are members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses (a Christian sect) and the Rastafarian religion respectively. These figures suggest that prayer is the standard “orthodox” solution when it comes to problems associated with road travel. This position of prayer makes it necessary for me to discuss a theology of prayer in relation to what the informants themselves have said about prayer as one of the activities related to the prevention of road accidents. There are four aspects emerging from the responses of the informants on which my discussion of such a theology of prayer will be based. A first aspect has to do with what I can call the primacy of prayer with regard to road travel. This is how the idea of the primacy of prayer is expressed by two informants respectively: “the only ritual I perform is prayer....”¹⁸⁰ and, “the only ritual I perform is prayer and nothing else.”¹⁸¹ Christian prayer in both the above two cases is perceived as an adequate “orthodox” solution, which does not need to be mixed with any other ritual which is not Christian when it comes to problems associated with road travel. There is also a suggestion of some form of intolerance with regard to the use of any other ritual other than prayer in the case of the second informant. What we are presented with here is a belief in that as far as religious activities related to the prevention of road accidents are concerned, no other religious activity can offer road users protection in the course of road travel other than prayer. This primacy of Christian prayer as an “orthodox” solution is further nuanced by five other the informants¹⁸² in this section who say that, they combine prayer with other accepted Christian activities such as sprinkling a vehicle with holy water, or using holy water when taking a bath, or the wearing of a rosary, or the use of bible texts. First and foremost, this combination of Christian prayer with other supplementary rituals at the same time, suggests a commitment to “ensure” that safety is “guaranteed” in the course of road travel, by the deployment of other accepted practices in mainstream religion. The use of bible a text and / or a text from a spiritual book in combination with prayer, suggests that prayer as an “orthodox” solution also needs to be inspired and / or enhanced by spiritual reading. Prayer in this sense becomes a key factor

¹⁸⁰ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

¹⁸¹ (13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

¹⁸² (9.1 KTP [m] Rastafarian Religion; 9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah’s Witnesses; 14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church; 15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church; and, 15.3 KTP [f] Church of the Twelve Apostles)

in ensuring divine involvement in the prevention of road accidents. In other words, for a bible text to be effective, it requires the active participation (prayer) of a person. Again, there is another suggestion here that there could be no holy water without prayer. In other words, it is after praying over ordinary water that the latter is transformed into holy water, which in turn leads to a blessed vehicle (a protected vehicle) after being sprinkled with holy water. Similarly, a person who believes he/she is protected from the danger of experiencing a road accident because he/she has added holy water in his/her bath water, believes so because of the knowledge that prayer has effectively transformed ordinary water into holy water. One of the five informants mentioned above says: “I use holy water to sprinkle my vehicle before I drive it every morning”.¹⁸³ This is a fascinating understanding of Christian prayer which seems to be compatible with one of the most important road traffic rules and regulations related to driver instruction – that a driver is expected to totally check his/her vehicle before driving off. The importance of this rule can be seen by the fact that compliance or non compliance with it usually determines whether or not a learner driver will pass or fail a driving test. Similarly, the sprinkling of a vehicle expressed by one of the informants in this section, suggests also some form of checking a vehicle before driving off in order to determine whether or not a vehicle is road worthy. In the same manner, a rosary detached from prayer would simply be an ornament of no spiritual significance. Prayer then makes a rosary in this case a blessed object and, a person wearing it in the course of road travel becomes a protected person from experiencing a road accident, regardless of the fact that the person concerned is not a member of the Roman Catholic Church¹⁸⁴. Nevertheless, this case suggests that concern about the prevention of road accidents is so strong for the informant concerned that “adopting” an unfamiliar religious object (a rosary) together with the accompanying practice (the actual wearing of such an object), as well as the beliefs linked to all this do not seem inappropriate. A second aspect has to do with the idea that God is omnipotent – all powerful. This belief is expressed by the idea that prayer is made ‘to God’ because the informant who entertains this idea believes that, “the power to protect me from

¹⁸³ (14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church)

¹⁸⁴ (15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church) This informant confirmed to me (the researcher in this research project), that he has never been a member of the Roman Catholic Church in his life, and that he was told by his former girl friend that wearing a rosary around his neck all the time will help to protect him in all the perils of life, including road accidents.

experiencing a road accident rests with God alone”.¹⁸⁵ This is tied up with the idea that God is either addressed directly or through the intermediary of Jesus Christ. References such as these two: “I pray to God” [or]; “I pray to God through Jesus”¹⁸⁶ are therefore common. Finally, the words “I pray” might suggest that the kind of prayer involved here is a private prayer. The third aspect involves both time and space. This is expressed by at least thirteen (about 26%) of the informants in the following manner: “I pray everywhere; e.g. on the way to a taxi rank, in a taxi rank, inside a moving kombi taxi, at work and at home”.¹⁸⁷ What is being suggested here is unlimited space and, timeless time – the time of communicating with the divine God. There is also a suggestion that communicating with God through prayer cannot be restricted in a particular space and time. Moreover, a further suggestion is that of the omnipresent of God. In other words, the suggestion is that God can often be encountered in all the spaces and times linked to the various places mentioned above by the thirteen informants, that is, before, during and after road travel has been embarked upon. This suggests that God can be approached at anytime and in any place in the course of road travel. A fourth and final aspect involves a belief that prayer has clear benefits. However, some of the benefits are personal, while others are meant for other road users. Personal benefits related to prayer include personal courage, ability to focus on the positive things in the course of road travel and personal safety. All these suggest that a person who is embarking upon road travel needs to take care of himself/herself by deploying prayer all the time. Benefits to other road users suggest participating unanimously in solving problems associated with road travel by for example praying for all the other road users – being part of the solution without expecting to gain anything, or assuming responsibility for inviting God’s grace even for people you do not know.

¹⁸⁵ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

¹⁸⁶ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church; and, 13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

¹⁸⁷ (10.3 KTP [m] UNC Lutheran Church; 11.3 KTP [f] & 19.3 KTP [m] Roman Catholic Church; 12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church; 16.3 KTP [f] & 18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church; 17.2 KTP [f] Will of God Ministries; 17.4 KTP [m] The Ark of Prophecy Church; 18.3 KTP [f] & 19.1 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God; 18.4 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church; and, 8.2 KTP [f] & 19.4 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church)

5.5.2 [African] “Traditional” Solutions

A number of issues that will be tackled in this section seem to elicit controversy from both western scholars/experts and African scholars/experts as well. This is especially true with regard to issues related to African religious beliefs and practices on the one hand and Christian religious beliefs and practices on the other hand. What I intend to do in this section however, is to present an analysis and interpretation of the data that will be based on what the people who participated in this study think, believe, and have said about road travel and what this means to their faith. The following narrative demonstrates how one of the informants expressed what she believes about road travel and what this means to her faith. This was in response to this question: What are the rituals that you perform with regard to your use of this road? The informant responded in this way:

The first of these rituals is; *ukuziqinisa* (to make myself strong in the sense of being immune against magical, harmful and dangerous substances made from animal fats or human remains). I do this by bathing in the herbal remedy prepared from *izintelezi* (the group of succulent plants) and other plants. These have to be thoroughly boiled with water. If a road accident happens because of witchcraft for instance; the chances of me being affected are very minimal. I can be one of those passengers whom everyone would ask after an accident: how did you survived?

One of my brothers was killed in a road accident about three years ago in the vicinity of that dreadful spot – the Pantritch corner, just before you reach Aluminium factory and the other factories from town. He was one of the kombi taxi passengers who died in that accident. There are two very important rituals we have performed as a family in this regard. One of them is called *Ukuvala umkhokha* (to make sure that other family members do not suffer a similar fate as a deceased relative).

The other important ritual has to do with what is culturally referred to as *ukubuyisa* (to bring back the spirit of a dead family member back home). This is done in order to make sure that a deceased relative is united with the family spirits of the other ancestors. *Ukubuyisa* is done at the end of a year after a dead relative has been buried. We as a family slaughtered a bull (because the ceremony was for a male member), as an offering. *Utshwala besizulu* was prepared for the occasion. As a family spirit like the others who went before him, my brother is now known as an ancestor or *ithongo* or *idlozi*. It is common practice that before the sacrifices are made all the other ancestors are notified of what is about to happen and the reasons for the ceremony are given. This is done by way of a senior male member of the family reciting the family praises (*izithakazelo*). These praises are coined from the original ancestors of a family. The recitation of the praises is based on the belief that the family ancestors are the custodians of everything the living family members own. Thus whatever offering is made, their permission need to be sought first. If this is not done properly, the anger of the ancestors can result in serious consequences for the family concerned. Another ceremonial ritual will have to be performed in order to appease the family spirits. The following day, all the family members, relatives and friends enjoy the feast. When everything goes smoothly right up to the end of the ritual, family members will see this as a sign that the ancestors were happy with the ritual and also an indication that they will be protected from all ills.

The other ritual I perform of course is prayer. As a Christian who believes in the power of God, I value prayer very much. Not a single day goes by without me conversing with God in prayer. I

believe that I am what I am and that I do what I do because of him. He chose this calling for me. All I ever dreamed about when I was a young girl was to become a nurse and nothing else. I have accepted this calling and I do it without any regret. That is why I pray to him so that I do nothing other than to help people in need.¹⁸⁸

It would appear that there are three issues of crucial importance related to what is referred to above as [African] “Traditional” Solutions. The first issue has to do with the idea of the interconnectedness of the universe, which emerges from belief in a multiplicity of possible agents besides the Supreme Being – for example the ancestors and other bothersome spirits. According to the informants, the constituent parts of such an interconnected universe include: 1) the physical world, which is represented by people and the motor vehicles they use to get to work, as well as the road environment, 2) the spiritual world which is represented by ancestors and other spirits of people who have passed on, and 3) the religious activities which are expected to bring about harmony between the physical and the spiritual world. The second issue has to do with the need for right relationships between the physical world and the spiritual world. This need appears to be based on the idea that road accidents are a sign of disharmony between the two worlds. The third issue is linked to both the first and the second issues and it involves the idea of blessing motor vehicles, people, as well as bothersome spirits and appeasing ancestors in order to prevent road accidents. This last issue is linked to the use of specific African traditional rituals such as the burning of incense, supplication and the reciting family praises (*iziThakazelo*) when communicating with ancestors, animal sacrifices, and offerings of items such as food and drinks, including African traditional beer. The above three issues then, constitute the starting point for the following discussions on [African] “Traditional” Solutions. I will start by discussing the religious practice or the [African] “traditional” solution referred to as *ukubika imoto kwabaphansi* (informing ancestors immediately after acquiring possession of a motor vehicle), that is, before making use of such a vehicle in the course of road travel.

The main reason for adopting this approach is that a person needs to own a motor vehicle first, inform his or her own ancestors before using it, then use the vehicle for some time, and finally, perform a thanksgiving ritual when there has been no experience of road

¹⁸⁸ (13.2 KTP [f] African Traditional Religion / Zionist Church)

accidents. This means that all the other rituals categorized under the rubric [African] “traditional” solutions are performed after the practice of informing the ancestors about having acquired possession of a motor vehicle. In other words, this ritual comes first before all the others. I will now turn to the discussion of this practice.

5.5.2.1 *UkuBika imoto* (informing ancestors after purchasing a vehicle)

The first thing that seems to be suggested by the existence of this ritual is that to acquire possession of a motor vehicle for the purposes of using it as a means of transport is a heavy responsibility. The vehicle may become a millstone around the neck of the owner if the correct rituals are not performed. Arguably, it might be this same reason that learner drivers are subjected to driver instruction which contains the following requirements: 1) A thorough theoretical training and understanding of how a motor vehicle operates, including an understanding of the road traffic rules and regulations. 2) Driver instruction also requires a thorough practical training of how a motor vehicle is operated and manipulated through road traffic, including the practical application of the road traffic rules and regulations. Moreover, road travel related awareness campaigns aimed at all the classes of road users appear to be designed with the same understanding in mind - that road travel itself is a heavy responsibility. All the different causes of road accidents which have emerged from the responses of the informants in this research project appear to be consistent with the idea that road travel is not an easy undertaking, precisely because there are, amongst other things, all kinds of unacceptable behaviour on the road. This then, is the context within which the need to inform one’s own ancestors immediately after having acquired possession of a motor vehicle needs to be understood. But before I get into a detailed discussion about the key issues involved in this practice, I need to note that all that has been said above with regard to [African] “traditional” solutions suggest an example of the existence of a common ground in the practice of ancestral veneration and the road traffic rules and regulations, and that common ground is this: to acquire possession of a motor vehicle, including its use on the road is a demanding responsibility which requires consistent vigilance. This vigilance needs to be practiced for both the practical/legal requirements of owning a motor vehicle as well as

the spiritual/religious requirements. The one mirrors the other. Just as the one “looks after” the physical realm so the other “looks after” the spiritual realm.

The responses of the informants suggest that the performance of this ritual involves, at least, the following five levels or sub-practices: an incense burning ritual, verbal presentation of a motor vehicle to the ancestors, the need to sacrifice an animal, the need for blessing a vehicle – a precautionary measure to make the vehicle “safe” so that it does not get involved in road accidents, and, a celebration which is itself also an important part of the ritual under consideration. All the five sub-practices are important parts of the same [African] “traditional” solution in this section. I will now discuss each of the above sub-practices one by one beginning with the incense burning ritual. But before that, it is crucially important that we listen to the articulation of the performance of this ritual by one of the informants:

I perform a sweet smelling incense burning ritual, the smoke from the incense must permeate all the parts of the vehicle i.e. both the inside and outside parts. I then inform my ancestors about the vehicle in these words: *‘nanti ihashi lenu enivumile ukuba ngiligibele* – here is your horse [vehicle] which you have made it possible for me own, I am now asking you to accompany me whenever I am travelling in it. I then slaughter a goat as a gift offering to ancestors. I sprinkle the vehicle with a mixture of goat dung from the entrails, gall liquid and herbal medicines. The gall pouch is then inflated with air, tied with a thin rope and hung/displayed on the steering wheel.¹⁸⁹

In the following sections below, I present and discuss the performance of the above ritual step by step.

5.5.2.1.1 The incense burning ritual (*ukushisa impepho*)

Ushunqisela imoto entsha, noma esanda kuthengwa ngemphepho ngaphakathi nangaphandle kwayo. (An incense burning ritual is performed on the inside as well as the outside of a newly acquired motor vehicle).¹⁹⁰

This is an introductory rite which is based on the assumption that incense facilitates and / or enhances the presence of one’s own ancestors. It is believed that it does this by attracting the attention of the ancestors to the issues and concerns of their living relatives. In this sense then, it could be argued that the use of incense is meant to bridge the gap between the spiritual world of the ancestors and the physical world of their living

¹⁸⁹ (4.1 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion)

¹⁹⁰ (5.2 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion)

relatives. In this sense then, incense paves and / or soothes the way for an effective communication with ancestors to take place. The “sweet smelling smoke” coming from burning incense, mentioned by an informant in this case, is the key factor for attracting ancestral attention. The idea alluded to by the same informant that smoke coming from a burning incense, must “permeate all parts of a vehicle both inside and outside of it”, suggests that incense is a preliminary rite which can be linked to the idea of blessing a vehicle before it is introduced to the ancestors. The burning incense ritual is a practical demonstration of respect for ancestors – there is no better way of showing respect to any living or living - dead person than to present to that person something that has been blessed already.

5.5.2.1.2 Presentation of a vehicle

Once a motor vehicle has been blessed through the incense burning ritual, it is then ready to be presented to the ancestors in the following words:

Here is your “horse”, which you have given permission to me to use for travel purposes. I am now asking you, to accompany me in it whenever I embark upon road travel. (*Nanti ihashi lenu, enivumile ukuba ngilisebenzise njengesithuthi emgwaqweni. Manje ngiyanicela ukuba nihambe nami ngazo zonke izikhathi uma ngilisebenzisa*) - (5.2 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion).

The very first thing that can be noticed in this account is that a motor vehicle is referred to as a “horse”. It would appear that this is a deliberate play on words, a strategy aimed at ensuring that even the remotest ancestors are not excluded in the presentation of a motor vehicle, otherwise, their exclusion might provoke their anger which can in turn, lead to causation rather than prevention of road accidents. In other words, excluding other ancestors even unknowingly can be counter-productive – it can spell disaster. The second thing that is happening in the above account is that a motor vehicle is presented as the property of the ancestors. The word *lenu* (your) makes it clear that the vehicle being presented is perceived as belonging to the ancestors. This suggests that the person who actually bought the vehicle understands his/her role as that of a trustee/steward, so to speak. In other words, her role or his role is understood as that of managing the vehicle on behalf of the ancestors. Arguably, the kind of vehicle management which is suggested here is that of a well behaved driver/operator – free from the grip of human error, human greed, human sin and all the other factors within human ability to control in order to

prevent road accidents. It would appear that the idea of stewardship in this case suggests a rebuttal of the notions of a self-made person, a self-sufficient person, self-regard and self-preservation. These ideas seem to be more likely to cause estrangement between the living and their ancestors (the living – dead). In other words, the above issues are a threat to the prevention of road accidents because they undermine the two way relationship between the living and their ancestors – a relationship of respect such as the one suggested in the incense burning ritual above, as well as a caring relationship – keeping the living free from harm and / or death which might be caused by road accidents. Moreover, there is also a suggestion that the safety of the living (all those who will use a newly acquired vehicle as a means of transport), is totally dependent on whether or not the person who has bought a vehicle has shown or not shown respect for his/her own ancestors – by performing or not performing this ritual.

Lastly, there is a request that the ancestors need to ‘accompany the person involved in all his /her travel trips. In this case, the ancestors are treated as if they are living human beings whose role is to police, or patrol the road in order to prevent road accidents from harming their living relative and all those who travel in their vehicle. Once again, what we find here is another example of a combination of the practice of ancestral veneration with the rules of the road, where ancestors are expected to act in a similar manner as the road traffic officials for the purposes of the prevention of road accidents.

5.5.2.1.3 Animal sacrifice

Uhlaba imbuzi yokubonga edlozini bese ugeza imoto ngomswani, nangenyongo okuhlanganiswe nezintelezi. (You slaughter a goat as a token of appreciation to the ancestors. (5.2 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion)

The issue of critical importance here is that the animal to be sacrificed seems to be regarded as a token of appreciation for the expected prevention of road accidents. In other words, prevention of road accidents is not doubted at this stage, even though the performance of the whole practice has not yet been completed. On the contrary, the sacrificing of an animal seems to be regarded as a collateral – a seal of the belief in the taken for granted role of the ancestors in preventing road accidents. Below, the discussion involves the idea that some parts of the sacrificial animal are needed for what I

call “the second blessing” of a motor vehicle – the first blessing being the one that involves the incense burning stage above.

5.5.2.1.4 The second blessing of a vehicle

The vehicle is then sprinkled with the not yet digested food from the stomach of the sacrificial goat, the gall liquid mixed with herbal medicines. (*Imoto ibe isichelwa ngomswani wembuzi ehlatshiwe, oxutshwe nenyongo kanye nezintelezi*). The gall sack is inflated with air, its top is tied with a string (to prevent air from escaping) and it is tied on the steering wheel (*Ufutha inyongo uyibophe ngentambo, bese uyilengisa esitelingini semoto*). At night it is removed and placed in a special sacred place reserved for communication with ancestors. (*Ebusuku iyasuswa bese ibekwe emsamu, indawo yokuxhumana nedlozi*): (5.2 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion).

A motor vehicle which is presented to the ancestors needs to be blessed for the second time by being sprinkled with a mixture of goat dung, gall liquid and herbal medicines (*izintelezi*), as well as by displaying (on a steering wheel), the gall pouch filled with air and tied at its neck with a thin string. Two things are suggested by what is done at this level of the practice of informing ancestors in order to prevent road accidents. Firstly, there seems to have been an evaluation of animal and plant products (created things) and their creator, who gave existence to all things. Secondly, there seems to be an unambiguous assumption that such created things have mysterious powers which can be tapped into in order to create harmony between the spiritual and the physical words – provide a solution in the quest for the prevention of road accidents.

The displaying of a gall pouch on the steering-wheel seems to suggest two significant functions: the gall pouch is a symbol or a sign pointing to the idea of the assumed “practical” involvement of the ancestors in the prevention of road accidents. It also acts as a talisman or a relic or a charm which brings about protection in the course of road travel. This second blessing of a motor vehicle leads to the final stage of the practice of informing ancestors about a newly acquired vehicle – feasting or a celebration.

5.5.2.1.5 Celebration

Given all that has been discussed above, it would appear that what is being celebrated is the belief that the ancestors of a person who has performed this ritual will from then on be fully present in the road travel life of their living relative – preventing road accidents before they happen. It is therefore not the availability of goat meat and other foodstuffs

and drink offerings that is celebrated, even though these form an important part of the celebration. It is however the expected or assumed involvement of the ancestors to safeguard the lives of the people in the course of road travel which is celebrated. Moreover, performing such a ritual is not the end of the narrative related to the prevention of road accidents. There are other spiritual concerns of equal importance, which when not addressed can effectively derail the task of preventing road accidents even though the ancestors might have been informed about all the motor vehicles to be used for travel purposes. Such concerns also involve the nature of the relationship between the living and the living dead (ancestors) and spirits of people who have died on the road under unacceptable conditions – e.g. as a result of violent death. Hence, the next discussion involves an [African] “traditional” solution referred to as *ukuvala umKhokha* by one of the informants in this research.

5.5.2.2 *Ukuvala umKhokha* (to stop a regular recurrence of death in a family)

This is an [African] “traditional” solution which is usually utilized when an African family is experiencing regular recurrence of any kind of violent death, including road travel related death. It is a strategy which is based on the belief that the ancestors of a family in which violent death has occurred, resent the fact that one of their own living members has been subjected to violent death. This triggers their anger, the kind of anger which involves ancestors withdrawing their protection of each and every living family member. In this way, the whole family becomes exposed to all kinds of violent death related dangers, including road travel related dangers. This religious practice therefore, is an attempt to once again win over the favour of a family’s own ancestors which has been lost through the violent death of a family member. What is being suggested by this ritual is that ancestors would rather have all their living family members wiped out of the face of the earth when these show that they cannot duly take care of each other. One of the important aspects of performing or not performing this ritual, especially with regard to road travel, is that either way, other people/ road users are more likely to be affected. For example, when the ritual is not performed, other road users who are not even related to the family concerned, can themselves also be affected by a road accident involving one or more people from the “guilty” family. Similarly, when the ritual is performed, other

people's lives can be saved as well. Let me now deal with the stages related to the performance of this ritual. The informant who gave an account of the stages involved began by stating that:

- The spirit of a person killed in a road accident, for example, must be removed from the scene of the accident, brought home and then directed through ritual, to the grave where the body has been buried. The spirit of a person who died violently on the road is brought home by means of a branch of a tree known as *uMlahlankosi* (carisna anduina). This branch is soaked into traditional medicines (*izintelezi*) before it is used. The person is then called by name in this way for example: *sibanibani asihambe siye ekhaya kwabakini* (Son and so, let us go home where you belong).
- When the spirit of a person has been brought back home, a hole is dug outside the gate of the household. A red cock is then killed by strangulation and then buried in the hole together with a knife, a bullet and a piece of a motor vehicle tyre. All these items symbolize the violent nature of the kind of death experienced by the person on his or her behalf the ritual is performed. Finally, a goat is slaughtered to celebrate the fact that the person who has died a violent death has been joined with his or her ancestors in a respectful and dignified manner.¹⁹¹

One of the first ideas that seem to be coming out of this is that, the separation of the human body and soul at death cannot be the function of human persons and / or human events such as a road accident. In other words, neglecting to perform this ritual on the one hand, denies a person who has experienced violent death on the road a right to be buried with dignity. On the other hand, the performance of this ritual (making sure that a relative is buried in a dignified manner), appears to be the first step towards prevention of road accidents – because the ancestors will presumably be happy. What is needed for the process of removing the spirit of a deceased person are two items of significant importance: a branch of *umlahlankosi* (carisna anduina) and herbal medicines (*izintelezi*).

The latter item has to do with the idea that the branch of the tree to be used needs to be blessed before it can act as a carrier of the spirit of a deceased person. It is for this reason therefore, that the branch of the abovementioned tree is soaked in herbal medicines before it is used. The *isiZulu* word: *umlahlankosi*, once again suggests the significance of human worth – the dignity of the human person, even when he/she has been subjected to a violent death (what people generally consider as shameful death). This word is made up by the combination of the root words *lahla* (to bury) and *nkosi* (king/chief), that is, titles related to human honour and dignity and power. Once again, the emphasis on the dignity of a deceased person is the second step in winning over the favour of one's own

¹⁹¹ (5.1 KTO [F] African Traditional Religion)

ancestors and hence, the prevention of road accidents. The next step in this process is the identification by human name of the spirit of the deceased person in this manner: “so and so... let us go home where you belong”. Human dignity is emphasized, by making it clear that the concerned people are not dealing with a nameless and / or a homeless vagrant instead, they are making it known that they are dealing with a person who is one of their own – a person who is allied or associated with a caring family. At home, a hole (a shallow grave), on the ground outside the gate, big enough to bury: a strangled cock, a knife, a bullet, and a piece of a motor vehicle tyre – all representations of violent death. The most significant aspect here is that all the symbols of violent death are buried in a “grave” outside the household gate. This suggests that the family concerned is freed from violent death for good. It can no longer trouble other family members any more. They have seen it being symbolically got rid off by being buried outside of their homestead. Lastly, there is an animal sacrifice followed by a celebration of the belief that family ancestors have been won over, as well as a celebration of the protection from road accidents which is anticipated with certainty/trust. However, to halt a recurrence of road travel related violent death in a particular family is also not the end of the narrative of [African] “traditional” solutions. This narrative continues because there are other powers and forces responsible for the causation of road accidents and other [African] “traditional” solutions are needed to counter such problems. It is for this reason therefore, that in the next sub-section the discussion centers around an [African] “traditional” solution related to neglected and bothersome spirits in the course of road travel.

5.5.2.3 Removing neglected and bothersome spirits on the road

The practice of removing neglected and / or bothersome spirits on the road has some similarities, as well as dissimilarities with the practice of stopping a regular recurrence of death in a family (*ukuvala umkhokha*) discussed above. The most important similarity is that the spirit of a person killed in a road accident, for example, needs to be removed from the scene of the accident. The difference is that in the case of the spirit of an unknown person, it is generally ordered to move away from the vicinity around which it

is causing problems, or some other compromise solution must be found. The following story told by one of the informants illustrates the above point:

In our area there was a road bend where it had become common to have road accidents. Some people consulted a diviner/traditional healer for the purpose of trying to understand what was happening and with the hope that this problem might be resolved. The diviner indicated to the people concerned that, there were spirits of people who had died on that spot. Those spirits were the ones causing road accidents because proper African cultural burial procedures were not followed, that is, removing the spirit of a person killed on the road immediately after death through ritual. So, a request was made that drivers need to throw white (SA) coins each time they drive through that spot. This 'fine' was meant to appease the bothersome spirits and also to put an end to the problem of road accidents that had become a common feature in that vicinity. Vehicle drivers were willing for some time to part with a few coins each time they drove through that spot. They had no problem with paying for their safety, as well as the safety of their vehicles (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion).

According to the informant concerned, the compromise found in the case of unknown spirits causing road accidents in a particular spot on the road was that all drivers, who pass through that spot, were advised by a diviner (*iSangoma*), to pay a "fine" by dropping white South African coins, as a way of appeasing such spirits. This unusual practice of paying a "fine" suggests a fascinating example of the combination of the practice of ancestral veneration with the road traffic rules and regulations. The difference however, is that road rules demands the paying of a fine from a driver who is guilty of a road offence, while in the this case, the drivers who allegedly had to pay a "fine" to the ancestral spirits were technically not guilty of any road offence. Nevertheless, the most important point in this case is that the cooperation of some of the drivers seems to have prevented road accidents from continuing to happen. The last but one [African] "traditional" solution discussed in the next section, involves the ritual related to the idea of deadening the impact of sorcery, witchcraft and / or evil magic.

5.5.2 4 *ukuQiniswa* (to be ritually strengthened and protected)

The existence of this practice is based on the belief that sorcery, witchcraft and / or evil magic are uncanny forces deployed by people with evil intentions, that such forces are capable of luring a driver to see a bogus hazard on the road, which will in turn lead a driver to cause a road accident when trying to avoid the "hazard" in front of his/her moving motor vehicle. There is therefore a need to use "protective and strengthening" charms and / or African traditional herbal medicines deemed capable of keeping at bay

the effective functioning of such uncanny forces. One of the informants said the following about this:

I usually cleanse my body with traditional herbal medicine, because in the road environment only the fittest survive. This ritual helps to ensure that people do not take me for granted, that they treat me with respect. If they do not succeed with their witchcraft attacks, they will leave me alone because they will know that I am not an easy target for *ubuthakathi – ngiqinile* – I am ritually strong¹⁹².

Another informant gave the following different version of the above ritual:

One of the important rituals I perform has to do with *ukuqiniswa kwami* – to be made strong, in such a way that whatever magical spell is directed at me goes back to its owner and harm him or her and not me. This is what is called in our *isiZulu* language – *sibashaya ngezabo* (to beat a person at his or her own game or to return the ‘favour’ by striking or harming an enemy with his or her own weapons). There is no better way of dealing with evil actions of others than this (16.2KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church).

There are three possible scenarios suggested by the performance or lack thereof of the [African] “traditional” solution referred to as *ukuqiniswa* (to be “strengthened and protected”). The first of these could be the possibility of rendering the mysterious power of such uncanny forces, ineffective, that is, being powerless to have a negative influence on the targeted driver, through the performance of the ritual. The second scenario is that the effects of sorcery or witchcraft and /or evil magic would be felt not by the targeted driver, but by the person who has deployed such uncanny powers in the first place. The third scenario would be to do nothing, that is, not to perform the ritual at all (probably due to a lack of knowledge as to the operation of such things), and thus suffer the consequences of being lured to self destruction in the course of road travel. In the case of the first scenario, no person would be harmed on the road because the evil intentions of the malevolent person involved would be thwarted by the performance of the ritual. The consequences in the case of the second scenario can be dire because a road accident arising from what can be called protection by vengeance, would not only harm the practitioner of such uncanny forces, it could also harm other road users who might be near and / or around him/her when the accident happens. This makes such a solution controversial, for it is capable of preventing and causing a road accident at the same time.

¹⁹² (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church

The final [African] “traditional” solution I will be discussing below is referred to as *idili lokubonga* (a thanksgiving ritual).

5.5.2.5 A thanksgiving ritual (*idili lokubonga*) as an [African] “traditional” solution

The deployment of the above reitual was explained to me by one of the informants in the following manner:

It has become a family tradition that we slaughter and sacrifice a goat for each of our kombi taxis at the end of every year. This is done to give thanks to our ancestors for the protection they have provided during the passing year and also to ask for the continuation of protection during the coming year. We do the same for the other family cars. The activities pertinent to this ritual essentially include consultation with ancestors by making use of sweet smelling oblation (incense). Smoke coming from a burning incense is of particular interest when communicating with ancestors, presentation of all that is to be offered – i.e. animal(s) and other necessary offerings, conveying our gratitude to ancestors about what they have done for us and asking them to join us in our celebration of their presence in our family life. Once animal(s) have been slaughtered, each vehicle is sprinkled with gall liquid (*ichelwa ngenyongo*) and also with herbal medicines (*izintelezi*) to prevent both natural and unnatural causes of road accidents, because our kombi taxis serve people who adhere to different religious faiths, we do not display any traditional religious symbol inside our kombi taxis. Family cars are treated differently – we display gall pouches inflated with air inside them to serve as protective charms. Finally, the next day is a feast day where we celebrate with family members, relatives, neighbours and friends. After the feast, we know that our ancestors are happy with us and that they will continue to protect us when all present had enjoyed them-selves and there was no trouble whatsoever¹⁹³.

The informant who articulated the nature of the activities related to this ritual is both a diviner and a traditional healer (*uyisangoma aphinde abe ngumlaphi wendabuko futhi*), and, a kombi taxi owner/operator at the same time, who owns more than four kombi taxis and a couple of family (private) motor vehicles. A practical certainty of the involvement of the ancestors in preventing road accidents during a specified period of time (a one year period), appears to be the determining factor as to whether or not a thanksgiving ritual can be performed. This suggests a valued ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the contribution of the ancestors, in terms of doing their part in preventing road accidents within such a given period of time.

The absence of road accidents in a period of a year therefore appears to be the key criteria, which leads to this practice. The first activity that is done when the need to perform this ritual has been determined is that “an animal (a goat) sacrifice for each of

¹⁹³ (4.1 KTO [f] Traditional Healer – *Isangoma*, African Tadtional Religion)

the private and public motor vehicles is performed at the end of every single year”.¹⁹⁴ There appears to be two significant issues which emerge from the concerned informant’s articulation of this ritual. The first issue has to do with the idea that each motor vehicle is treated as a single or separate case when it comes to concerns about safety issues and the involvement of the ancestors. In other words, when a person owns more than one motor vehicle the involvement of the ancestors entails treating each motor vehicle as a single object of care and protection. The second issue involves what one can call ‘standard of time’ (a period of one year and no more) to live by with regard to the monitoring and evaluation of the contribution of the ancestors in the prevention of road accidents. This suggests two important things. Firstly, the ancestors need to be given enough time before it can be ascertained whether or not they are helpful in preventing road accidents. Secondly, there is a limit beyond which a solution or a strategy cannot be pursued without it being subjected to a re-evaluation process once again. In other words, time is of great importance when it comes to activities related to the prevention of road accidents, that is, the decision about the ancestors’ contribution or the lack of contribution in preventing road accidents is subject to a limited period of time. The issue related to treating a motor vehicle as a single object of care, as well as the issue of time linked to a thanksgiving ritual appear to present us with another example of the combination of the practice of the veneration of ancestors and one of the requirements of the road traffic rules and regulations. For instance, each individual motor vehicle needs to be subjected to mechanical testing after a certain period of time, in order to ascertain whether or not the vehicle is road worthy. Since the performance of this ritual also involves making animal sacrifices and food and drinks offerings, Magesa’s insights on these matters are worth noting.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ (4.1 KTO [f] African Traditional Religion)

¹⁹⁵ Magesa Laurenti, 1997, says: ...generally, sacrifices are usually made of items of value and the ritual is “bloody”, whereas items of offerings are symbolic and the ritual is usually bloodless. In either case, however, the item is meant to be removed from human possession or use and transferred to the mystical powers [the ancestors], who become the new “owners” of the sacrificial or offered items. Human beings partake in consuming the consumable items essentially as “guests” for the purposes of obtaining blessings. These blessings are bestowed from the sacrifice, which is now a gift from the invisible, mystical powers [the ancestors]. The sense here is that both the consumable items for sacrifices and offerings are presented to the ancestors intact, but the people help to eat them. The ancestors however, get the savour (aroma or pleasant smell) of it which rises in the air towards them while the more material part is devoured below, p.201.

Mbiti adds on Magesa's insights by explaining the difference between sacrifices and offerings thus:

The distinction between sacrifices and offerings is that sacrifices involve blood shedding of animals; while offerings pertain to the giving of things such as foodstuffs, beverages, [*utshwala besiZulu* (African traditional beer)], and money¹⁹⁶.

Judging by the way the informant concerned articulated the process followed in the performing of this ritual, there seems to be a well defined procedure involving: 1) reflection about the presence and action of family spirits/ancestors in relation to road travel – i.e. whether or not it has been positive in a period of a year, 2) the absence of the experience of road accidents leads to the belief that the ancestors have been taking care of their living relatives 3) a decision is then made to express gratitude to the ancestors 4) the decision is made known to other family members 5) the decision is also made known to the ancestors - (up to this point the process is a private family affair), 6) it then becomes a public matter when distant relatives, neighbours and friends are also informed, 7) means to ensure that the decision is going to be carried out in practical terms are secured 9) the objects of sacrifices and offerings are introduced to the ancestors and blessed by incense – (*impepho*), and then prepared 10) offerings and sacrifices are shared among those present 11) an evaluation is made on the basis of the behaviour, as well as the reactions from invited guests – if there was no trouble and everybody was happy then the ancestors are believed to have been happy about the ritual, and 12) when the ancestors are perceived to be satisfied with the performance of the ritual, then the belief that they will continue to prevent road accidents from bothering the people concerned is strengthened. I now turn to the analysis and interpretation of the data related to “synthetistic” solutions.

5.5.3 “Synthetistic” Solutions

In response to the following question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The informant replied:

I am a full member of a revival church group referred to as the Welcome Church in Edendale. At the same time, I am carrying a rosary around my neck given to me by a former girl friend who is a member of the Roman Catholic Church. It has become part of me because everywhere I go I wear

¹⁹⁶ See Mbiti, 1991, – he also talks about “the shedding of the blood of human beings”, p.63. However, as the researcher in this study, I never came across a person who mentioned this fact.

it. I was told that it was going to help me whenever I am confronted by troubles in my life. I may not understand much about the rosary but I am satisfied that wearing it day and night has brought great relief in my life.¹⁹⁷

The above case is the only one in this research project which clearly demonstrates a syncretistic solution where the informant concerned, “uses a Christian form” (the wearing of a rosary in the course of road travel), “but without its content or objective”, as described by Howell¹⁹⁸. This suggests that when traditional solutions do not meet the need of preventing road accidents, the informant concerned has taken it upon himself to turn to a Christian solution. It would appear that the intention of the implicated informant is apparently to use a rosary as a magic “wand” with regard to prevention of road accidents. This intention is determined by what the informant shared with me (the researcher), at the time of the interview: that he is a member of a Pentecostal church, and does not adhere to the Roman Catholic faith. These in turn suggest that he had never been formally or informally introduced to Roman Catholic teaching about the rosary or its devotional value. Nevertheless, this also suggests that concern about the risk of being involved in a road accident and the need for protection in the course of road travel is so strong that “adopting” an unfamiliar religious object (a rosary), together with the accompanying practice (the actual wearing of this object), as well as the beliefs linked to all this, did not seem to be inappropriate to him. I now turn to the analysis and interpretation of the data related to “syncretistic” solutions. There are a number of cases in this research project in which “syncretism”, that is, the overlap and combination of different faiths is taking place.

5.5.4 “Syncretistic” Solutions

There are thirteen cases in this research of syncretistic activity, or a mixing of elements from the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion, in order to meet the need for the prevention of road accidents. The following are the percentages of the informants involved according to religious formations - about 20% from African Independent Churches, about 2% from a mainline Christian church, about 2% from a Pentecostal church, and about 2% as well, from an Evangelical church. These figures suggest the

¹⁹⁷ (15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church)

¹⁹⁸ See Howell, Allison M., 1997, p.252.

following two important things: 1) “the rejection of the dominance of the western form of Christianity (not Christianity itself) and / or the dominance of European culture”¹⁹⁹. This is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of the informants (about 20%), are adherents to African Independent Churches. 2) A highly inclusive approach to problems associated with road travel in order to “cover all the bases” from a faith perspective. In other words the stakes are such that the issue of religious “purity” must be foregone in the interests of prevention of road accidents. This latter point seems to tie up with what Ukpong calls:

...the response of those that have accepted the western form of Christianity but seeks to transform it from within and make it attain African cultural expressions through the process of inculturation²⁰⁰.

In order to understand the reasoning behind this mixing of elements from the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion, it would be important to refer to two popular concepts among the *amaZulu* people – the concepts known as *ukucobelela* and *ukuthaka* respectively. This is how the meanings of these concepts are explained:

The first concept refers to the practice of getting some medicines or sometimes knowledge about medicines and the way they are prepared for use, from other practitioners so as to fortify your own medicines. The second concept refers to the practice of strengthening one’s own medicines by adding to them certain medicines which are known to possess certain potencies and to make yourself more formidable than hitherto in your skill and medical practice²⁰¹.

In the context of using both an element from Christian religion, for example, holy water and African traditional medicines, the two concepts would be an attempt to give *izintelezi* (African traditional medicines), new power and new efficacy by *ukucobelela* from the Christian faith a Christian force (holy water). The combination of the two for an adherent to African Traditional Religion, means that African traditional herbal medicines – *izintelezi* have been strengthened and fortified by a Christian force so much so that there is no doubt that the mingling will do wonders, in terms of protecting the individual concerned in the course of road travel. Another example of a syncretistic solution

¹⁹⁹ See Ukpong, Justin, “Inculturation Theology in Africa: historical and hermeneutical developments”, (in Phiri Isabel Apawo and Dietrich Werner, eds., 2013: *The Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, Dorpspruit: Cluster Publications, pp. 530-41.

²⁰⁰ Ukpong, 2013: p.530.

²⁰¹ See Vilakazi Absolom, Mthethwa Bongani and Mpanza Mthembeni, 1986, *Shembe: the revitalization of African Society*, p.72). According to these three authors, “these two medical practices supply the conceptual basis of what is commonly referred to today as syncretism”.

involves the use of Christian prayer, together with African herbal medicines for personal bathing purposes. This suggests that people need to be blessed before they can embark upon road travel, in order to ensure a safe journey. Similarly, the use of Christian prayer simultaneously with African herbal medicines for the purposes of sprinkling a vehicle, suggests that, vehicles also need to be blessed in order to make them safer to use, and also to ensure that people are indeed safe in the event of some unforeseen circumstance happening to a vehicle in the course of road travel, in spite of it having been blessed. It could be argued that the sprinkling of a vehicle that is mentioned here seems to bring to mind one of the “modern” safety measures, that is a standard requirement for drivers to thoroughly check their vehicles each and every time before embarking upon road travel. In conclusion, the informants involved with syncretistic solutions appear to be saying that they themselves do not shy away from *ukucobelela* and *ukuthaka*, as these two medical practices seem to have the potential of enhancing primary safety in the course of road travel.

5.5.5 Closing the discussion on activities related to the prevention of accidents

There is more to road accidents than just road unworthy and speeding vehicles, as well as other scientifically determined causes. And as long as causes related to spiritual/religious agencies are ignored, especially those causes linked to African cultural religious beliefs and practices are ignored, it will take us a long time before we are able to deal effectively with problems associated with road travel²⁰².

These words from one of the informants, summarizes well the responses generally received. It is a very significant observation because it indicates that this informant has a very holistic understanding of what is going on amongst the people who use the Edendale Road on a daily basis. With such an observation, the informant seems to be suggesting an inclusive approach with regard to the issue of the prevention of road accidents. Material factors, moral factors, including economic and structural factors, need to be considered together with spiritual factors. This seems to be similar to the idea that has been promoted by two popular literature writers – Merhtens and Scott Peck²⁰³. According to Merhtens: “South Africans are trapped by a tendency which is prevalent in

²⁰² (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church)

²⁰³ Peck, M. Scott, 1996, *In Search of Stones: a pilgrimage of faith, reason and discovery*, London: Simon and Schuster, also says: “Instead of an either/or style of thinking, we need to push for both/and thinking, and he calls the word ‘And’ – ‘the Holy Conjunction’, most probably because of its inclusive nature, P.369.

Western Culture – tending toward ‘either/ or’ rather than ‘both/and’ thinking.²⁰⁴ It would be argued that it is because of this way of thinking therefore, that sometimes some people within the transport sector in the South African Public Service talk about the need to employ “the best world practices” in order to deal effectively with problems associated with road travel. However, the informants in this section appear to be suggesting that “the best world practices” need not be used at the exclusion of African Religious/Cultural solutions. Professor Balcomb makes the following observation concerning this ability to take into account both scientific (material) explanations as well as non-scientific (spiritual) explanations of causes of road accidents:

If, as the Human development Report of the United Nations development programme suggests, human development is to do with “a process of enlarging peoples’ choices” then the ability to seriously consider both spiritual as well as material causes of phenomena such as road accidents reflects the ironic possibility that the so-called “developing” nations that continue to live with an enchanted world view are more “developed” than those nations who have their choices limited by the one-dimensional perspective of a disenchanting world view unable to take seriously anything outside of the scientific frame of reference (Comment in private conversation made on 17/05/17).²⁰⁵

In the next section, I will do an analysis and interpretation of the data related to the use of sacred texts, that is, the use of both the Old and the New Testament biblical texts by the informants with reference to their understanding road travel.

5.6 The use of Biblical texts

5.6.1 Introduction

A quantitative analysis in this section reveals that thirty three informants (about 66%), use sacred texts drawn out of the Christian *Bible*. Nineteen of these (about 38%) use texts from the Old Testament, while the other fourteen (about 28%) use texts from the New Testament. A total of thirty four biblical texts have been used. Twenty two of these (about 65%) are from the Old Testament and twelve (about 35%) from the New

²⁰⁴ Hayakawa S. I. called this the “two value orientation” (1964:239); and E. Said (1978, 1994: 46, 327) has called this type of thinking “binary opposition” and has given the following examples: East/West, North/South, have/have not, White/Coloured etc. ‘Such a way of thinking is based,’ according to this author, on one of the colonial legacies which has this attitude: “West is best”, in Merhtens, Susan E., 2000, *Wake up South Africa: a sequel to leap frog option*, p.5. The phrase “West is best” in the context of this study seems to suggest that “modern” or “scientific” solutions are the best when it comes to problems associated with road travel.

²⁰⁵ See Human Development Report (HDR) 1990, published for the United Nations Development Programme, New York, Oxford University Press, p.1.

Testament. Five informants²⁰⁶ (about 15%) used a combination of texts in the following manner: 1) a combination of two Old Testament texts and a New Testament text²⁰⁷; 2) a combination of Old Testament texts²⁰⁸, and a combination of two New Testament texts taken from the synoptic gospels²⁰⁹.

In the following section, I will be presenting the ways in which some of the informants in this research actually understand the sacred texts they have used, especially how they use such texts in their understanding of road use. I will begin with the informants' interpretation of Old Testament texts and then follow this up with their commentaries on the New Testament texts they themselves have selected. But firstly, I need to give some preliminary remarks about some of the important issues related to the use and interpretation of all the texts in this section. When I look into both the Old Testament and New Testament texts used, as well as the interpretations given to such texts, there seems to be no doubt that a similar process to the one advocated by Nolan for workers is taking place with regard to road users as well. By this I mean "a process in which the experience, faith, biblical interpretations, and interests of workers [road users] are fundamental"²¹⁰. As the interpretations given by the informants appear to be a form of observational and survival driven interpretations, I prefer to call the modes of interpreting sacred texts in this study, road travel hermeneutics. Inherent in this road travel reading of biblical texts is a level of critical observational thinking whereby, the informants' experience of road travel gives meaning to the scripture texts used and the scripture texts give meaning to the experience of road users. Below, I will follow a framework proposed by Albert Nolan²¹¹ which according to this author, 'was meant to provide initial interest or motivation for workers (particularly in South Africa), to construct a genuine theology of work'. It would appear that the questions suggested by Nolan seem to be

²⁰⁶ (9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah's Witnesses; 8.2 KTP [f] Faith Mission Church; 8.3 & 9.1 [m] Rastafarian Religion; 13.2 KTP/BP [f] Zionist Church; and, 10.2 KTP/BP Anglican Church)

²⁰⁷ Isaiah 25:8, Zephaniah 2:3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-5

²⁰⁸ Psalms 43:5, 54:1,9, 119:55 and Isaiah 38:20; Ezekiel 18:34 and Psalm 94:19; Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32

²⁰⁹ Luke 12:32 and Mark 11:24

²¹⁰ See Nolan, Albert, "Work, the Bible, Workers, and Theologians: Elements of a Worker's Theology", in Wimbush Vincent, ed., 1996, SEMEIA 73 an experimental journal for biblical criticism, GA 30333 – 0399, "Reading With" African overtures, Part V: *Doing Theology with Ordinary Readers*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, pp.213

²¹¹ Nolan Albert, pp.219-220

appropriate theoretical tools to use with regard to the quest to understand what is going on with the use of biblical texts in the context of this research, as well as with the meanings attached to such texts by the informants. However, I have slightly adapted Nolan's questions to suit the purposes of this research, by substituting Nolan's references to "work" and "workers" with references to "commuters" and "road travel". The framework for this research therefore, takes the form of the following four questions:

- Is embarking upon road travel to get to work experienced as a curse or a blessing or both?
- Do the Bible texts used by the informants suggest that embarking upon road travel to get to work might also be a curse or a blessing or both?
- How can embarking upon road travel to get to work, be changed from being a curse into being a blessing?
- How does such redemption of embarking upon road travel to get to work fit into God's redemption?²¹²

The analysis and interpretation which will follow hereunder will be based on the above framework, and especially the first two questions, with a view of looking into the issues and concerns raised by the experience of road travel within the context of using such biblical texts. The last two questions will be used in the next chapter which is concerned with theological reflection. This research has revealed that embarking upon road travel is sometimes experienced as a curse and sometimes as a blessing. I now turn to the discussion of the idea that road travel is sometimes experienced as a curse.

5.6.2 A Road travel hermeneutics – road travel seen as a curse

To reiterate, the informants in this research have identified three kinds of causes of road accidents: causes where human beings are the main agents, which include – human error, human greed, as well as human sin. Causes related to spiritual/religious agency, which include things such as *ubuthakathi* (sorcery) and *ukuthwala* (witchcraft or bad magic), the role of the ancestors and neglected bothersome spirits, Satanism, the will of God. And

²¹² Adapted from Albert Nolan's "Workers and A Framework for a Theology of Work" in SEMEIA 73 (1996), p. 219: into "Commuters and A Framework for A People's Theology of the Edendale Road and its Selected Feeder Roads".

causes related to structural, economic and mechanical factors. The idea therefore, that embarking upon road travel is sometimes experienced as a curse by the informants emerges out of all the three causes mentioned above. Embarking upon road travel seems to be experienced as a curse, because every time a person is travelling in a kombi taxi, especially as a passenger, his/her life is totally out of his/her hands and in the hands of other forces – the driver of a kombi taxi or of a bus, God, the ancestors, neglected bothersome spirits, the ill will of others who might wish to harm him/her through *ubuthakathi* (sorcery) and / or *ukuthwala* (witchcraft or bad magic). For the informants in this research, this is compounded by the fact that they have no option but to travel to survive. So, they put their lives in the hands of forces over which they have no control each and every day they have to embark upon road travel in order to survive. This is compounded by the lack of knowledge about motor vehicles, rules of the road, and all other physical things that are operating. Moreover, there is also the fact that there are many of them travelling and when you have many fearful people together, the fear factor is compounded as well, by the fact that they are all strong believers in a world that is full of malevolent forces seeking their destruction. The informants are being faced daily with existential dangers that are associated with road travel, that is, the dangers that are all around them on the road, - speeding, reckless driving, drinking and driving, overloading, driving through a red robot; dangers in the spiritual world e.g. angry ancestors, neglected and bothersome spirits and the will of God, dangers from people of ill-will: e.g. Satanism, greedy drivers who put their interest in money before people's safety on the road, sorcery and witchcraft, and dangers posed by structural, economic and mechanical factors.

All these things become more intense when people get into kombi taxis or into buses. If a person is walking for example, he/she is in control of where he/she is going and what happens to him/her. Such a person can run away from danger if it comes to him/her. In a kombi taxi or a bus a person cannot. He/she is trapped in what could be his/her coffin. My own personal experience as a kombi taxi passenger is that there is usually little verbal communication between the travellers during kombi taxi trips. Each person (myself included) is usually self-absorbed and uncommunicative. People usually withdraw into

their own private world and only think about their own business while travelling rather than think about the person sitting next to them. This is a very “un-African” behaviour that is probably also induced by the western capitalist focus on the individual self, that is, the kind of individual self whom Charles Taylor refers to as a “Buffered Self”, that is, “not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers”, but shielded by not believing in these things and “having confidence in our own powers of moral ordering” (Taylor, 2007:p.27). However, it cannot be denied that such an “un-African” behaviour is also induced by the fact that road travel puts people in a situation where they think a lot about the precariousness of their own lives and the lives of those around them (family members and / or dependents) and, therefore, affords them the opportunity to reflect on matters of life and death that impact on them in a broad sense and especially about religious matters, including the use of biblical texts. The scripture verses that they quote are giving expression to this sense of vulnerability, weakness and having no control – a sense of experiencing embarking upon road travel as a curse. So their experience is finding expression in the scriptures and the scriptures are being given meaning by their experiences.

The following are some of the verses that the informants are using to show how these verses give expression to their experience of embarking upon road travel as a curse:

The Lord God saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that his heart contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long. The Lord God regretted having made human beings on earth²¹³.

Fools say in their hearts, there is no God. Their deeds are loathsome and corrupt; no one does what is right. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the human race, to see if even one is wise, if even one seeks God²¹⁴.

You may be quite sure that in the last days there will be some difficult times. People will be self-centered and avaricious, boastful, arrogant and rude; disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious; heartless and intractable; they will be slanderers, profligates, savages and enemies of everything that is good; they will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it. Keep away from people like that²¹⁵.

²¹³ **Genesis 6:5,6**; - (17.4 KTP [m] The Ark of Prophecy Church (*umKhumbi*))

²¹⁴ **Psalms 14:1,2**; - (15.2 KTP [m] Welcome Church)

²¹⁵ **2 Timothy 3: 1-5**; - (9.2 KTP [f] Jehovah’s Witnesses)

You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘you shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgement’. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement....²¹⁶

Whether these biblical texts are used in reference to road travel or any other human situation for that matter, there is no doubt that it would be unrealistic to dissociate some of the words and phrases found in them with the experience of a curse. This is especially true of words and phrases such as: “human wickedness on earth”, and “human heart contrive wicked schemes”, in the Genesis text. “There is no God”, and “human deeds are loathsome and corrupt”, in the quoted Psalm. “People are self centered and avaricious, arrogant and rude, disobedient, heartless treacherous and reckless”, in the 2 Timothy text. The words: “kill”, or “kills” and “angry”, in the Matthew text. However, it is also apparent that the above scripture texts do not necessarily refer or make use of the words - road travel or a situation whereby people are embarking upon road travel. Nevertheless, the informants (road users) seem “to have”, that is, in the words of Nolan, “notice[d] something of their own [road travel] experience in these texts”²¹⁷. Other texts used by the informants, suggest that sometimes embarking upon road travel is actually seen as a blessing. It is therefore to the discussion related such an experience, that I now turn to.

5.6.3 Road travel seen as a blessing

It is also apparent that the informants (road users) in this research have also ‘notice[d] something of their own experience in the scripture texts that do not necessarily make use of the phrase “road travel” at all’²¹⁸, and that something is this - road travel is sometimes a blessing for them. In the next section, the discussion is about the didactic role that road travel plays in the lives of road travelling believers. One of the things that will be apparent in that discussion is that virtues and benevolent behaviour are also exemplified amongst the informants. This suggests that embarking upon road travel is indeed sometimes seen as a blessing. Such blessing is manifested by the following feelings: a feeling that embarking upon road travel has led some of the informants to come to grips with relevant spiritual lessons contained in the scripture texts they use – the presence of God’s grace in the course of road travel manifested in the following scripture texts they

²¹⁶ **Matthew 5: 21, 22;** - (18.1 KTP[m] Anglican Church)

²¹⁷ Nolan Albert., *Work, the Bible, Workers, and Theologians: Elements of a Worker’s Theology*, p.162.

²¹⁸ Nolan Albert., *Work, the Bible, Workers, and Theologians: Elements of a Worker’s Theology*, p.162.

have used – “God is so near to us, whenever we call upon him”²¹⁹ - a suggestion that prayer brings about God’s grace in the form of God’s presence which leads to the protection of road users in the course of road travel. Again, “we rely on the name of the Lord our God”²²⁰ – a suggestion that to have a totally reliable God in the course of road travel makes the informant to see the experience of road travel as a blessing. Hence, one of the informants is bold enough to quote the following text: – an expression of a feeling of confidence in the God who seems to do “The Lord is my shepherd...” more than reliable road traffic officials when guiding the flow of road traffic, for example, to prevent road accidents when robots are not working in a congested intersection. The more that God does is suggested by the word “shepherd”. And unlike road traffic officials, he does not protect people only on that part of the road where there might be danger – he accompanies/travels with them all the way and also gives them courage. Another sign that road travel is sometimes experienced as a blessing is the manifestation of God’s love alluded to in this next text – “For God so loved the world... did not send his son... to condemn..., but that the world might be saved through him”²²¹.

Others still, have learned to embrace personal morality and ethical considerations such as introspection and need for personal change and transformation. This suggests that embarking upon road travel is a blessing for an informant who experiences this kind of positive change. One of the key texts which act as a motivating factor in this regard is this one:

...let us put away the works of darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the weapons of light. Let us walk in loveliness of life...let us not walk in revelry or drunkenness, in immorality and in shamelessness and in strife²²².

In the above sacred text, we are confronted with an example of the similarity between the practice of a Christian religious spiritual teaching – related to reading a scripture text, meditating or reflecting on it, and then appropriating it to a concrete life situation. And this seems to have some similarity with teaching road users about the rules of the road, for example, those that act as teaching aid tools cautioning road users, for example, about

²¹⁹ **Deut 4: 7** (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church)

²²⁰ **Ps 20: 7** (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

²²¹ **John 3: 7, 8** (19.3 [m] Roman Catholic Church)

²²² **Romans 13: 11-14** (14.3 KTP [m] Faith Mission Church; 18.4 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

the danger of drinking and driving, speeding and driving through a red robot – actions that are contrary to good moral and ethical standards. The call in biblical texts, to embrace personal morality and ethical considerations in the course of road travel is further enhanced by using a scripture text which seems to be meant to be understood as suggesting that - the ultimate cause of people behaving badly on the road is the deceptive devil, and thus, emphasizing that road users need to “be calm but vigilant...”, [but also to], “stand up to him strong in faith”²²³. It would appear that even though the calmness and vigilance suggested in the above scripture text is consistent with what is expected of a driver who has been given some rudimentary knowledge of operating a motor vehicle, the directive to “stand up to him strong in faith”, suggests that by using this scripture text, the informants concerned are thinking beyond the practical knowledge of operating a motor vehicle. They are more likely to be thinking that embarking upon road travel can indeed be a blessing if a driver also knows about his/her spiritual self as well. In other words, embarking upon road travel is sometimes seen as a blessing by the passengers when a driver shows signs that he or she is good in operating a vehicle - he/she is calm and vigilant at the same time. On top of this, when such a driver also knows more about himself/herself, that is, when there are discernable signs - manifested by the way he or she manages driving a vehicle in a continually changing traffic context, that he or she is motivated by faith in God. In some of the texts we find these words: “we rely on the name of the lord our God”²²⁴, “I sought the Lord, and he delivered me from all my fears”²²⁵, and finally, “when anxiety increases in my heart, your consolation calms my soul”²²⁶. Some of the key words in these texts respectively are “rely”, “delivered”, and “consolation” and they are all used with reference to God. The first word in this list suggests the undoubted availability of God. The last two suggest God’s practical actions/responses. All three suggest that embarking upon road travel is seen as a blessing when a person has someone to rely on (God in this case), and someone who is ready to console, by giving protection in the course of road travel. In the next section, the focus of

²²³ **1 Peter 5: 8, 9** (11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church; 17.3 KTD [m] & 19.4 [f] Faith Mission Church; 18.3 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God Church)

²²⁴ Ps. 20: 7

²²⁵ Ps. 34: 4

²²⁶ Ps. 94: 19

the discussion is on the didactic role that road travel plays in the lives of believers who use the Edendale Road on a daily basis to get to work.

5.7 The didactic role of road travel

There are numerous references from the informants in this research to the way road travel teaches them about faith and about life, that is, from spiritual lessons, to personal morality and ethical considerations such as introspection and the need for personal change and transformation, to broader theological and / or spiritual and philosophical issues, such as the need to come to terms with and overcome what one of the informants calls a “shameful death”²²⁷. In the next section, I will pursue this latter issue together with other issues involved in the way that road travel is perceived to be teaching the informants about faith.

5.7.1 What Road Travel Teaches about faith

Two of the most important spiritual lessons that seem to emerge from the responses of the informants with regard to road travel and faith are the following: “road use tests and strengthens faith”²²⁸. And, “road travel provides an opportunity for God to show his love, mercy and grace”²²⁹. An excellent example of how some of the informants make sense of the idea that their faith in God is tested and strengthened can be demonstrated by the following response from one of the informants:

When my brother was killed in a road accident, we all thought it was a very bad way to die. This is the same as saying that God allowed our brother to experience a shameful death. We were in the grip of sorrow and we allowed it to blind us so much so that we forgot that our brother was a Christian and he believed in God in all the days he was with us. We also ignored the fact that it was not God who was driving the kombi taxi, nor the truck that collided with it when the accident happened. The simple truth is that the driver of one of the cars lost control and the vehicle moved to the opposite road and the two cars collided. There is no shame in being killed because of the mistakes of other people²³⁰.

Tied up with the belief that road travel tests and strengthens faith in the above account is the idea that road travel also teaches about the need to come to terms with what the

²²⁷ (13.2 KTP [f] Zionist Church)

²²⁸ (13.2 KTP [f] Zionist Church; 16.3 KTP [f] Anglican Church; 17.2 KTP [f] The Will of God Ministries; 18.4 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church; and, 19.1 KTP [F] Universal Kingdom of God Church)

²²⁹ (6.3 KTO [m] Roman Catholic Church; 10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church; and, 13.1 KTP [f] Evangelical Lutheran Church)

²³⁰ (13.2 KTP [f] Zionist Church)

informant calls “shameful death” – a concept that not only does have profound theological and / or spiritual implications but is also culture specific. In *Nguni* culture (Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi cultures), for instance, when a person has experienced a horrifying death (e.g. in such a way that his/her body is burnt or disfigured beyond recognition, or when the body limbs are dreadfully separated from each other as a result of a road accident), people refer to this as *ukufa okubi kakhulu, okufikisela ihlazo namahloni* (death which is too bad, disgraceful and embarrassing), and equally so to the deceased and his/her family, as well as to the family’s ancestors. Such an occurrence exposes the deceased person and his/her family to all kinds of bad public scrutiny and speculation. For instance, someone will ask another person: *uthi abathakathi nje?* (Do you not think that these people practice sorcery?) Or that the deceased has suffered this kind of death because he was involved in some secretive shady dealings which have harmed a lot of other people. The implied conclusion is that God is exposing and punishing the deceased through “shameful death” for all the evil deeds he/she has done in secret or under the cover of darkness. Moreover, speculation can go as far as suggesting that *abaphansi bakubo bamfulathele* (the deceased has been forsaken by his own ancestors). This will also bring about fear to the deceased family that they also might suffer the same fate. All these happenings can indeed, test both an individual’s faith, as well as the faith of his/her family – especially faith in God. In the above account therefore, the informant is adopting an apologetic stance, or setting the record straight, particularly for the sake of the deceased who can no longer defend himself against what seems to her to be hostile public scrutiny. The informant does this by boldly stating thus: “our brother was a Christian and he believed in God all the days he was with us”. Moreover, God is exonerated from the idea that the punishment of the deceased came from him - “it was not God who was driving the kombi taxi, nor the vehicle which collided with it when the accident happened”, rather, there is a suggestion that the “shameful death” was caused by human error – “one of the drivers lost control”. Finally, the argument presented by the informant in this case ends up with these words: “there is no shame in being killed because of the mistakes of other people” – suggesting that the faith of the informant has not just only been tested and strengthened, it also seems to have been validated by what the informant has said above. In this sense then, road travel tests,

strengthens and validates faith. The idea that road use provides opportunities for God to show his love, mercy and grace can be understood better within the context of the notion of the road as a liminal space discussed in the previous chapter. The vulnerability that liminal space induces causes people to reflect about the precariousness of their own lives and their experience of the benevolent involvement of God when they are not in control. I will examine some examples of this. Two of the informants put it this way respectively:

I am usually troubled by an awareness of how vulnerable and powerless I am during road travel trips²³¹; [and], I do not have a choice but to travel in a kombi taxi that is available at any given time, believing that such a choice is not mine but God's choice²³²;

In these two accounts, the reality of the risk of experiencing a road accident in the course of road travel is acknowledged. In the first account, this is represented by alluding to a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness, while in the second account the phrase: "I have no choice..." says it all. The word "troubled" used in the first account seems to suggest that as far as the informant is concerned, it does not make sense for her (or any other road user for that matter), to be subjected to danger while traveling to survive. However, the informant in the second case seems to have found something which makes sense for both these two informants in these words: "...it is not my choice but God's choice". It makes sense for the second informant to come to the conclusion that it is usually when people like herself, are on the human threshold of vulnerability in the course of road travel, that God is provided with opportunities to show his love, mercy and grace. Manifestations of God's love, mercy and grace have been expressed thus:

I have no doubt that using the Edendale Road often strengthens my faith, because it helps me to trust in God and to have confidence that the God I believe in cares for me and is always ready to protect me²³³.

One of the important things being suggested in the above account is that, whether it is confidence or trust in God – they are both manifestations of God's grace. The phrase "I have no doubt..." seems to suggest the following four things: firstly, that the informant has been overwhelmed by uncertainty. Secondly, that the informant has taken the initiative to get herself involved in some form of a meditation exercise, or deep reflection.

²³¹ (11.3 KTP [m] Roman Catholic Church)

²³² (12.1 KTP [f] Presbyterian Church)

²³³ (8.1 KTP [f] Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission – *KwaMasango*)

Thirdly, that meditation has in turn resulted in uncertainty being replaced by certainty. And fourthly, all this has led to an improved faith so much so that, it seems appropriate for me (the researcher in this study) to put the following words in the mouth of this informant: “yes it is true that God is involved in road travel life”. It would appear that in this case the seemingly transformed faith of the informant concerned is itself also a manifestation of God’s love, mercy and grace. In the next section, the discussion will focus on the virtues related to life that are being learned as a result of road use.

5.7.2 What Road Travel Teaches about life

It is apparent from the responses of the informants in this research that there are specific virtues learned and taught as a result of road use. High on the list of virtues that have emerged from the responses of the informants is patience, that is, “the ability to endure discomfort without complaint”²³⁴, which in turn,

...calls into play some other virtues such as [concern and consideration for others], humility, tolerance, self-control, respect, sympathy, compassion, and generosity – [thus], ‘making patience a complex of other virtues rather than, a fundamental virtue’²³⁵.

All the causes of road accidents (particularly those related to bad human behaviour), that have emerged from the responses of the informants in this research suggest that, they (the causes of road accidents), are a set of really irritating circumstances for the informants especially, because they put the lives of all road users, including the informants themselves, in a precarious position. Patience is manifested by not only concern and consideration for the self, that is, “I pray for myself...” but it is also manifested by concern and consideration for others – “I also pray for other road users, including those who sometimes put our lives in danger”²³⁶. The people who are prayed for can be divided into two distinct groups in terms of power relations. Firstly, there are those who are the most vulnerable, powerless and without control in the course of road travel (the self and other road users). Secondly, there are those with some form of power and / or the

²³⁴ www.Christianitytoday.com/biblicalstudies/articles/spiritualformation/virtueofpatience: “In it-self, not complaining carries no particular virtue. Something else must be required to make someone’s lack of complaint virtuous. That something is discomfort. It is because a circumstance is uncomfortable for someone that we find her refusal to complain remarkable and thus regard her as patient”, p.1.

²³⁵ www.Christianitytoday.com/biblicalstudies/articles/spiritualformation/virtueofpatience

²³⁶ (10.2 KTP [f] Anglican Church)

authority to control and / or change the bad situation on the road for the better (drivers/operators, as well as some of the road traffic officials). And the latter are presented as “...those who sometimes put our lives in danger” by the informant. The informant is in the group that is not complaining, in spite of the fact that such a group is faced with an uncomfortable situation. Instead, the informant has learned to exercise some of the virtues mentioned above – humility, tolerance, self-control, compassion, generosity and sympathy, that is, she has learned an important lesson of life, and all because of being involved in road travel. A few other informants have also demonstrated that concern and consideration for other road users is an important aspect of road travel. For instance, three of them also say this same thing: “I also pray for other road users”²³⁷. However, one of these three informants has added another seemingly important aspect to the idea of concern and consideration for others. The informant has done this by stating thus: “insisting on my own rights may impinge on the rights of others”²³⁸.

This is a remarkable insight which forms the basis of law. At the same time, this very insight is by implication also the foundation of the road traffic rules and regulations. Moreover, it also involves virtues such as humility/modesty, sacrifice, tolerance, detachment and self-control. It also seems highly unlikely that a person who does not possess any of the virtues mentioned above, can easily relinquish his/her own rights because of his/her concern and consideration for others. Another fascinating thing is the idea that passengers in particular are solicited to show concern and consideration for drivers by praying for them – the sign in one kombi taxi that says, “Please pray for this driver”²³⁹. I say fascinating because usually it is the drivers who are reminded by messages displayed on road signs informing them, for example, that “Speed Kills” and / or that drinking and driving is prohibited by law. The above case then seems to suggest, an attempt or a desire to use a Christian practice, that is, prayer as a back up strategy for the road traffic rules and regulations. Then we have one informant (a private car driver), whose response suggests that another life related lesson in the course of road travel for

²³⁷ (11.2 KTP [m] Zionist Church, 11.3 KTP [f] Roman Catholic Church and, 18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church)

²³⁸ (18.1 KTP [m] Anglican Church)

²³⁹ (6.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church) – a message from the Highway Center, displayed inside a kombi taxi.

him involves realizing that there are various problems associated with road travel and subsequently, committing one self to do something in order to contribute in reducing those problems. This informant has stated that: “some of us show tolerance at all times so that those road users who are stubbornly intolerant can learn from us”²⁴⁰. This suggests a case of leading by example in as far as tolerance on the road is concerned. In other words, there is a certain degree of commitment to show good behaviour in such a way that it might in turn influence other drivers to embrace and adopt the same approach. There is also another informant (a kombi taxi driver), who seems to be saying that he is one of those few drivers who value “respect for their work, as well as respect for other road users”²⁴¹. Once again, this suggests commitment to adopt good behaviour as a life lesson, which has been learned because of being involved in road travel.

Some of the passengers seem also to have learned to take up the challenge of getting themselves involved, in the commitment to efforts to encourage good behaviour on the road. For instance, one of them says: “stubborn road users learn to change their bad behaviour because of people like me who constantly pray for them”²⁴². What seems to be emerging from the above cases is the idea of road travel as a “mission”. Commitment also seems to emerge as a road travel virtue learned for the informant who has stated that: “I have learned to cope with worry about the possibility of being involved in a road accident”²⁴³. This suggests an unwavering commitment to travel because of the need to survive, in spite of the precariousness of the informant’s life brought about by daily road travel. Understanding also appears to be another life lesson learned as a result of road travel – understanding one’s own personal identity, one’s historical origin, connection with other people, as well as relations of kindred. The informant puts this in this way:

Road travel has led me to ask myself these questions – Who am I? Where do I come from? What is my relationship with those around me, as well as those through whom I came into this world?²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ (14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church)

²⁴¹ (17.2 KTD [m] Will of God Ministries)

²⁴² (18.3 KTP [f] Universal Kingdom of God Church)

²⁴³ (8.2 KTP [m] Faith Mission Church)

²⁴⁴ (16.2 KTD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

I would appear that the idea of asking the above questions seems to be motivated by a desire for a change of behaviour, or maintaining the current behaviour if it is good and acceptable for the purposes of road travel. I base this argument on the fact that the informant who brought up the above response is himself a kombi taxi driver, who even though he is in a better position (by being in control), than his passengers, his apparent commitment to understanding important aspects of life suggests an openness and / or a willingness to change.

It is apparent that road travel brings out the best and the worst in people, both virtues and vices, benevolent, as well as malevolent behaviour. Both the virtues and vices that have emerged are not specific to any one of the religions that are exemplified amongst the informants in this research. It does not seem to matter whether road users adhere to African Traditional Religion, Christian, Muslim, or African Independent Christianity, or indeed Humanist – without any religious affiliation at all – these seem to come up as universal virtues applicable to everyone and any one.

5.8 Other related issues

There are a host of issues which are related to road travel that have come up in this research. Among them the tension between African traditional/religious beliefs and practices and modernity, the issue of the overlap and combination of elements from different faiths (what others refer to as syncretism or hybridity), the “veneration” as opposed to “worship” of ancestors, as well as the issue of ethical and unethical behaviour. Moreover, these issues are compatible with the idea that road travel puts people in a situation where they think a lot about the precariousness of their lives and therefore affords them the opportunity to reflect on matters of life and death that impact on them in a broad sense, and especially about religious matters – God, prayer, ethical and non-ethical behaviour, how we should behave towards others, the meaning of culture and tradition, the spiritual world – issues that constitute the basic elements of theology. In the next section I will do an analysis and interpretation of the data that seems to be related to what scholars and / or theologians and other writers refer to as syncretism or hybridity.

5.8.1 Syncretism or Hybridity?

It is necessary to note before engaging in any discussion in this case, that the informants in this research know nothing about syncretism or hybridity *per se*, including knowledge about the advantages and / or the disadvantages that are integral to these two concepts. These are the terms that scholars have coined to try to understand the phenomena of combining different elements in the exercise of faith. Clearly road users have no compunction in combining elements from different faith traditions. They are more interested in their own survival than being fastidious about the so-called purity of the faith.

Thirteen (about 26%) of the informants in this research unambiguously stated that they are indeed involved in the mixing of elements from different faiths in order to decrease the risk of being involved in a road accident. relation to their attempts to prevent the risk of being involved in a road accident. Twelve (about 24%) of these simply stated that they each “use prayer or prayer to God and holy water and, *impepho* (incense) when consulting ancestors, as well as African traditional herbal medicines (*izintelezi*)”²⁴⁵. The former are elements which are associated with the Christian faith, while the latter are elements which are linked to African Traditional Religion. The thirteenth informant stated that over and above this he also “uses ashes, domestic waste which comes from sweeping floors, red candles, an animal sacrifice (a red cock), as well as divination”²⁴⁶. What is being suggested by this mixing of elements from different faiths is the pragmatic reconstitution of their own faith; that is, a faith that can suite their immediate needs related to road travel. In other words, it is a primary Road Safety faith related strategy that is believed to be working for the informants concerned. It would appear that the term hybridity seems to be more appropriate in this case than syncretism because the former comes out of a holistic view of life that recognizes the interconnectedness of all things and therefore the use of different elements from different faiths in a religious matter of protection from road accidents. Syncretism on the other hand, is usually a

²⁴⁵ (13.2 KTP [f], 11.2 KTP [m] and 14.4 PCD [m] Zionist Church; 14.2 KTD [m] Christ for All Nations; 6.1 KTD [m] and 7.1 PCD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church; 12.3 KTP [m] Dutch Reformed Church; 14.1 KTP [f] African Gospel Church; 16.1 KTP/BP [f] and 19.2 KTP [m] African Christian Church; 17.1 KTP [f] Assembly of God; and, 18.2 KTP [m] The Church of the Twelve Apostles)

²⁴⁶ (15.1 KTP [m] Salvation Army)

pejorative term that comes out of a dualistic worldview that separates “good things” from “bad things” and tries to produce something “pure” with all the “good things” in it without any “bad things”. This is not the way African philosophy works. In one of the sections above I attempted to demonstrate how African philosophy works by putting forward two twin concepts (*ukucobelela* and *ukuthaka*) related to dealing with health matters, including the matter concerning the prevention of road accidents²⁴⁷. The two concepts related to *isiZulu* or Zulu culture, tie up well with the term hybridity, especially when we consider the idea put forward by Muller²⁴⁸ that “It [hybridity] seems to evoke an unapologetic sense of blending, whereby two different traditions contribute in roughly equal measure to a new cultural/religious product” (2008:p.819). Similarly, the two concepts above evoke the same sense of blending elements of both knowledge and material products from different religious cultures at the same time. Through such a process of blending a new and more fortified product seems to be more likely to be produced. I now turn to the discussion involving the issue of the tension between modernity and African traditional religion/culture.

5.8.2 The tension between modernity and African traditional religion/culture

Basically, modernity has to do with a rejection of traditional views and methods and replacing them with contemporary or modern ones. African traditionalists on the other hand insist that it is still appropriate to embrace religious beliefs and practices or customs handed down from one generation to another most probably because, for them, these are established ways of doing things or customs. The tension between modernity and African tradition that is apparent in this study comes about as a result of the fact that there are well established modern views and methods of dealing with problems associated with road travel – modern views and strategies related to safe road usage. “Modern” human beings do not need what Nurnberger has called “dependence on transcendent powers of any kind” (2007:p.17-6). According to Nurnberger,

The emphasis in modernity is on human mastery. Emancipation, autonomy, power and control are the driving forces. All authority is rejected – whether the authority of the church, the *Bible*,

²⁴⁷ See foot note 50 above

²⁴⁸ See Muller, R., 2008, *Rain Rituals and Hybridity in Southern Africa*, ISSN 1609-9982-VERBUM ET ECCLESIJA JRG 29 (3).

cultural traditions, the state, the family, the parents or the ancestors. Individuals are entitled to live their own lives (individualism), see for themselves (empiricism), think for themselves (rationalism), employ their own means (pragmatism), pursue their own interests (economic liberalism) and satisfy their own desires (hedonism)' (Nurnberger Klaus, 2007, p.10).

Let me look at each of the above modernity linked trends, in relation to some of the issues that have emerged as a result of African traditional religious beliefs and practices in this study, with reference to road travel. Firstly, there is mastery – complete control over someone or something, including thorough knowledge or skill. The continuing injuries and deaths of people using the road and the destruction of property (vehicles), do not suggest that there is reasonable control over the situation on the South African roads. And some people cannot even have control over themselves so that they drive cautiously and save innocent lives.

Secondly, there is individualism – selfishness or narcissism or self-love or self-worship. Selfishness in this study has been identified with human greed, a flawed character trait which undermines not only the road traffic rules and regulations, but also the safety needs of other road users. Thirdly, there is empiricism – it also involves relying on knowledge (in this case knowledge of how to manage a vehicle and self properly while driving). It is apparent in this study that selfishness works against relying on the knowledge of the road traffic rules and regulations – hence, the continuing occurrence of road accidents. Fourthly, there is rationalism – basing opinions and actions on reason rather than on religious beliefs. It seems to be delusionary to think that reason can actually work when selfishness is at the helm of other people's lives within the road travel environment. Fifthly, there is pragmatism – when it is an exclusive pragmatism that is advocated by modernity, that is, a pragmatism that excludes all other views and methods perceived to be capable of contributing to safe road usage. But such an attitude leads to the marginalization of ATR beliefs and practices. Sixthly, there is economic liberalism – driven by a profit motive and supported by moderate political and social reform. Finally, there is hedonism – belief that pleasure is the main aim in life, including road travel life. The combination of all of these things means that it is not surprising that commuters are gripped by worry, anxiety and uncertainty, while travelling to get to work and back to their places of residence.

In other words, the above-mentioned modernity related trends seem to be the fundamental aspects in fuelling worry and anxiety and uncertainty on the one hand and, theological reflection on the other hand by commuting road users, regardless of whether or not they know this to be the case. The question which might be asked now is this one: *why the tension?* This question is especially relevant given the idea that adherents to African Traditional Religion in this study are not advocating for a “ban” on modern views and methods of dealing with problems associated with road travel. Rather, this research has shown that they would prefer to have African Traditional religious beliefs and practices taken seriously as well.

In the next section, I will turn to the issue of “worship” as opposed to “veneration” of ancestors. This is also one of the controversial issues in theological circles which has sparked highly contested debates. The fact that it has also emerged in this study suggests that discussions and debates about it are far from over.

5.8.3 “Veneration” versus “worship” of ancestors

One of the controversial issues related to road travel which has come up in this research is this one: Is there any indication from the responses of the informants that suggests that ancestors are actually “worshipped” instead of being “venerated” by people who adhere to African Traditional religion? Adequate reflection on the meaning of these two concepts is needed, that is, before I decide on which one to use in relation to what has emerged from the responses of the informants. Talking about their meaning would be a good starting point in this regard. In one of the dictionaries of Christianity I have found the following two complementary explanations of the term “veneration”:

Veneration [is a] feeling of awe and respect excited by the dignity, sacredness, superiority, wisdom, or hallowed association of a person. In traditions that use images or icons and acknowledge Saints, [it means] reverence paid to them as distinct from worship offered to God²⁴⁹.

In the same dictionary, this is how the term “worship” is explained: “sense of veneration and adoration toward God”, [and / or] “act, process, or instance of expressing such veneration through performing a religious exercise or ritual” (Thomas, 2005:p.724).

²⁴⁹ Thomas, Kurian George, 2005, ed., *Nelson’s Dictionary of Christianity: the authoritative resource of the Christian world*, Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, p.698.

These two concepts are clearly two different things. The main difference is that God is the only object of worship, while a person or a saint (God's creature) is the object of veneration. Sunquist has this to say about veneration and Christianity with reference to African peoples:

'In Africa, ancestor veneration is not so much a matter of cultic worship as it is an ongoing communication and participation of the deceased with the family – one of the central beliefs of African Religion'²⁵⁰.

Furthermore, Kahakwa has this to add with regard to the above assertion by Sunquist:

Ancestors are past and present, active and passive. Continuous communication between ancestors and their descendants is the sphere of ancestor veneration with roots in the conviction that the deep communion among family members is not broken by death²⁵¹.

Given the above explanations, including my understanding of the information presented to me by the informants themselves, I have decided that their responses seem to be more in line with the idea of “veneration” rather than “worship” of ancestors.

Let me now present an example of what I am talking about. One informant states that “[I]t is always necessary to remember one's own ancestors because they connect us with God as they are closer to God and are therefore in a better position to intercede for us before God”²⁵².

In this case the informant is clearly referring to family ancestors. Moreover, they are presented as having acquired a state of honour and dignity to “hang around” God after their death. In other words, they are believed to have become “companions” and / or “servants” of God, who have been assigned the task of looking after the affairs of their living human descendants. Thomson and Aukofer say this about the Saints who are also venerated just like the ancestors: “[T]here is a supernatural power imputed to them (Christian Saints) – it might be easier to think of them as heavenly lobbyists”

²⁵⁰ Sunquist, Scott W. “Ancestor Veneration and Christianity: Overview”, in Daniel Patte, 2010, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, p.30.

²⁵¹ Kahakwa Sylvester, “Ancestor Veneration and Christianity in Africa”, in Daniel Patte, 2010, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, p.31.

²⁵² (19.2 KTP [m] African Christian Church)

(2011:p.119). It would appear that ancestors are most probably seen in the same way as the saints in Christian religion - who are venerated not because Christians believe that they are gods or are equal to God, but because Christians believe that their saints are such a powerful representation of God for them that they believe the saints deserve to be venerated. Similarly, family ancestors are seen in the same way as the Christian saints – perhaps minor saints (because they are concerned with individual family matters), compared to the saints of the universal church, but saints nevertheless. The two co-authors quoted above have also stated that, “Catholics are invoking access to God, asking the saints to ‘intercede’ for them” (p.119). This is similar to what the latter informant is referring to. In addition, family ancestors, just like the Christian saints, seem to be perceived as having what is popularly known as “the halo effect” – ‘a type of cognitive bias in which our overall impression of a person [in this case ancestors], influences how we feel and think about his or her character. Essentially one’s overall impression of a person (“He/She is nice”) impacts evaluations of that person’s specific traits (He/She is also smart)’²⁵³. Similarly, in the informant’s response above about family ancestors, we find the following impression and evaluations of their specific traits – “ancestors are closer to God”, “they connect us with God”, and also “they intercede for us before God”. I would argue that it is possible to add one more trait specific to the way family ancestors are perceived in the above case – “ancestors protect us from road accidents”. All that has been stated above then suggest a case whereby ancestors are undoubtedly venerated. Then we have also two similar cases about people who are not only family ancestors (in relation to their own families), but are actually also considered as religious/spiritual ancestors by their living human followers – Isaiah *Shembe* and Paulos John *Masango*. The following are the responses linked to these two church leaders respectively:

The person who was baptized by John the Baptist to whom God in the Bible said ‘this is my beloved son, listen to him’, was actually Isaiah *Shembe* himself – *iLanga lamalanga* [the greatest

²⁵³ www.nic.com>halo effect: It was named by psychologist Edward Thorndike in reference to a person being perceived as having a halo. “Halo stands for helping and leading others. The halo effect highlights kids who can make the world a better place”. As a noun: ha-lo effect means – the tendency of an impression created in one area to influence opinion in another area. It is also understood as cognitive bias in which an observer’s overall impression of a company, brand or product influences the observer’s feelings and thoughts about the company’s or brand’s or product’s properties.

of the heavenly stars], *iNyanga yeZulu* [the light of heaven] *uThingo* [the Rainbow]; and he also instructed us his followers, to always remain in close association with our own ancestors²⁵⁴.

And also:

UBaba uMasango (spiritual/religious father) was a prophet like Jesus. He was sent by God to heal the world from all kinds of sicknesses, diseases and misfortunes, including those related to road accidents by using *iChibi* (Holy Water)²⁵⁵.

The crucial question arising from these two accounts is whether we can say without any doubt that there is some indication in both of them that the two spiritual/religious ancestors/leaders are worshipped or venerated. My own answer to this is that it depends on two critical issues – the issue of authority coupled with the halo effect as well as the issue of how they are seen in relation to Jesus by their own followers.

As spiritual/religious ancestors, who seem to be thought of by their followers as being a step higher in the authority hierarchy than the “ordinary” family ancestors, it might not be further from the truth to suggest that they are both “venerated” and “worshipped” at the same time – “venerated” by their own living family human descendents, but worshipped by some of their own followers at the same time, for example, by all those who agree with the way they have been portrayed above. But even more importantly, it would be because of the followers’ overall impression, for instance, in the case of Isaiah *Shembe*: (“He is God’s beloved son” [and], “Listen to him”), or in the case of Paulos *uMasango*: (“He is a prophet like Jesus” [and], “He was sent by God to heal”), which impacts on their evaluations (“He can therefore, protect me from any danger, including danger related to road travel”). I would argue that the similarities that have been made above between the two church leaders on the one hand and Jesus on the other hand, seem to suggest that some of their followers might be entertaining the view that since Isaiah *Shembe* and Paulos *Masango* also have a closer and more powerful relationship with God, that is, more powerful than ‘ordinary’ family ancestors, they too therefore, deserve to be worshipped Just like Jesus.

²⁵⁴ (7.1 PCD [m] Nazareth Baptist Church)

²⁵⁵ (8.1 KTP [f] Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission Church)

5.9 Conclusion

In this research we have seen that there is a variety of religious faiths – Mainline Christianity (people who are members of “established” churches such as the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches e.g. the Lutheran Church, Anglican church and Presbyterian church), Pentecostal Christianity, African Independent Christianity, Christian sects (e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses), Islamic Religion, Rastafarian Religion and African Traditional Religion. Among these we have a variety of theologies about God, sin and salvation, prayer, ritual, and notions of morality and ethics. All these are brought together in the travel experience. A central theme that has emerged is that of respect – respect for various sacred things, respect for people (both the living and the living dead), respect for property, and the road travel environment, respect for other people’s time and finally, respect for God. Moreover, it has become apparent that road travel is an arena in which both sin and salvation become manifest. In other words, road travel throws up sin and salvation – sin in the malevolent side of people (often transferred to the ancestors and God) and salvation in the benevolent side of people. So when we talk about a theology of the Edendale Road (or any other road for that matter), we are actually talking about the possibility of the road itself becoming a theatre where sin and salvation, ethics and morals, prayer and ritual, life and death, are exemplified.

Chapter 6

Touching Base with the Traditions

6.1 Introduction

This study has canvassed adherents from four religious traditions: mainline Christianity (consisting of the so-called “mainline” or established churches), evangelical Christianity (which includes the so-called “born again” people, Pentecostals and Charismatics), African Independent Churches such as *Amazayoni* or Zionists, and African Traditional Religion. It has become increasingly apparent in the course of this research that the informants that took part in the research have departed from the doctrinal norms that govern some of these traditions. It became clear, for example, that people who believe in the “born again” experience (such as Pentecostals who belong to churches such as the Assembly of God and Evangelicals such as the Salvation Army) will still consult ancestors and/or traditional healers when it comes to road travel. Similarly, people from mainline Christianity and those who come from African Christianity or African Independent Churches will do the same.

This chapter will attempt to investigate the extent to which their theologies have been forged on the road as opposed to adhering to the norms of orthodoxy as dictated by their traditions. In order to do this I interviewed representatives of the traditions represented in the study. The main purpose of this exercise is to get a better idea about the extent to which the religious beliefs and practices of my informants are influenced by the traditions that they belong to or whether their faith is forged mainly through their experiences on the road. Four full-time practitioners of the various faiths were canvassed: one from the Assembly of God (a male representative of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity’s point of view), one from the Presbyterian Church (a male representative of a perspective of Mainline Christianity), one from a Zionist Church (a female representative of a perspective related to African Independent Christianity), and one from African Traditional Religion (a female traditional healer/diviner representing an African

traditional religious perspective). In the next section, I will present the opinions given by the four religious practitioners, as well as my own analysis and interpretation based on my comparison with what has already emerged from this study.

6.2 Data presentation and analysis

6.2.1 Views from Pentecostal Christianity (a Pastor – Assembly of God)

In my interview with the Pentecostal pastor I explained to him about what had emerged in my study – that people who believe in the “born again” experience will still consult ancestors, or African traditional healers and / or faith healers who also employ African traditional methods of healing (*abalaphi bendabuko noma abathandazi abaphinde basebenzise nezindlela zendabuko ekulapheni*), when it comes to situations of real danger in the course of road travel. I also specifically gave him an example of the two informants in my study who adhere to Pentecostal Christianity and Evangelical Christianity respectively. One of these had experienced social problems, as well as road travel related problems. Following advice of a work colleague, this informant had turned to a variety of solutions including consulting a faith healer who suggested that the informant concerned needed to get things right with his own ancestors and secondly, that he needed to collect a variety of African traditional religious objects for the purposes of performing traditional rituals. I also pointed out to the pastor that the second informant’s solution to road travel related problems recommended the use of both Christian prayer and African traditional herbal medicines. I then asked the pastor to explain to me his reaction to all this and to take into account a Pentecostal Christianity and / or an Evangelical Christianity perspective on such matters. This is how the pastor responded in *isiZulu* (in Zulu language):

Sonke njengabasebenzisi bomgwaqo siyazi ukuthiizingozi zibangwa unkungahloniphi imithetho yomgwaqo (All of us as road users know that road accidents are caused by disrespecting road laws).

Lokhu kuhlanganisa ukushayela uphuzile, ukushayela ngesivinini, ukusebenzisa izimoto ezingekho esimweni esigculisayo, ukulayisha ngokweqile nokungakhulumi kwabagibeli yize bebona ukuthi umshayeli uyaphambana nezimiso zomgwaqo (This includes drinking and driving, over-speeding, use of vehicles which are not road worthy, overloading of passengers and failure of passengers to report bad driving).

Ukusebenzisa amazwi ayingcwele nokuthandaza kuNkulunkulu kufanele ngoba kunikeza ithemba lokuthi abenza okungalungile bangaguquka ezenzweni zabo, (The use of both sacred texts and

prayer to God is acceptable because it gives hope that people with bad behaviour on the road can eventually be inspired to change it into good behaviour).

Isisekelo salokhu ngukuthi uNkulunkulu esimkhonzayo sikhulwa ukuthi ayabavikela abantu bakhe, ngoba unguNkulunkulu onomusa kanti futhi akahlulwa yilutho (The foundation for this is the belief that the God we worship protects his people because he is the God of mercy and besides, nothing is impossible for him).

Lokhu kokusebenzisa ezinye izinto akufanele ukuba kwenziwe ngoba kuyisenzo esihambene nenkolo yobuKrestu (The idea of using other things is wrong because it is an act which is a contradiction to the Christian faith).

Ngombono wami onokuzithoba ngingathi labobantu abathi bangamakholwa kodwa bebesabambalele ezintweni zakudala neziyize badukile, badinga ukukhulekelwa ukuze babuyele ekukholweni okuyikho (In my humble opinion, I can say that those people who claim to be Christians and yet still hold on to ancient beliefs and practices are a lost generation, they need to be prayed for so that they can follow the true or real faith).

The pastor concluded his response to my enquiry by stating that,

Amazwi angcwele atholakala encwadini yamaHeberu (10: 1 -18) acacisa ngokusobala ukuthi nguJesu Kristo kuphela okusindisa abantu kulomhlaba kubobonke ubunzima, nezingqinamba kanye nezilingo ababhekana nazo mihla namalanga (The sacred words of scripture found in the Letter to the Hebrews (10: 1 -18) make it very clear that it is only Jesus Christ who has the ultimate power to protect people in this earth from all difficulties, trials and temptations on a daily basis).²⁵⁶

There are similarities as well as differences in belief and practice between the Pentecostal leader and Pentecostal followers as represented in the informants in this study. The latter would have no argument with the belief in the material and moral causes of road accidents that the pastor has mentioned. Neither would there be disagreement about the power of God to save people from accidents. But there is clearly a difference when it comes to what one might call the remedial action needed to help ensure safety on the road. The pastor is emphatic about prohibiting belief in anything but Christ himself but the informants concerned might not openly admit to their pastor that they turn to their ancestral traditions as well but they obviously do. Thus a contradiction between the official position of the church and popular belief and practice therefore clearly exists. What the pastor calls “ancient religion” to which a so-called “lost generation” turns for help continues to play an important role in the faith practice of members of his church. He is trying, but clearly failing, to disparage such practice.

²⁵⁶ Reactions from a male pastor in the Assembly of God Church in Edendale during a conversation with me Siphon Casper Ngcobo – the researcher in this study, I used jotted notes to capture this conversation on the 28th of August, 2017.

The rejection by the pastor of the beliefs and actions taken by the born again informants seems to suggest that he is taking a “modern” or more “scientific” perspective that is generally entertained by secularized persons who also support a “disenchanted” view of the universe as opposed to an “enchanted” view. The acceptance of Christian objects (sacred texts) and a Christian practice (prayer) as necessary “credible” means of assistance in the midst of material and moral factors suggests the existence of a perceived alliance or partnership between a “modern” perspective and mainline Christianity. People who believe in the “born again” experience (such as the Pentecostals) believe that Christ has saved them from their traditional religion which they now see as sinful or demonic. They usually believe that they have an experience of Christ that frees them from the past completely and they have become “new creatures” which means they must have nothing to do with the past. This perspective is compatible with the idea of complete freedom from the past. Apparently the experience of road travel brings out the real African identity to the informants in this study who belong to the Pentecostal Christian tradition.

6.2.2 Views from Mainline Christianity (a Presbyterian Pastor)

In my encounter with a Presbyterian pastor I told him what my Presbyterian informants had said about their religious beliefs and practices with regard to road travel and I particularly brought to his attention the following sentiment which had been expressed by one of my informants from the Presbyterian Church:

There is more to road accidents than just road unworthy vehicles, as well as other scientifically identified causes. And as long as causes related to spiritual/religious agency, especially those causes of road accidents related to African cultural religious beliefs and practices are ignored, it will take us a long time before we deal effectively with problems associated with road safety.

- (10.1 KTD [m] Presbyterian Church)

This is how the Presbyterian pastor responded to what I had presented to him:

Ebandleni lethu sinazo izindlela zokubhekana nazozonke izimo ezinzima njengezingozi zemigwaqo noma ukuhlushwa yimimoya emibi amakholwa abhekana nazo imihla namalanga (In our own church, we have got ways of dealing with all the difficult situations faced by our members on a daily basis, for example, the possibility of being involved in a road accident, or the situation whereby someone is troubled by evil spirits).

Izibonelo ezisemqoka engingakunika zona eziqondene nesimo sokusebenzisa umgwaqo ngendlela ephephile yilezi (I can give you the following examples of what we normally do to assist believers to use the road in a safe manner) - ukumema abantu abazi kabanzi ngokuphepha emgwaqweni ukuba bazocacisela amakholwa ngokubaluleka kokusebenzisa umgwaqo ngendlela ephephile (we sometimes invite people who are specialists in road safety matters to come and enlighten believers about the significance of safe road usage), kanti futhi siyamubusisela umuntu osibikele ukuthi ucela ukubusiselwa imoto yakhe (moreover, we also perform a Christian ritual related to the blessing of a vehicle for any member who has come forward and asked for his or her vehicle to be blessed).

Lokhu kuhambisana nokuqonda ukuthi akufanele sivalele uNkulunkulu esimkhonzayo ngaphandle kwezinye izingxenye zezimpilo zethu (This is done with our common understanding that we need to involve God in all aspects of our lives).

Ngakhoke, ikholwa elithi lona lidinga okungaphezulu kwalemizamo yebandla, lokho sengingakubeka ngingahlonizi ngithi – sekunguphambana nemfundiso yobu krestu (Thus, any believer who says that he or she wants more than what the church is providing is actually asking for what is contrary to our Christian faith).²⁵⁷

The response of this clergyman to what I had learned in my research suggests that his church has an approach that is a lot more sensitive to the needs of ordinary members of his church when it comes to the dangers they face in road travel than the Pentecostal church mentioned above. He demonstrates that his church is doing all it can to accommodate the peoples' needs and meet their problems with regard to Road Safety and it is aware of the temptation to turn to ancestral religion. It has even devised its own blessing ritual for cleansing motor vehicles. On the basis of what it is providing the minister asserts that for his congregants to want more is to go too far and to ask for what is "contrary to the Christian faith". The line that the minister has drawn in this case is understandable. His argument seems to be that to allow more lenience would be to go too far down the path of compromise and jeopardize the integrity of the church's teaching. This is probably, however, not going to stop members of his church from turning to their ancestral religion.

There are two other things about this minister's input that are interesting. Firstly, he is aware of the lack of education (a material factor that is perceived as one of the causes of road accidents). This is suggested by the need to invite experts who give people basic

²⁵⁷ Reactions from a male Presbyterian Church pastor in Edendale during a conversation with me Siphosiso Casper Ngcobo - the researcher in this study, I used jotted notes to capture this conversation on the 29th of August, 2017.

knowledge about safe road usage. This in turn highlights a belief in the need to promote a “modern” or “scientific” perspective when it comes to road travel.

Secondly, the fact that a Christian ritual related to the blessing of a vehicle has been invented highlights the possibility that mainline Christianity has recognized the need to accept both ritual and reason in the modern faith. But the exchange with this minister also suggests that in spite of the church’s teaching some of its members will still turn to indigenous African sources for help and inspiration, thus indicating that modern necessities such as road travel will bring out aspects of African identity, culture, and tradition even though these might be contrary to its official teaching.

6.2.3 Views from African Traditional Religion (a Diviner/Traditional Healer)

In my encounter with a female diviner/ traditional healer (*isangoma esibuye sibe ngumlaphi wendabuko*) I began by pointing out to her the link between my research and the work of traditional healers and diviners and the issue of Road Safety and the significant role that ancestral religion played amongst kombi taxi operators and the transport sector in general. I also emphasized that people turn to religious leaders like her (amongst other perceived possible helpers) because they believe they will help them. I then proceeded by raising the following questions:

Ungathini, (jengomuntu onolwazi ngemithi yendabuko yokwelapha kanti futhi ungomunye wabantu abaziwa njengabantu abanegunya lokunikeza abantu imithi yokwelapha), ngabantu abakulolucwaningo abathi abanyebasebenzisa imithi abayithola kwabanye benu ukubayenga bese bezithola sebehlangabezana nengozi yomgwaqo ebeka nabanye abasebenzisi bomgwaqo engozini, ngenxa nje yomona (What can you say [as a person who has knowledge of traditional herbal medicines and also as one of those people who is perceived as being qualified to dispense African traditional medicines] about people in this study who say that other people because of jealousy, use harmful traditional medicines they get from other traditional healers in your line of work, medicines which lead them to get involved in road accidents which also harm other road users).

Ngaphezukwalokhu, umuntu uthola umuthi omqinisayo ukuze noma ngubani omhlasela ngomuthi ngoba enomona isikhuni sibuyele kumnikaziso, kephake nakho lokhu kunomthelela wokufaka nabanye abagibeli engozini (Moreover, a person gets medicine to strengthen himself or herself against witchcraft or sorcery attacks so that any person motivated by jealousy who deploy such forces can get the taste of his or her own medicine although, even this puts other road users in danger).

This is how the informant responded to my questions above:

Okokuqala, isangoma esibuye sibe ngumlaphi wendabuko esanikezwa lomsebenzi yidlozi lakwabo, sabuye saqeqesheka kahle, siyakwazi ukubona umuntu ozekuso enezinhloso ezingalungile – izinhloso ezimbi (Firstly, a diviner/traditional healer who has received his or her calling from his or her own ancestors is able to discern the hidden evil motives of a person who has come for consultation and help).

Okwesibili, isangoma/umlaphi wendabuko oqotho ulindeke ukuba avikele isithuzi sedlozi lakhe, alihloniphe futhi alazise ngaso sonke isikhathi ngokuba angavumeli ukuhambisana nezinhlolo eziphambene nobulungiswa (Secondly, a well groomed and honest diviner/traditional healer is expected to protect the dignity of his or her own ancestors, to respect and to honour them all the time by not allowing himself or herself to be tempted to ignore the truth before him or her).

Okwesithathu, isangomaumlaphi wendabuko onjalo-ke siyaye sikubeke kucace kumuntu onezinhlolo ezingalungile ukuthi asiphiwanga isipho semithi yokubulala (Thirdly, a diviner/traditional healer endowed with such good qualities will usually inform a potential client that her or his own ancestors had not given her or him the gift of traditional medicines which have the potential of harming other people).

Okokugcina, kuphambene nobulungiswa kanye namadlozi ukunikeza omunye umuntu umuthi onamandla okucekela phansi izimpilo zabanye abantu; kodwa-ke abanye bethu bayazenza lezizinto ngenxa yothando olulweqile lwemali (Finally, it is against good morals and the wishes and demands of the ancestors to give another person traditional medicine which has the potential of destroying other people's lives. However, some of us do these things because they are obsessed with the love of money).²⁵⁸

There is no doubt that in the above account a spiritual/religious perspective in matters related to road travel, clearly takes centre stage. Such a perspective seems to be underpinned by a sense of morality or a code of ethics and the ancestors believed to be “standing guard over” such values. In the latter case however, it is the road traffic officials who are supposed to be in the line of duty to see to it that such values are totally adhered to.

The most important point made by this leader in the African Traditional religious tradition is that it is wrong for a diviner/traditional healer to give someone *umuthi* (African traditional medicine) even for the purposes of protection, if that will mean harming other road users.

²⁵⁸ Reactions from a female African traditional religious leader in Edendale during a conversation with me Siphon Casper Ngcobo - the researcher in this study, I used jotted notes to capture this conversation on the 31st of July 2017.

In the case of African Traditional Religion tradition as well, there can be no doubt that the experience of road travel brings out real African identity to those informants who use rituals which are both protective and destructive at the same time.

I did not ask this leader what she thought about those who practiced ancestral religion also adhering to Christian beliefs and practice, especially because leaders in the Christian faith object to their people reverting to ATR beliefs and practices. Asking this question was necessary because why should ATR practitioners, by the same token, not object to their people reverting to Christian practices. However, my oversight was corrected by the fact that before we parted she made this vital comment: “I also pray to God every day before I begin my work”. This comment suggests the extent to which ATR is more tolerant and inclusive than Christianity. If an ATR practitioner sets aside some time to revert to an important Christian practice like prayer, it is unlikely that such a person would object to people who consult her when they revert to Christian practices.

6.2.4 Views from AIC (a Faith Healer – Zionist Church)

In my encounter with a female leader in a Zionist church I also began by highlighting the fact that people turn to people like her as well because they are concerned with their safety, roads are unsafe and people believe they can get help. I also pointed out to her that people in my study identified material, moral and spiritual causes of road accidents. Further, I also made her aware that when it comes to activities related to the prevention of road accidents, they mention spiritual activities only (such as prayer, holy water [*isiwasho*], sacred texts and their own family ancestors [*amadlozi emindeni yabo*]), and that this seems to suggest that my informants are more familiar with spiritual preventative measures than measures related to what a person with a “modern” perspective (*umuntu wendabuko obuka ngeso lesimanje*) will identify as the real causes of road accidents (i.e. material and moral causes). I also pointed out to her that the African Christian tradition seems to be consistent with what my informants have done, that is, seek road travel related help from spiritual things only. I then put to her the following question:

Ungathini kubantu abathi emsebenzini wenu wokusiza abantu mayelana nokuvikeleka emgwaqweni, kungakuhle uma nigaxila enkolweni yobu krestu nezimfundiso zayo njengoba ningamakrestu ngoba kungase kube nalezinkinga – abasebenzisa umgwaqo ikakhulukazi abashayeli, bangacina bengasayihloniphi imithetho yomgwaqo ngoba bethi idlozi labo lihamba

nabo, libavikele. Labobantu bangaphinde bathi ukuhlanganisa imikhuba yobukristu neyendabuko njengomthandazo, amanzi angcwele kanye nemithi yendabuko kuphambene nenkolo yenu yobukrestu (What can you say to people who say that in your attempts to help people with regard to protection on the road, it might be better to focus on Christian ways and means of providing help. This can help in preventing unintended consequences such as road users, especially drivers, ending up not obeying the rules of the road because, for example, of the belief that they are already protected by their ancestors who accompany them in the course of road travel. Moreover, the mixing of Christian exercises like prayer, holy water and African traditional religious exercises like traditional medicines is contrary to the Christian faith).

This is how the faith healer responded to the concerns I had raised above:

Okokuqala, idlozi alihambisani nomuntu ophambana nokulunga ngamabomu; empeleni ngingathi liyadumala uma kunokungaziphathi kahle komuntu ophilayo oqondene nalo (Firstly, ancestors do not approve of any misbehaviour. I can say that actually they are disappointed or embarrassed when one of their living relatives does not adopt good behaviour).

Yingakho siyaye sikhulume ngokuthi umuntu othile ufulathelwe yidlozi uma izinto zakhe sezingahambi kahle (That is why we usually say that, a person's ancestors have turned their backs on him or her, especially when nothing seems to go right in that person's life).

Isibonelo, umshayeli obeka abanye nayuqobo engozini ngokungahloniphi imithetho yomgwaqo angazithola ehlangabezana nezingozi kulandelana kuze kube sengathi uloyiwe uma idlozi selimfulathele ngenxa yokuziphatha kabi (For instance, a driver who puts himself and other road users in danger by deliberately disobeying road rules can find himself experiencing one road accident after another, so much so that he might think that he has been bewitched when the ancestors have turned their back on him because of bad behaviour).

Ezinye zezinto ezilindelwe yidlozi kumntu eliqondene naye inhlonipho nokuziphatha kahle Some of the two things expected by the ancestors from their living relatives is respect and good behaviour). *Angikaze ngizwe ngedloze eligugquzela ukuba kube nesixhwanguxhwangu kulabo eliqondene naba abasaphila* (I have never heard of the ancestors who promotes or encourages anyone among their living family members to be a family and / or societal trouble maker).

Okwesibili, angiboni mina ukuthi inkinga ikuphi ekuhlanganiseni, sisebenzise izinto zesintu nezibukrestu ngenhloso yokulekelela ekutheni abantu uma inhloso kungukusiza ekunikezeni abantu ezinye zezindlela ezengeziwe zokuba zilekelela ekutheni baphephe emgwaqweni (Secondly, I do not understand why there is a problem with the mixing of elements from the Christian faith and African traditional religious faith when the purpose is to assist in helping people - by providing them with other additional means of protection against the perils of the road).

Okwesithathu, uNkulunkulu nguye owadala zonke lezizinto ozibalile (umthandazo, amanzi nemithi) (Thirdly, prayer, water and plants were all created by God).

Okwesine, nguye futhi owanikeza okhokhobethu ubuhlakani bolwazi lokuthi yiziphi izihlahla ezingaba lusizo kithina kanye nenhlobo yosizo ezisinika lona (Fourthly, It was also God who gave our ancestors the wisdom to know which plants can be helpful to us and for which purpose).

Okwesihlanu, okhokhobethu baludlulisela kithi lolulwazi njengoba sesisizakala kulo namuhla (Fifthly, our ancestors passed this wisdom down to us as we are benefiting from it today).

Kuzwakala sengathi kuthiwa sesone kakhulu uma sisebenzisa izinto esaziphiwa ngumdali ngesandla sokhokhobethu (It sounds as if we are being accused of committing a mortal sin when all we are doing is using things given to us by God through our ancestors).²⁵⁹

This AIC leader is expressing the classic position of her tradition, which is a combination of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The points she is making summarize nicely her tradition and are worth repeating here:

1. Ancestors continue to play an important role in the faith of AIC practitioners.
2. Ancestors do not approve of reckless and selfish behaviour on the road.
3. There is nothing wrong with calling on the ancestors for help because they are wiser than we are.
4. The use of prayer, water, and plants are acceptable because these are all creations of God and were given by the ancestors.
5. It is ridiculous to think that we are committing a mortal sin when we are simply using the things that God has given us through our ancestors.

There are two things that stand out in the responses from this person. Firstly, that her theology is unambiguously inclusive rather than exclusive and secondly that it has a strong creation element. She has no problem in accepting everything that she experiences in her world as part of the divine order – whether it is God, the ancestors, plants, water, and the beliefs and opinions of other faiths, especially the Christian faith. All these phenomena are given for good and for the salvation of human beings. The universe she lives in is a typically sacramental universe (if sacramentalism is seen in the broader sense of gifts given by God from the created world to be used for our salvation) and the world view that she has is clearly holistic and not dualistic. This approach is present to some degree in the representative of ATR but largely missing from the two Christian representatives whom I interviewed.

²⁵⁹ Reactions from a female faith healer - a Zionist Church leader in Edenale, during a conversation with me Siphon Casper Ngcobo - the researcher in this study, I used jotted notes to capture this conversation on the 2nd of August, 2017

6.3 Conclusion

These interviews with “professional” exponents of the traditions reinforces the notion that theologies that are being exercised by ordinary people as defined earlier in this work are indeed their own theologies and, while taking their cue from the tradition that they have chosen, will depart from it due to the exigencies placed upon them by road travel. It also indicates that ancestral religion, or what some have called “primal” religion, becomes the primary reference point to which people revert in times of vulnerability and danger. The implications of this for a people’s theology of the road would be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Primal religion as the primary reference point for a theology of the road

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the significant departures from the orthodox belief and practice of their traditions when people do their theology “on the road”. This departure seems to take place when people begin to experience the real danger on an ongoing daily basis when they are forced to use public transport. It is at the point of this existential threat that they turn to their ancestral religion which then becomes a reference point for how they construct a theology of the road. By “ancestral religion” I mean not only the religion in which they call upon their ancestors but the religion that their ancestors actually practiced, the religion that was with them before the advent of Christianity – in other words, their first or primal religion.

This does not mean that during the moments of travel they reject the religion that was brought to them by the missionaries of Christianity. But it is clear that they find it necessary at least to include within and amongst their Christian beliefs the beliefs that were fundamental to the faith of their ancestors, if not recast their Christian faith within the world view provided by their ancestral religion. If, therefore, we are to understand what really constitutes a theology of the road then we ought to understand what this [primal] theology is all about.

In what follows I will attempt to unpack the significance of primal religion in the construction of theologies of the road in the context of this study using Harold Turner’s six feature analysis of the primal world view as well as some of the thinking of Andrew Walls and others around the topic. I will also attempt to demonstrate, using Bevan, that ancestral theology is essentially a kind of creation theology. I will also briefly discuss the

nature of good and evil in an African cosmology using the work of Anthony Balcomb, Laurenti Magesa, John Bewaji, and others.

7.2 The primal worldview

The word “primal” is defined by Andrew Walls as referring to

...the religions of circumpolar peoples, of various peoples of Africa, the Indian sub-continent, South East Asia, Inner Asia, North and South America, Australia, and the Pacific....[it is not] a euphemism for “primitive,” nor are any evolutionistic undertones intended. The word helpfully underlines two features of the religions of the peoples indicated: their historical anteriority and their basic, elemental status in human experience. All other faiths are subsequent and represent, as it were, second thoughts; all other believers, and for that matter non-believers, are primalists underneath.²⁶⁰

The most significant thing about this definition of Walls’ is the assertion that “all other faiths are subsequent and represent, as it were, second thoughts; all other believers, and for that matter non-believers, are primalists underneath”. This is a remarkable statement because it is basically saying that everyone, believers and non-believers, traditional and modern, western and non-western, are “primalists underneath”. The word “underneath” suggests that our primal instincts are always present but hidden. They lurk somewhere in our DNA and, given the right circumstances, will become manifest. This study tends to confirm this so it is appropriate to unpack further the significance of the primal worldview.

Harold Turner has identified six characteristics of the primal worldview.

- First, a sense of kinship with nature, in which animals and plants, no less than human beings, have their own spiritual existence and place in the universe, as independent parts of the whole.
- Second, the deep sense that humankind is finite and weak and in need of a supernatural power.
- Third, that humankind is not alone in the universe, that there is a spiritual world of powers and beings more ultimate than itself. This is a personalized universe where the appropriate question is not what causes things to happen but who causes things to happen.
- Fourth; that human beings can enter into relationships with the benevolent spirit world.
- Fifth, an acute sense of the afterlife usually expressed in belief in and respect for the ancestors who may be referred to as the “living dead”.

²⁶⁰ Andrew Walls, 1996: *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Marknoll, New York: Orbis Books, pp. 120-121, 124 and 131. Also, Henry David Thoreau, 1937: *The Works of Thoreau*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

- Sixth; that humans live in a sacramental universe where there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual and that the physical can act as a vehicle for the spiritual.²⁶¹

I will attempt to reflect on some of the findings of this study using these features.

7.2.1 A sense of kinship with nature

Nature in this research is to do with the non-human or other-than-human elements in the universe. “A sense of kinship” with nature implies that human beings not only need nature but are somehow related to nature. Human beings share a common life and a common purpose in life with nature, that is, to survive and flourish. They are mutually interdependent. This means that they cannot do without each other. Their mutual survival depends on each other. And there are moments in life where the consciousness of the need for each other becomes particularly intense. In this study these moments are felt by the vulnerability which is induced by the experience of road travel.

A number of the informants in this study seem to understand this connectedness clearly. Hence, they are more open to using plant products such as *impepho* (incense), *izintelezi* (African medicines) and *umhlankosi* (*carisna anduina*), and animals such as goats and domestic fowls when performing rituals related to protection in the course of road travel. The informants believe that such plants and animals might connect them with the spirit world. Moreover, they also believe that non-living things like motor vehicles, are not just instruments for our use, they are potentially part of the interconnected universe and might also need to be blessed or anointed somehow with substances extracted from plants and animals that would make them safer.

The notion of recognition and respect underlies the idea that “animals and plants, no less than human beings, have their own existence and place in the universe as independent parts of the whole”. These are not just objects to be used and then thrown away. They are alive, just as human beings are alive, and they are willing even to give their lives for the survival of themselves and human beings. When sacrifices are made it does not mean

²⁶¹ Quoted in Kwame Bediako, 1993, *Christianity in Africa – The renewal of a non-western religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.93

that the plants or animals that are being sacrificed are being disrespected. On the contrary they are given more respect because of this.

In this study it is clear that humans rely on plants and animals to connect them with the spiritual world and for their survival in the course of road travel. Secondly, there is a direct suggestion that animals and plants have in them a natural power to bless man/woman made objects and by implication, to bless human beings themselves. Moreover, such a power does not come from human beings but rather from the nature in which these elements were created by God.

This kind of interdependence between the human and non-human is similar to the relatively recent discovery in modern western science of ecology which is based on the recognition of the intricate and total interdependence of all life. Clearly primal religion understood this interdependence long before modern science did. Central to the interdependence of life is the fragility or vulnerability of life. This leads to the next feature that Turner identified.

7.2.2 A sense of human finiteness and weakness

The idea that humankind is “finite and weak and in need of a supernatural power” comes out in this study in many ways. Firstly, it is clear that human beings by themselves cannot put an end to the recurrent problem of unnecessary death – death that many feel can be prevented. The dangerous experience of road travel causes people to be aware of their “finiteness”, that is, they are not going to last forever on this earth, and this is why road travel becomes an important place for the incubation of a peoples’ theology that revives the sentiments associated with primal religion.

But just because they are made aware of their vulnerability during road travel does not mean that they are not vulnerable through the whole of life. Indeed all life, including human life, is vulnerable all the time. This includes those humans who surround themselves with the technology that gives them the illusion of being invulnerable. The theology that I am endeavouring to understand here is one that foregrounds vulnerability

as a defining characteristic of the human condition. Balcomb has some interesting things to say in this regard:

The human condition is universally vulnerable. But humans themselves are not universally aware of this vulnerability. Where belief in a material universe populated by the autonomously defined individual units prevails, there prevails also the belief in the control of the universe through material means. Where technological control increases, so does the possibility of the illusion of invulnerability. Africans, on the whole, understand being in the world in a way that is the polar opposite of the western understanding. If there is one word that sums up spirituality in Africa it is the word *relationality*. Their's is the belief that one's being is intimately related with the beings of others and the entire cosmos itself is intimately related. This increases exponentially their sense of vulnerability. If vulnerability is a key condition of being human; then, apprehension of such vulnerability is key to being human. Loss of humanity is linked to the loss of the realization of vulnerability. If there is any truth in this then spirituality in Africa is not only to do with the spirituality of Africans but the spirituality of human beings universally. To "secure the border" between the spiritual and material worlds and between the self and the other, or even more currently, to build a wall between these worlds, is to place a wall between ourselves and our humanity. It is based on the ethic of control. It is the story of Prometheus who stole the fire of the gods. It is the story of attempting to gain mastery. But mastery is an illusion. One loses one's humanity, and ultimately one's life, in trying to gain it. An ethic of vulnerability is the polar opposite. It says if you seek to find your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life, you will find it.²⁶²

7.2.3 Humankind not alone in the universe

This study has demonstrated that one of the first questions that occur to the people canvassed is who causes road accidents and not what causes road accidents. In other words the road environment is part of a personalized universe populated by beings whose lives are intimately connected with the physical universe. And the existence of a world of powers and beings more ultimate than the universe itself includes amongst its "residents", God, who is believed to be fed up with the way things are run by people he created and placed in the universe as we know it. However, others believe that God is actually protecting them from the evil powers in the universe. Some also believe that in such a spiritual world there are also malevolent bothersome spirits as well as benevolent spirits. Ancestors are implicated in both categories, and other mysterious powers manifested by sorcery and witchcraft are included in the malevolent side of people.

It sounds strange that people living in this day and age continue to ask the "who" and not the "what" question when it comes to the causes of road accidents. In western countries this kind of question used to be asked a hundred years ago but very few people today

²⁶² A. O. Balcomb et al., "Spirituality and Hope in Africa – A study in five countries", in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, September 13, 2017.

would be asking it in the west because of secularization, disenchantment, and the European Enlightenment. However, Balcomb has argued that there has been a renewed interest among scholars in the sciences, anthropology, philosophy, and religion in the idea of a personal universe.²⁶³ He argues that this trend to simply ask the question “what” causes things to happen is to treat the universe as though it was not alive and did not have agency. This has led to the exploitation, domination, and destruction of the environment. When we treat it as personal we tend to have more respect for it and sometimes even fear it. Although this has its disadvantages as to the way we live our lives it is arguably better than the kind of attitude that brings about the abuse of the environment. This has in turn led to increasing interest in the way primal communities understand and relate to the world around them.²⁶⁴ This leads to the next feature in Turner’s list.

7.2.4 Human beings entering relationships with the benevolent spiritual world

Once again, the informants in this study illustrate this point very well. They pray to God, they do reflections on sacred texts (God’s words), and some of them even testify that they believe that God alone has the power to protect them in the course of road travel. But they also “enter into relationships with the benevolent spiritual world”. The burning of incense, verbal communication with ancestors, animal sacrifice and the offering of foodstuff products and various beverages are some of the things used not just to “enter into relationships with the benevolent spiritual world”, but also to ensure that people “live in the closest association with [family spirits], and...[so] maintain their goodwill”²⁶⁵ in such relationships.

Once again this sounds strange to the ears of modern people. However, this approach has implications for the way we understand and treat the environment.

²⁶³ See A. O. Balcomb, “Counter-modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory – Shifting the paradigm”, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 157 (March 2017): 44-58

²⁶⁴ See especially the work of Tim Ingold, for example, *The Perception of the Environment – essays in livelihood, dwelling, and skill* (Routledge, London and New York 2000).

²⁶⁵ See Lugg, H. C. *Life under a Zulu Shield*. Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter: (1975: p. 6).

Catherine Tucker, for example, says that:

Traditional peoples live within animate worlds of mutual obligations with spirits or nonhuman beings, and their beliefs constrain the behavior of members of the communities, ideally limiting their environmentally destructive behavior. Modernization processes, on the other hand, disenchant and despiritualize those worlds to enable life without the constraints and obligations.²⁶⁶

7.2.5 An acute sense of the after-life

All of the informants of this study have an acute sense of understanding a life that follows after death. But this study indicates that the “after-life” in the minds of many of the informants overlaps with the present life. This is supported by one of the prevalent ideas in this study, that some of the informants have some form of ‘social dealings’ with their ancestors, that is, their family spirits or spirits of religious leaders who have passed on. There are two things which suggest the truthfulness of the existence of such an idea. Firstly, there are beliefs related to communication with ancestors. Secondly, there are also various rituals which are performed for the purposes of communicating with ancestors.

The acuteness of such a sense of the afterlife is usually demonstrated in two significant ways. The first is the somewhat paradoxical notion of the ancestors being described by Mbiti as the “living-dead”. They are believed to be living because they are presented as behaving like normal living human beings. So it is believed that they have the same emotions as human beings such as anger, sadness, and happiness. Thus, they can cause bad things to happen when they are angered, for example, people believe that they can be involved in the causation of a road accident. At the same time it is also believed that they can make sure that good things happen in the life of their living relatives when they are suitably recognized. For instance, people believe that ancestors can accompany them in the course of road travel and thus protect them from travel related danger. The above resonates well with Mbiti’s assertion that:

The living-dead are the spirits that normally matter most on the family level. They are considered to be still part of their families. They are believed to live close to their homes where they lived when they were human beings. They show interest in their surviving families, and in return their families remember them [through ritual performances] from time to time. The living-dead may

²⁶⁶ Catherine Tucker, *Nature, science, and religion: intersections shaping society and the environment*, (Santa Fe, SAR Press, 2012) 14.

also visit their surviving relatives in dreams or visions, or even openly and make their wishes known (Mbiti, 1991, p.77).

This suggests that ancestors have also special characteristics and abilities usually attributed to a normal living human being. They are considered part of their families, live close to them, show an interest in them, visit them, and make their wishes known.

7.2.6 Humans live in a sacramental universe

The notion of a sacramental universe has already briefly been discussed in the previous chapter. A sacramental universe is one where the natural world is seen to be imbued with spiritual energy, to one degree or another, and therefore has agency, or the ability to act as a channel for the divine. For example streams, trees, rocks and mountains may be seen as special places where spirits of ancestors may reside.

This may also extend to other man-made or woman-made objects, as Mbiti points out:

Religious objects and places cover things and places which people have set apart as being holy or sacred. They are not commonly used except for a particular religious purpose. There are many such religious objects and places. Some are made by man [human beings], but others are taken in their natural form and set apart for religious purposes. Some belong to private individuals and families, while others belong to the whole community in a given religion (Mbiti, J. S., 1991, pp.11-12).

According to the informants in this study these include *uMsamu* (an African traditional family shrine) used for communicating with ancestors and other related rituals, any part of the road environment used for the purposes of prayer to God for safety on the road, as well as places where people have died on the road.

There are also religious objects in this study associated with plants and trees. These include a branch of a tree *uMlahlankosi* (*carisna anduina*), which is believed to be appropriate to be used in its natural form as carrier for the spirit of a person killed on the road, in compliance with proper African customary and religious burial procedures. There is *iMpepho* (incense), a religious substance that produce a sweet-smelling smoke when it burns. It is also used in its natural form to perfume *uMsamu* (a family shrine) during the process of consultation with ancestors. People believe that the use of incense might connect them with the spirit world of their ancestors. They also believe that it can

play a role in blessing them and their motor vehicles which might in turn make vehicles safer in the course of road travel.

There are also different kinds of *iziNtelezi* (herbal medicines), that are processed or prepared and mixed with other substances before they are used. Their use is believed to render a person strengthened and protected from any risk or danger, especially when mixed with bath water before taking a bath. Some of the informants in this study say they use it to sprinkle their vehicles to protect them against possible sorcery and / or witchcraft attacks.

Other religious objects include domestic animals such as goats and domestic fowls. Goats are usually the animals which are symbolically given to the ancestors through various ritual performances, either as a gesture of appeasing ancestors or to celebrate their role in protecting people from road accidents. There is a case in this study of a domestic fowl being strangled and then buried together with human made items regarded as symbolic representations of violent death – a knife, a bullet and a piece of a vehicle tyre.

The use of these objects in this way is believed to prevent the cycle of death from destroying the whole family of a person who suffered violent death on the road. In other words, there is recognition that although these are objects of death they can be transformed to become objects of life, just as the cross of Christ was an object of death but has become the object of salvation for Christian believers. Finally, there is the use of water and a rosary. The former becomes holy water after being blessed. It is then used to bless and protect motor vehicles and people alike.

The significance of the primal worldview for a people's theology of the road will be further discussed in the next and final chapter when features of such a theology will be finally summarized. A sacramental universe as defined in this study places nature at centre stage which suggests that attention needs to be given to a theology of creation when trying to understand the theology that I am dealing with.

7.3 A creation centered theology

In the following quote, Stephen Bevans²⁶⁷ is describing a creation centered approach in the manner in which he understands it within the context of contextual theology:

A creation – centered orientation to theology is characterized by the conviction that human experience, and so context, is generally good. Its perspective is that grace builds on nature, but only because nature is capable of being built on, of being perfected in a supernatural relationship with God. A creation – centered orientation sees the world, creation, as sacramental: the world is a place where God reveals God-self; revelation does not happen in set apart, particularly holy places, in strange, inwardly circumstances...; it [revelation] comes in daily life, in ordinary words, through ordinary people. It is within such a creation – oriented theology that we can best speak of “anonymous Christianity” (Rahner) or the Christ who is to be discovered in a culture (Raimon Panniká’s “unknown Christ” in Hindum). Creation – centered theology approaches life with an analogical, not dialectical, spirit or imagination and sees continuity between human existence and divine reality. It is not that the world is perfect and sinless. Creation – centered theology certainly acknowledges the reality and ugliness of sin. But sin is sin precisely because it is an aberration of such a beautiful world, an attempt to “get out of life what God has not put into it”. And the only way that sin can adequately be exterminated is by confrontation with the power of good. A creation – centered approach therefore, requires that the context be approached more positively.

The emphasis above on the use of things that God has given is nuanced by Bevans in the above quote. Firstly, he says “grace builds on nature”. This seems to suggest that grace uses nature (plants, trees, water and animals) as the foundation for preserving human life. This makes sense to me, especially when I consider the fact that all these nature products or aspects have been implicated in the performance of African traditional rituals in this study. This explains the influence of the creation in the beliefs and practices of the people in this study. The theology of creation is an earthly theology – it is connected with people’s experience of road travel on a daily basis.

Secondly, Bevans mentions that “God reveals himself in creation”. This suggests that when the agency of nature is used by human beings to guarantee their protection and safety on the road, and the results appear to be positive – such positive results are perceived as evidence of God revealing himself to humanity through created things and making himself, accessible through created things.

Thirdly, Bevans also mentions that a creation centered approach to theology “acknowledges the reality and ugliness of sin”. In the context of this study this might be

²⁶⁷ Bevans Stephen B., 2002, *Models of Contextual Theology: faith and culture* (Revised and Expanded Edition), Mary knoll, New York: Orbis Books, pp. 21, 22

reflected in the fact that the things given by God (elements of nature like trees and plants for example) do get abused by human beings. A typical example of such an abuse of nature in this study is the use of *imithi* (herbal medicines) for sorcery and witchcraft. However, in spite of the reality of this destructive nature of sin, Bevans cautions us that we must never underestimate the power of good that is inherent in nature or in the things that God has given us for our wellbeing and survival. This leads us to a discussion on the notion of good and evil in this study.

7.4 Perceptions of good and evil in a theology of the road

There are two things that emerge when examining concepts of good and evil in this study. Both of them find their origin in the primal universe that constitutes the main frame of reference of most of my informants. The first is that the universe is perceived in holistic and not dualistic terms and the second is the pursuit of the fullness of life. Balcomb suggested the following insights on this matter:

There seems to be a fundamental difference between religions that draw their understandings of good and evil from a primal background and those that draw them from a monotheistic background.²⁶⁸ The latter is dualistic in the sense that good and evil are polar opposites that find their origin in God and the devil. Things are either good or evil in absolute terms. The primal universe does not understand reality in terms of these polar opposites. There is one reality and things within this reality can be used in ways that are good and life giving but also in ways that are evil and life taking. The fact that they are all connected means that they can draw from each other a common life force that sustains and energizes them for the common good. But this close relationship between all things, which can be perceived as having life and therefore agency, means the possibility that they can be manipulated for evil purposes, that is, for the diminution of life instead of its enhancement. This can be done through witchcraft and sorcery.²⁶⁹

In this study the notion that good is to do with the pursuit of the fullness of life comes out quite clearly. Road travel is undertaken for the purposes of maintaining, enhancing and sustaining life. Anything that might put life at risk in the course of road travel is essentially against life. Laurenti Magesa has coined a very direct phrase in this regard by

²⁶⁸ This is not to say that primal religion is non theistic. However Bolaji Idowu has argued, using Yoruba religion, that African religions embrace “diffused monotheism” where the supreme being’s influence is experienced through a multiplicity of lesser agencies, including gods, spirits, ancestors, etc. (see E. Bolaji Idowu *Oludumare – God in Yoruba Belief*, London, Longmans, 1962, and John A. Bewaji, “Oludumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil”, *African Studies Quarterly*, vol2, issue 1, 1998.

²⁶⁹ Conversation with Balcomb A. O. on 28 October 2017. A recent study by Balcomb et al indicates that the belief in witchcraft continues to be widespread throughout sub-Saharan Africa. See A. O. Balcomb et al., “Spirituality and Hope in Africa – A study in five countries”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, September 13, 2017.

referring to everything that “...threaten the continuation of life in its fullness...and endangers life [as] ‘enemies of life’” (1997: p.161). He further suggests that, [those things are “...bad, wrong, or sinful” (p. 166). Similarly, a number of the beliefs of the informants in this study allude to what is usually referred to as the human capacity for sin or evil or wickedness.

Hence, exposing other road users to danger or death on the road through human error in all its manifestations, or human greed, or human sin (witchcraft and sorcery or a deliberate refusal to perform African burial rituals, or a deliberate refusal to obey road traffic rules and regulations), all constitute evil. Scott Peck, one of the authors of popular spiritual literature provides us with the following definition of evil which I think is quite relevant here:

...evil is live spelled backward. Evil is in opposition to life. It is that which opposes life force. It has, in short, to do with killing. Specifically, it has to do with murder – namely unnecessary killing, killing that is not required for biological survival.... Evil is also that which kills spirit. There are various essential attributes to life – particularly human life – such as sentience, mobility, awareness, growth, autonomy, [and] will. It is possible to kill or attempt to kill one of these attributes without actually destroying the body. Thus, we may “break” a horse or even a child without harming a hair on its head.²⁷⁰

There are a number of bad actions or behaviours which have been identified by the informants in this study. All of them seem to fit in well with the label of being “in opposition to life” and therefore evil. They include drinking and driving, driving through a red robot, the overloading of passengers, use of vehicles which are not road worthy (actions which are contrary to the road traffic rules and regulations and morality). They also include greed, sorcery, and witchcraft and a deliberate refusal to perform certain African traditional rituals (spiritual factors). The latter has the dire consequence of causing death by involving ancestors in the causation of road accidents.

Good behaviour, generosity, concern and consideration for others, humility, tolerance respect, self-control, sympathy, compassion, adherence to the road traffic rules and regulations and cultivating and maintaining a good relationship with family spirits or ancestors, all emerge as understandings of the good in the theology that I have been

²⁷⁰ See Peck, M. Scott. 1990, *People of the Lie: the hope for healing human evil*, London: Arrow Book Limited, pp. 46-47.

investigating. An expected consequence of the characteristics related to the affirming and nurturing life is safe road usage or protection from road accidents. According to Magesa, this is in line with Africa religion in general:

For African Religion, the most important principles that determine the system of ethics revolve around the purpose or goal of human life...which does not change. ...Human experience and responsibility are judged in the light of this goal...all principles of morality and ethics are to be sought within the context of preserving human life and its “power” or “force”...of divine origin (Magesa Laurenti, 1997, pp. 31-32 and 46).

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that the basic features of a primal worldview as identified by Harold Turner can all be recognized in the beliefs and practices of my informants. In other words, it could be said that a people’s theology of the road bears all the marks of the universe in which their ancestors have lived from time immemorial. But it is also a theology that interprets and includes the faith that was brought by the Christian mission. In other words, it is an inclusive, African theology that resonates both with the African as well as Christian traditions and thus could in many ways be labeled as an African Christian theology. The fact that my research has demonstrated that this theology departs in one way or another from the official position of the traditions represented in this study, that is, mainline Christianity, evangelical Christianity, African Independent Christianity, and African Independent Christianity, and African Traditional Religion, suggests that it is not only a theology that is being formulated on the Edendale Road and its feeder roads but is a theology that is itself, as it were, “on the road”.

Chapter 8

Outlining a People's Theology of the Road: summarizing the features

8.1 Introduction

I will begin this chapter by summarizing what I have done so far in the thesis. This will include stating my overall goal and how I have attempted to achieve it. The main goal of this final chapter is to end my study by summarizing the essential features of what could be tentatively described as a people's theology of the road towards which my project has been aiming. I therefore, offer the following features:

1. A people's theology of the road is a theology done by ordinary people using kombi taxis to commute to and from the city centre of Pietermaritzburg.
2. It emerges out of a situation in which people are constantly facing the existential threat of harm to themselves because of the dangers associated with road travel.
3. It is intimately linked with the socio-economic deprivation that is typically found amongst the economically marginalized people of South Africa.
4. It is a theology that draws on all three major religions in Africa (Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion) but especially ATR. However, my research has found that it does not always adhere to the orthodox understandings of these religions.
5. The Christian version of this theology draws heavily from ancestral, or what I have called primal religion.

After I have expanded on each of the above features, I will conclude by offering some exploratory recommendations and possibilities for further research. In the next section I begin the first task of this chapter as stated above.

8.2 A summary of what I have done so far

In the first chapter, I described my own background and motivation for this study, outlined some of the socio-cultural dynamics of road travel, and touched on the socio-economic, geographical, and political history of the Edendale Township. Moreover, I indicated that road users (“ordinary people”), are the main subjects in this research project. I will offer what I understand by the above term in the section below where I will be unpacking the features of a people’s theology mentioned above.

In the second chapter, I attempted to set the scene for investigating the kinds of theologies that exist amongst people using the road by highlighting a broad range of issues associated with these theologies and described the conditions of road travel that give rise to making a theology of the road. I attempted to paint in broad strokes the meaning of a people’s theology, the existential experience of road travel in Africa and the kinds of beliefs and sentiments associated with this. I also touched on research that has been done elsewhere on beliefs associated with road travel. I have also emphasized that the overall goal of this research project is to describe in broad strokes a theology of the road, to understand where it is coming from, how it is being formulated, and what it is doing for the people experiencing the exigencies of road travel. I have attempted to achieve this by doing an analysis and interpretation of the data related to my informants’ articulations of their popular beliefs about God, the divine, sin and salvation, notions of good and evil, ancestors and the supernatural and the various activities linked with these beliefs including prayer, various religious rituals, use of sacred texts and the use of fetishes and amulets.

In the third chapter, I outlined the theoretical framework that I used and described my methodology. I began the fourth chapter by discussing levels of safety as related to road travel, liminal space and religious beliefs and practices in context. I then presented data which emerged from the responses of my informants during the interview process. In the fifth chapter, I did data analysis and interpretation. In the sixth chapter, I attempted to answer this question: to what extent do theologies of the road depart from the norm? I discovered that an analysis and interpretation of interview responses from “professional” exponents of the religious traditions germane to this study reinforces the notion that the

theologies exercised by ordinary people in this study are indeed their own theologies. In the seventh chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that the basic features of a primal worldview as identified by Harold Turner can all be recognized in the beliefs and practices of my informants. In the next section, I will expand on each of the features of a people's theology of the road mentioned above.

8.3 Unpacking features of a people's theology of the road

The most important issue related to the first feature above is the idea that a people's theology of the road is a theology done by "ordinary people". I have used the term "ordinary people" in this study to refer to people without any formal theological education. According to Philpott, these are the people,

...who are usually excluded from the enterprise of the production of theological knowledge, [because] they are invisible [and] their knowledge and practices, their wisdom and experience, are also invisible and undervalued (Philpott, 1993: pp. 17, 29).

The exclusion happens regardless of the fact that "ordinary people" are also believers who have faith. The idea that a people's theology of the road emerges out of a situation in which people are constantly facing the existential threat of harm to themselves leads to the need to understand the dangers of road travel. The informants in this study have indicated that being "on the road" for them means being vulnerable to causes of road accidents where human beings are the main agents, to causes of road accidents related to spiritual/religious agency, and being vulnerable to causes of road accidents related to structural, economic and mechanical aspects. This suggests that being vulnerable to a multiplicity of dangers related to road travel makes primal religion more attractive to "ordinary people".

The third feature above suggests that a people's theology of the road is a theology of the poor. A theology of the poor is a theology of the most vulnerable in any society. The poverty of the situation in Edendale can be summarized in this way: Edendale,

...is a historically repressed and neglected township. [It has] an environment that is bound by the constraints of high levels of poverty and unemployment, rapid population growth, lack of facilities and services, the AIDS pandemic, a largely unskilled labour force and a lack of job opportunities (www.Msunduzi.gov.za.gedi/34.cpt2.host-h.net).

What is missing in the above quote is the fact that the majority of those people who are lucky enough to have jobs are in low income paying jobs and many of those jobs are found in the city of Pietermaritzburg. This means simply daily commuting for the majority of the working people in Edendale, and daily commuting means being daily exposed to the dangers associated with road travel. This suggests that the poverty situation in Edendale contributes a lot in popularizing primal religion to become the primary reference point for theologies of the road.

Even though it is true that a people's theology of the road is a theology that draws on all three major religions in Africa, it is not easy to ignore a suggestion from my study that it does not always adhere to the orthodox understandings of some these religions. For instance, some of the "ordinary people" in this study have made it clear that they usually turn to primal religion for help in their attempts to deal with the vulnerability induced by the experience of road travel. The views and opinions from their traditions on beliefs and practices related to primal religion do not seem to matter much.

The feature linked to the idea that the Christian version of the theology draws heavily from ancestral religion or primal religion, suggests that primal religion has an important role to play in the construction of a theology of the road. The fact that primal religion is inclusive, suggests that it plays the role of covering all the bases when it comes to a situation of real danger in the course of road travel. People draw on their ancestral religion in times of danger by accepting everything that they experience in their world as part of the divine order – whether it is God, the ancestors, plants, water, and the beliefs and opinions of their faiths, especially the Christian faith. This reinforces the notion that primal religion continues to be part of the foundation of the belief system of African people, even, and indeed especially, in a modern situation.

8.4 Some exploratory recommendations

It is apparent that in this study the issue of safety on the road or the vulnerable condition of being *en route* which is induced by the experience of road travel, is very much related to the primary level of safety - that part of the strategy of safety on the road making things "safe" so that road accidents do not occur in the first place. However, some of the

spiritual/religious issues raised in this study, as well as the fact that the outlook for road safety in South Africa generally continues to be bleak and gloomy, suggest that the entire strategy of road safety is not comprehensive and infallible enough. It is therefore, with the latter issues in mind that I offer the following recommendations.

- Firstly, the entire strategy related to the issue of safety on the road needs to be subjected to a fundamental re-examination. The majority of South Africans (all races included), seem to be connected with some form of religion. Safety on the road is a matter of life and death and it affects all South African people. However, it is unfortunate that some of the religious beliefs and practices are not taken more seriously when primary safety programmes are formulated and implemented, especially those which people believe can contribute to reducing the casualty rates on our roads. There seems to be a need to accept that some of the religious beliefs and practices which have emerged from this study need to be taken more seriously, because as Astley puts it – ‘that means beginning where most people are, with their ordinary (non – technical, non scholarly or [non – scientific]) beliefs and language’ (2002: 163). Astley, talking about ordinary theology, maintains that ‘it should be taken seriously by the church’s ministers, preachers and educators, who are the people above all who need to be alert to the ordinary theology of those in their care, and to recognize the significance for their congregations of the learning context of their theology’ (2002). Similarly, in the context of this study, the list of groups of people who should take ordinary people’s religious beliefs and practices seriously must include all those groups involved in road safety awareness campaigns, because such awareness campaigns suggest that the latter groups also do care about the safety of all road users.
- Secondly, there seems to be the need to improve our understanding of, for example, *amaZulu* people’s ideas of religion (ATR), because our understanding of such ideas to the extent that it is not fragmentary, or

perhaps just because of its fragmentary character, may be, to a large extent, spurious. A genuine understanding of *amaZulu* people's ideas of religion then would ensure that what is positive and good in their religion is not lumped together with what is destructive in it. I therefore contend that such spurious understanding has led many scholars, theologians and indeed even many Africans, especially those who believe in the "saved" experience, to assign all African traditional religious beliefs and practices and / or African Traditional Religion to categories such as superstition, paganism or animism, ancestor worship and magic or fetishism – derogatory categories which ordinary African people themselves are not familiar with and, which they certainly do not use to describe their religion²⁷¹. Moreover, spurious understanding of ordinary people's ideas of their religion, suggests a lack of what Stiver has referred to as; 'What is called for in understanding [African] religious language... the virtues of patient observation, a certain degree of participation and empathy, and a talent for "thick description"'²⁷².

- Thirdly behind all the carnage on the roads is a system that causes people to be a part of it if they want to survive. They have to rush to work to survive. But in doing so they put their lives in danger. This is a constant paradox that is at the heart of this study. People are caught up in a vicious cycle of capitalist consumerism. The more they get of the goods that capitalism provides the more they want. People are no longer able to live the simple lifestyles of their forefathers and mothers in rural Africa. This is now associated with backwardness and poverty. But the question remains whether this lifestyle is not only the safest but also in the long term the healthiest. Why is it that so many people who live and work in

²⁷¹ John S Mbiti., 1991, *Introduction to African Religion* (Second Revised Edition), (pp. 17-19); Oxford: Heinemann. See especially, his discussion of 'Some wrong ideas about African Religion'.

²⁷² Stiver, Dan R., (1996, 2000), *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story*, Oxford: Blackwell; in Astley, Jeff., 2002 p. 116 – Anthropologists and sociologists use the term 'thick description' (originally coined by Gilbert Ryle) to denote a multidimensional, nuanced and complex account of a situation in its context, utilizing different standpoints and interpretations (Geertz, 1993: ch.1; cf. West, Noble and Todd: 1999: 37-9) in Astley, (2002), p. 116.

the cities also have homes in the country? Why do people want to go back to their roots, their religion, and their ancestors in the country?

The above are the questions that I have decided to end this study.

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10. Appendices

10.1 Questionnaire: Aimed at canvassing road users willing to participate in the study fully for about an hour and also administered to potential participants willing to contribute for a shorter period of time.

1 (a): How often do you use the Edendale Road and or its feeder roads?

- Every day
- Every week
- Every month

(b): *Ingabe uvamise ukuwusebenzisa kangakanani umgwaqo i Edendale kanye noma nemixhantela yalomgwaqo?*

- *Zonke izinsuku*
- *Wonke amasonto*
- *Zonke izinyanga*

2 (a): What is your main means of transport?

- Car
- Bus
- Taxi
- Bicycle
- Walk

(b): *Yiluphi uhlobo lwesithuthi ovamise ukulusebenzisa?*

- *Yimoto*
- *Yobhasi*
- *Yitekisi*
- *Yibhayisikili*
- *Yizinyawo*

3 (a): What is the main purpose of your travel on the Edendale Road?

- Work
- Shopping
- Both of the above
- Other (please specify)

(b): *Iyiphi inhloso esemqoka eyenza ukuba usebenzise lomgwaqo?*

- *Ukuya emsebenzini*
- *Ukuyothenga ezitolo*
- *Yikho kokubili okungenhla*
- *Ngokunye nje (ngicela ukuba ucacise)*

4 (a): Which religious faith do you adhere to?

- Christian
- Muslim
- African Traditional Religion
- Other

(b): *Ingabe iyiphi inkolo obambebelele kuyo?*

- *Ngeyobukrestu*
- *Ngeyamasulumane*
- *Yinkolo yendabuko*
- *Ngenye inkolo*

5 (a): Are you a member of a church, mosque or other religious community?

(b): *Ngabe uyilo yini ilunga lebandla elithile, lethempeli elithile noma umhlangano othile wezenkolo na?*

6 (a): How much risk do you think there is in travelling on the Edendale Road?

- Little risk
- Much risk
- No risk

(b) *Ngokucabanga kwakho ungathi ingakanani ingozi ekusebenziseni lomgwaqo?*

- *Yincane*
- *Yinkulu*
- *Ayikho*

7 (a): What is the exact nature of this risk?

e.g.: Accidents,

Car-highjackings,

Other (please specify)

(b): *Ingabe wuhlobo lunilobungozi obukhona?*

Isibonelo: wukushayisa noma ukushayisana kwezithuthi

Ukudunwa kwazo

Noma ngokunye (ngicela ucacise)

8 (a): Do you believe in any kind of divine assistance to help protect you in your travel on this road?

- Yes
- No

(b): *Ngabe uyakholelwa yini ekuvikelekeni okuqhamuka ngenxa yokholo lwakho nxa usebenzisa lomgwaqo?*

- *Yebo*
- *Qha*

9 (a) If your answer to the above question is yes, would you mind stating exactly: what form this assistance takes?

e.g.: God

Jesus

Ancestors

A combination of any or all of these

Other

(b): *Uma impendulo yakho kulombuzo ongenhla kungu yebo, ngicela ungicacisele ukuthi lolusizo luphuma kuphi noma kubani – isibonelo:*

Ngabe luvela kumdali

Ngabe luvela kuJesu

Ngabe luvela kwabaphansi noma amadlozi akini

Konke okungenhla noma yinhlanganisela yokunye kwakho

10 (a): Is your belief in divine assistance based only on Christian religion, or only on African Traditional Religion, or only on any other religion or it is based on a combination of two or more different religions?

(b): *Ngabe inkolelo yakho osizweni lokuvikeleka olutholakala ngenxa yokholo lwakho isekelwe yinkolo yobukrestu kuphela, yinkolo yendabuko kuphela, noma kwenye nje yezinkolo noma enhlanganiselweni yalezi zinkolo esezibaliwena?*

11(a): Do you perform any religious practice with regard to your travel on the Edendale Road? (E.g. saying of prayers, libation, etc)

- Yes
- No

(b): *Ngabe ikhona yini imikhuba yezenkolo oyenzayo eqondene nokusebenzisa kwakho lomgwaqo (isibonelo: ukukhuleka imithandazo, ukushisa impepho, ukuchela ngamanzi angcwele)*

- *Yebo*
- *Qha*

12 (a) Do you perform religious practices that are based only on one religion or do you combine practices drawn from two or more religions?

(b) *Ngabe wenza imikhuba yezenkolo encike enkolweni eyodwa noma uhlanganisa imikhuba encike ezinkolweni ezimbili okanye kweziningi?*

13 (a) Is, there any special reason why you combine religious practices drawn from different religions?

(b) *Ngabe sikhona yini isizathu esiqavile esibangela ukuba uhlanganise imikhuba yezenkolo ezihlukene?*

14 (a) Do you wear any charms or amulets on your person or carry in your possession anything that you believe will protect you on the road?

(b) *Ngabe zikhona yini izinto zabantu ozifaka emzimbeni wakho noma oziphathayo nokholelwa ukuthi zingasiza ekukuvikeleni ezingozini zalomgwaqo?*

15 (a): What kind of charms or amulets do you wear or carry?

(b) *Ngabe ziwuhlobo luni lezizinto zabantu ozifakayo noma oziphathayo?*

16 (a) Do you wear or carry charms drawn from one religion or charms drawn from different religions?

(b) *Ngabe ufaka noma uphatha izinto zabantu eziqondene nenkolo eyodwa noma eziqondene nezinkolo ezahlukene na?*

17 (a) Is, there any special reason why you combine charms drawn from different religions?

(b) *Ngabe sikhona yini isizathu esiqavile esibangela ukuba uhlanganise izinto zabantu eziqondene nezinkolo ezahlukene na?*

18 (a) Are you willing to discuss this any further for about an hour?

- Yes
- No

18 (b) *Ungathanda yini ukuba sibuye siqhubeke sixoxe ngokujulile ngalezindaba isikhathi esingacishe sibe yihora eliloda na?*

19 (a) If you agree, I suggest that you name the time and the place that will be suitable for both of us and that you may invite a friend, or a neighbour or a next of kin or anyone to be present during our discussion.

(b) *Uma uvuma ukuba siyiqhube lendaba ngibona kungakuhle ukuba unqume isikhathi nendawo okungasilungela sobabili ukuba siyiqhube lindaba, kanti futhi ungamema noma umngani wakho noma umakhelwane wakho noma owakini noma kungaba ubani ongathanda ukuba abekhona engxoxweni yethu.*

10.2 Interview Schedule: Conducted with participants who were willing and had time to participate for about an hour in the study.

1. Which religious faith do you adhere to: Christian, Muslim, African Traditional Religion, Other?

(Ngabe iyiphi inkolo ozibandakanya nayo: NgeyobuKrestu, NgeyobuSulumane, Ngeyendabuko yase Afrika, Ngenye inkolo?)

2. Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time?

(Kungenzeka yini, ukuthi uzibandakanya nezinkolo ezevile kweyodwa ngesikahthi esisodwa?)

3. Is there any special reason for this?

(Ngabe sikhona yini, isizathu esiqavile sokwenza lokhu?)

4. Are you a member of a church, mosque, or other religious community, if so can you specify?

(Ngabe ulilunga lebandla, ithempeli elithize noma umhlangano othile ebandleni? Uma kunjalo, kungenzeka ukuthi ungicecisele?)

5. What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user?

(Ngabe yiziphi izingqinamba, izivivinyo, izilingo noma izinselelo ohlangabezana nazo njengomuntu osebenzisa lomgwaqo?)

6. How does your faith assist you as a road user?

(Ukholo noma, ukukholwa kwakho kukusiza kanjani njengomuntu osebenzisa lomgwaqo?)

7. If you perform rituals connected to your use of the road, could you answer the following questions?

- What are these rituals?
- Where are they performed?
- What benefit do you think they will achieve?
- Who are they performed to?
- Are they drawn from one religion or from more than one religion?
- Why are they drawn from different religions?

(Uma wenza noma yimiphi imikhuba yezenkolo eqondene nokusebenzisa kwakho umgwaqo, ngicela ukuba uphendule lemibuzo elandelayo:

- *Yimiphi lemikhuba yezenkolo?*
- *Yenzelwa kuphi?*
- *Umphumela muni ocabanga ukuthi lemikhuba yezenkolo izowuveza?*
- *Ngabe yenziwa ibhekiswe kubani?*
- *Ngabe isuselwa enkolweni eyodwa noma ezinkolweni eziningi?*
- *Kungani isuselwe ezinkolweni ezahlukene?)*

8. Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use?

(Ngabe akhona yini amazwi ezenkolo owasebenzisayo ukuze uqonde ngokusebenzisa kwakho lomgwaqo na?)

9. Is it possible that sometimes you use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why?

(Kungenzeka yini, ukuthi ngezinye izikhathi uke usebenzise amazwi ezenkolo aqondene nezinkolo ezahlukene? Uma kunjalo, ngabe yisiphi isizathu esiyimbangela yalokhu?)

10. Do you believe that God / or Allah / or the Ancestors / Spirits / Divinities / other spiritual forces and powers help to protect you on this road?

(Ngabe uyakholelwa yini, ekutheni uNkulunkulu ngokwamaKrestu, okanye uNkulunkulu ngokwamaSulumane, noma amaDlozi, noma imimoya namanye amandla ezenkolo kuyasiza ekukuvikeleni ezingozini zomgwaqo?)

11. In what ways do you believe these spiritual beings and forces protect you on the road?

(Yiziphi izindlela, okholelwa ukuthi lokhu okuphila ngokomoya kanye namandla okomoya kukuvikela ngazo emgwaqweni?)

12. Do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief?

(Ngabe uyakholelwa yini, ekutheni uNkulunkulu kanye namadlozi bayakuvikela ngesikhathi esisodwa noma ngokubambisana emgwaqweni? Uma uthi kunjalo, yisiphi isisekelo saleyonkolelo?)

13. How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith?

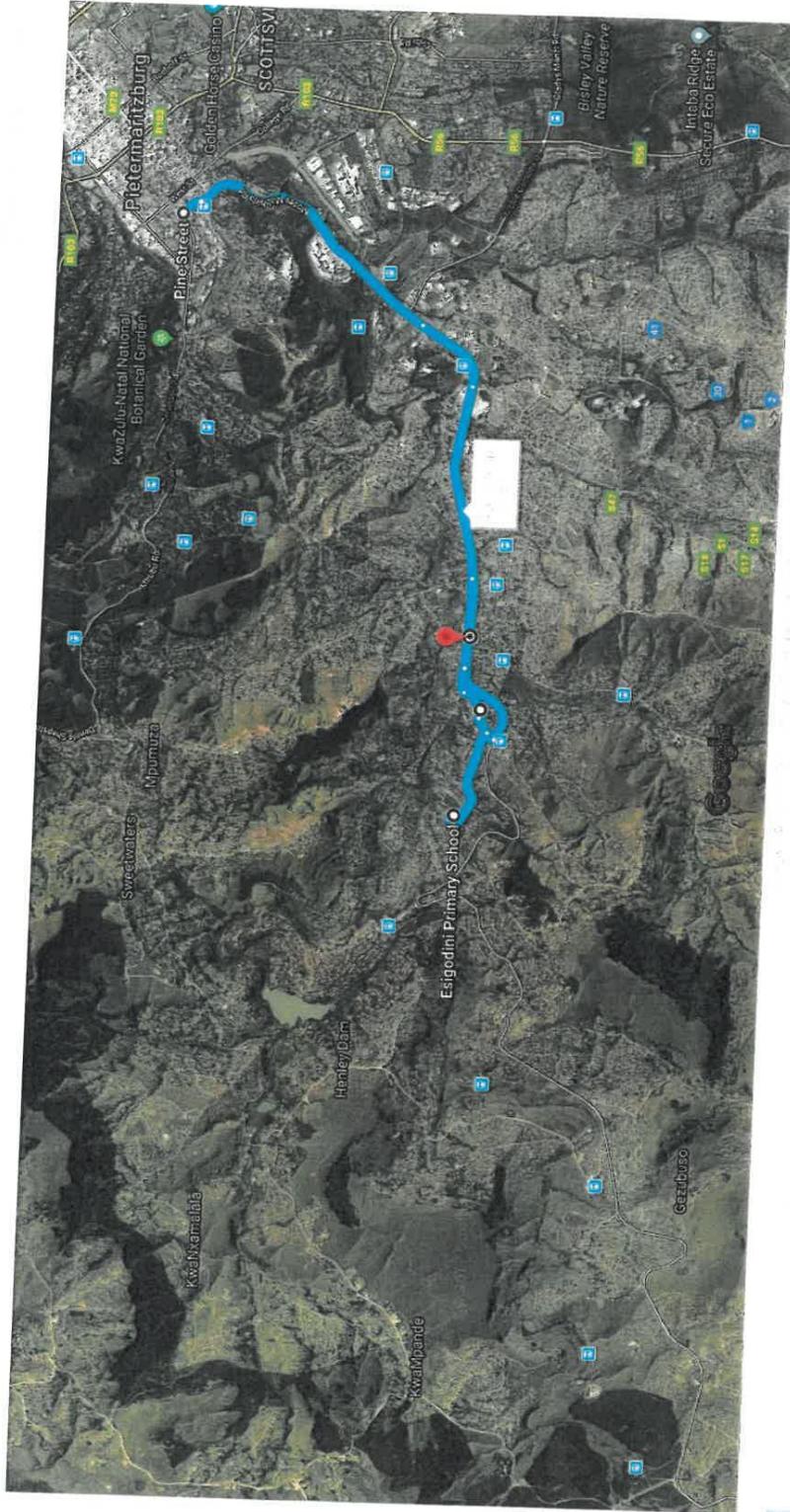
(Ungakuchaza kanjani, ukwenzeka kwezingozi zomgwaqo ngombono wenkolo yakho?)

14. What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith?

(Ucabanga ukuthi kumele kwenziwe njani, ukuze kuxazululeke izinkinga ezidala izingozi zomgwaqo uma ubuka ngeso lenkolo yakho?)

15. In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith?

(Uma ungaqhathanisa ngenhloso yokubeka umbono ojwayelekile, ngabe ukusebenzisa umgwaqo kuyasiza ekukhuliseni ukholo lwakho noma kuyalubulala?)





10.5 Field Reports (1-19): Subject: Field Report Number 1

1. Introduction

In this field report I discuss the steps I had to go through from the moment I entered the field for the first time. I begin by talking about the first person I met, the person who eventually made it possible for me to meet key stakeholders within the kombi taxi industry in the Pietermartizburg district. The Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads form part of this district. I discuss the experiences I had in the various offices I visited. I also discuss about issues which were highlights of my visits. These include my perceptions of the attitude of stakeholders related to academic / social / theological research. The issue of benefits raise by stakeholders is also discussed. I begin the discussion below by describing my experience immediately on entering the research site for the first time.

2. Entering the field site

I entered the field for the first time on the 14th of November, 2011 at about 06h30 in the morning. My main purpose at this initial stage was to ask for permission to conduct research from the Edendale local taxi associations. I therefore needed to find at least one person who would direct me to the places where Edendale local taxi associations conduct their business. I had already decided beforehand that the kombi taxi regulator at the Edendale Hospital kombi taxi rank would be the right person to help me find my way to the key stakeholders within the local taxi industry.

There are two reasons why I chose this particular kombi taxi regulator as my guide. Firstly, the Edendale Hospital kombi taxi rank is not far away from my place of residence – it is actually within a walking distance. Secondly, one of the functions of a kombi taxi regulator is to alert other kombi taxi regulators and kombi taxi drivers in case there are stranded passengers who need transport to be made available. This function makes it possible for kombi taxi regulators and regular prospective passengers to develop a cordial relationship. My use of kombi taxis on a regular basis to travel to the Pietermartizburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal five days a week made it possible for me to develop such a relationship with this particular kombi taxi regulator. It was such a person

who directed me to the offices of two local taxi associations – the Caluza Local Taxi Association (located within the Pietermaritzburg CBD) and the Dambuza Local Taxi Association (located in Edendale – KwaDambuza).

2.1 At the Caluza office (my first visit)

The office space used by the Caluza Taxi Association is located at the Battery Centre at the corner of West Street and Long Market / Langalibalele Street in Pietermaritzburg. There are two reasons which made me to decide to visit this office first before visiting the Dambuza office. Firstly, I was under the impression that it will be easy for me to find offices used by other local taxi associations in the city and that I will get direction to those offices from the Caluza office. Secondly, the Dambuza office was going to be easy to find because it is located in an area in which I am very much familiar with. I arrived at the Caluza office at about 08h00 – the same day I was entering the field for the first time.

After introducing myself to the office secretary, explaining the purpose of my visit and handing over to her the introductory letter from UKZN, I was told that the chairperson and other members of the association would be available the following day. After making a photocopy of my introductory letter, I was asked to leave my contact details so that I could be contacted once members of the association had deliberated on my letter. The other option given to me was that I may come the following day at 11h00 AM. I was given an assurance that by that time the decision about my request would have been taken.

Before I thanked the secretary and left, I asked about directions to offices belonging to other local taxi associations. This is the reply the secretary gave me: “Many of the local taxi associations do not have their own offices; they usually conduct their meetings at various temporal venues”. This response prompted me to decide to visit the Dambuza office at that very same day. It was 10h45 when I took a kombi taxi to Dambuza.

2.2 At the Dambuza office

The Dambuza local taxi association office is located at a building which serves as a shopping complex and a lodging complex at the same time. This building is popularly known as *eSitezi* (literally – a double story building) by local residents. When I arrived at the office, I was told that there was a meeting in progress and a promise was made that my request to meet with members will be brought to their attention. After about thirty minutes, I was invited into the meeting and asked to present my case. After I had introduced myself, explained about the purpose of my visit - why I needed permission, what my study was all about, how I intend to go about doing my study and explained about the things I would not do during the research process, especially things that might disturb the smooth running of the work of kombi taxi drivers, it was time for me to answer questions and / or concerns.

A variety of questions were raised. However, all of them suggested only one thing – that the Dambuza kombi taxi operators wanted clarity before making a decision whether or not to grant me permission. One of the questions was this one:

If you are looking for community members to interview them, why do you need to travel on kombi taxis? Why do you not just approach community members and then ask them interview questions?

Another question directed to me was this one:

The time that it takes for a kombi taxi to travel from the city centre to Dambuza is very short, and this means that you will not have enough time to complete your interviews with people in a single short kombi taxi trip.

I responded to the above questions by explaining that the first thing I needed at that point was to get a specific number of people who use kombi taxis on a regular basis to get to work - people from different parts of Edendale, as well as people from different religious backgrounds or traditions. I also explained that I was planning to canvass people who will be willing to participate in the research at the taxi ranks and inside kombi taxis during a number of trips that I will be undertaking. Again, I also explained that I was not going to be conducting any interviews during the kombi taxi trips. There was also concern about the possibility of disturbing passengers' peace after a hard day at work,

and also concern about my presence inside a kombi taxi disturbing activities such as the playing of music to entertain passengers. One of the taxi operators even suggested that some of the passengers would eventually start complaining about “a boring man who is asking too many questions during kombi taxi trips”. I gave an undertaking that I will make sure that my actions in the field do not in any way disturb the normal work of drivers and conductors by demanding attention from both passengers and drivers. I made it clear that any canvassing will be restricted to one person sitting closest to me in a kombi taxi trip.

Another suggestion and /or concern that raised by one of the people present at the meeting was this one:

There are many of activities associated with Satanism in our communities. It might be better for you to visit different churches and ask pastors or priests to allow you to interview their members after church services on Sundays. You could also visit different taxi ranks with a loudhailer and invite people who might be interested to meet you at a particular place for interview purposes.

I pointed out that the very idea of seeking permission from members of local taxi associations was that I and the university I am representing through the work that I will be doing need to acknowledge that kombi taxi operators are among the key stakeholders within the road environment. I also explained that another reason for seeking official permission within the kombi taxi space of operation was to prevent other people from inventing unfounded rumours about the intentions and purposes of my research study. I also mentioned that although Satanism might be one of the many concepts that might emerge from the data that will be collected, the study however is certainly not a crusade about Satanism. One of the senior members in the meeting made this remark:

As long as you are going to make sure that you are going to pay the required taxi fare for all the kombi taxi trips that you will be taking, we have no problem with giving you permission to do what you want to do. At the same time, we cannot tell you how you should do your work because you know it better than us.

After the above discussions, one of the members started summarizing the manner in which he understood what I was asking them to do for me. He then asked me whether or not I agree with his version. I said yes. He then suggested to the secretary that maybe it was time for him to sign the letter as an indication that permission has been granted

because we have all come to a common understanding of what is at stake. The letter was signed and handed back to me after a photocopy was made for the Dambuza Local Association's own record purposes. I thanked the association members and left after about one and a quarter hour discussion.

2.3 Back at the Caluza Office (my second visit)

When I arrived at the Caluza office the next day, I was told that there was a meeting going on and that my request for permission was also part of the agenda. After some time I was called into the office, and the following is the decision that was communicated to me:

All the members of the Caluza Local Taxi Association present at the meeting have decided that it will be to your best interest if you take your matter to the Regional Taxi Council office at number 225Berg/Hoosen Haffejee Street Pietermaritzburg, because that is where all the important decisions concerning local taxi associations are made. There you will be given one letter which will enable you to travel to all the areas you have identified as potential research sites. You might even be given the privilege to travel free of charge on your research trips. That is all. There is no need for you ask to ask us any questions because answering them cannot influence us to change the decision we have made already”.

I thanked the members of this association and then went on my way to find the Regional Taxi Council (RETACO) Offices as directed.

2.4 At the RETACO Offices

I arrived at the Regional Taxi Council offices at about ten minutes past one o'clock (13h10 PM). After I had explained the main purpose of my visit, I was asked to go and prepare a formal letter which I will have to submit to the council office for consideration. I wrote this letter and I submitted it to the relevant office on the 17th of November 2011 and I received the response to my letter on the 22nd of November 2017. In this response, I was invited to attend a council meeting scheduled for the 29th of November 2011. I was also told that I will be given the opportunity to present my case before all the council members at RETACO, in a way, to clarify the content of my letter.

I attended this meeting together with the co-supervisor to my main supervisor. After I had made a presentation about my research project, it became apparent that some of the council members wanted to ask some questions. The first question was related to the

methods I was planning to use in the collection of data. The second question was linked to ethical considerations – whether or not there was any possibility of any harm to the participants (passengers) as a result of the research itself. The final question was more the question of trust than anything else. It had to do with whether or not I promise to give a final copy of the research report to the Regional Taxi Council after the study has been completed.

The secretary summarized the proceedings by explaining to all his understanding of what I have said and he asked me whether or not I agree with his understanding. After this the and before closing the meeting, the secretary asked me and the co-supervisor to leave our contact details with the office secretary, who will then write the necessary letter authorizing me (as the researcher in this study) to officially enter the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads together with the taxi ranks and the kombi taxis themselves as parts of the research field relevant to the interests of my study.

3. Conclusion

When looking back at what transpired during my visits at the three offices associated with kombi taxis which travel on the Edendale Road, there are many issues which stand out and which need to be unpacked and / or reflected upon. But one of these issues stand out over the rest for me, and it is the issue of acquiring patronage, an issue that needs to be taken very seriously, especially by the person seeking it. In my case, I need to admit that the seriousness that is required with regard to this issue was lacking. I did not take it upon myself to find out more about the organizational aspects of the kombi taxi industry within the Pietermaritzburg district. If I had done that I would have went straight to the RETACO office and sought permission there. That would have saved me a lot of time!

Field Report Number 2

1. Introduction

This field report was necessitated by the fact that permission to officially enter the field and begin to canvass people who will be willing to participate in the study took longer to be granted than anticipated. It was on the 29th of November 2011 when a promise was made that permission letter will be sent to me as soon as possible. I eventually received the permission letter on the 9th of January 2012. Understandably, the delay was caused by the fact that it was about the beginning of the end of the year holidays when my request was made. The delay on the other hand gave me the opportunity to find out if there are observable indicators to what I was about to investigate in the field. I did not need permission to do this because I was still a regular kombi taxi passenger from Edendale who travels to the university at least five days a week. This field report then is about a strategy I devised for selecting the most suitable kombi taxis for this study. It is also about indicators I identified that suggested the faith interest or lack thereof of a kombi taxi driver / or operator. I collected information contained in this report through observation while travelling in kombi taxis from Edendale to Pietermaritzburg. I wrote this report in the interim period between waiting for permission and beginning my research work.

2. Selecting the most suitable kombi taxis

The basic idea here was to identify and select kombi taxis according to observable religious symbols displayed on them, as well as the kinds of symbols used in the course of travel, such as gospel music. The kinds of religious symbols displayed in kombi taxis I was looking for included sacred texts, prayers, photographs of religious leaders and /or founders, and everything else I will find. I then decided that in order for me to get close to such symbols, I will have to make sure that I travel on a kombi taxi that has at least one religious symbol that is either displayed or used. I was going to do this because I was operating under the assumption that the presence of a religious symbol in a kombi taxi would suggest that the owner or perhaps even the driver of such a vehicle would either be an adherent to a religion related to the symbol. I was also counting on the assumption that

the presence of a religious symbol in a kombi taxi will most probably lead me to people I can approach later on and ask them whether or not they were willing to participate in this study. In the next section I am going to present a list of some of the religious symbols I came across when I started to put my plan into action. Those were observable pointers which gave me the impression that kombi taxis which had these symbols while using the Edendale Road on a daily basis are more likely to be owned and or driven by people who are adherents to a religious faith or religion relevant to a symbol used or displayed.

3. Indicators

My observation as a regular kombi taxi passenger was that gospel music appeared to be the most commonly used religious symbol than all the others combined, including religious symbols displayed or used in kombi taxis operating within the Edendale Road network. Whether or not this is a true reflection of the fact that all or most of the owners and drivers of those vehicles are actually adherents to the Christian faith is another story. Regardless of what is actually the true state of affairs, it is an undeniable fact that gospel music is the most preferred religious symbol on the Edendale Road network. This however, does not mean that other music genres are not used. What it does mean however is that among the religious symbols that can be found on this road, gospel music is religious symbol number one.

Religious texts are also some of the religious symbols displayed either on the inside or the outside of some of the kombi taxis operating on the Edendale Road network. The following are some of the sacred texts I have observed on a number of occasions while travelling in kombi taxis on this road, especially during the past two months:

- The Lord is my Shepherd
- In God we trust
- God is Greatest
- Look, I will always be with you
- Psalm 62 used as a number plate – a psalm about the need to trust in God alone

The above texts and many others like them point to what Meyer and Smith²⁷³ regard as an understanding of Christian religion which they classify as: “a correct, enlightened understanding of the divine and spirituality”. This understanding is contrasted with that of witchcraft, magic and other religions and cultures that are not of western origin. According to Meyer and Smith; “these are generally regarded as false, deceptive, discredited, or morally tainted”; whereas, the first group of texts I presented above “...answer the needs of people who employ them in times of crisis, hurt, or loss or in the continual difficulties of every day life”(1994:p.14). The view on “other religions and cultures” lumped together with witchcraft and magic, as expressed by the two authors above is clearly a biased western perspective articulated by experts. It will be interesting to find out whether or not in the later stages of this research project ordinary people do have an alternative perspective on this matter.

Another set of religious symbols that I have observed as a regular kombi taxi passengers on the Edendale Road network include: a Pentagram, a Swastika, a fish, oil, a rosary, a photograph of a religious leader (e.g. Isaiah Shembe), and various kinds of a cross. In their book, Stein and Stein²⁷⁴ present and discuss some of the above symbols (e.g. a Pentagram, a Swastika, and a fish) and many others as basic artistic representations which today appear in many un-Christian religious forms. For instance, the Pentagram is one of those symbols, and according to the Steins,

The Pentagram was associated with the Hebrew Scriptures as a symbol of the five books of the Pentateuch (The Torah). Early Christians used the symbol with a variety of meanings; including the representation of the five wounds of Christ and the star that prophesied the birth of Jesus....However, later on this symbol came to be associated with evil when the twentieth century Satanists adopted the pentagram as their symbol. The Satanists symbol is an inverted pentagram, most commonly shown with a goat's head in the centre (Stein, R. L. and Stein, P. L. 2005:p.59).

It is this latter form of the pentagram symbol with a goat's head that I have observed displayed in some of the kombi taxis using the Edendale Road. Before getting hold of the above information about religious symbols, I simply assumed that it was just one of those symbols with religious significance. It can be interesting to find out how the people who

²⁷³ See Meyer, M. W. and Smith, R. Eds., (1994), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic texts of rural power.* (p.4)

²⁷⁴ See Rebecca L. Stein and Philip L. Stein (2005), *The Anthropology of Religion, magic and witchcraft,* (p.59)

display this symbol would respond when asked to explain the meaning and the significance of this form of the pentagram symbol.

4. Conclusion

The highlight of this field report for me is the fact that permission has been granted to me by the key stakeholders within the kombi taxi industry (RETACO). This means that I can now proceed to the first phase of this research project - that is, travelling on kombi taxis for some time with the aim of canvassing people who will be willing to participate fully in this study for about an hour. Hopefully, those people will be able to respond appropriately to the needs of the topic and its research question including sub-questions.

Field Report Number 3

1. Introduction

In this field report I describe how I went about canvassing potential participants. I became aware from the very beginning that success in gaining the number of informants who will be willing to participate fully in this research project depended on the extent to which I was going to be able to cultivate a good relationship with each and every potential participant I come across. I knew the kinds of people I was looking for – people travelling to get to work (commuters). Kombi taxi drivers, as well as commuting passengers were my main target groups when I made the decision to use the Edendale Hospital kombi taxi rank as one of the places I will use at the initial stages for the purposes of canvassing potential participants.

2. Canvassing in action

One of the first important lessons I have learned in the few days that I have been in the field is that, the nature of a question or the way I ask a question can either assist or hinder progress towards cultivating a relation with a potential participant. For instance, in one of the kombi taxis I noticed that a small bottle of what looked like blue oil was hanging on a thin rope tied above the inside mirror above the driver's head. So, I asked the driver this question after we had been engaged in a casual talk for some time: "what is the purpose of this?" I asked pointing at the bottle with oil. "It is meant to protect us", replied the driver uneasily. I continued asking: "It is meant to protect you from what?" Instead of responding to this last question, he kept quiet and started shaking his head slowly in a way that appeared to suggest to me that he was beginning to feel that I am either patronizing him or just being overly talkative. The one important issue which came to my mind after this experience was this one – respect. Fetterman (1998:44-45) when dealing with the question of what he calls "Interviewing protocols and strategies" says:

The first element common to every protocol is the ethnographer's respect for the culture of the group under study. Second is the respect for the person [because] an individual does the fieldworker favour by giving up time to answer questions. Thus, the interview is not an excuse to interrogate an individual or to criticize cultural practices. It is an opportunity to learn from an interviewee.

Unfortunately for me, it was an opportunity which I missed because I behaved like an expert instead of behaving like a learner. The above experience has made me aware of the need to constantly refine an approach before I put it into practice. For instance, I have discovered that it became easy for other people to open up to me when I am soliciting a discussion about religious beliefs and practices concerning road travel by starting a conversation with this question:

Is it true that the government is now forming a partnership with kombi taxi operators and drivers, including people from different religious groups in order to deal effectively with problems associated with road travel?

This has proved to be the most useful ice-breaker so far. Another way of refining the way I ask questions in the field involved the use of the questionnaire aimed at canvassing potential participants.

One of the problems I had not anticipated is the difficulty of asking all the questionnaire questions in the field when a potential participant is under the impression that she or he is not yet involved in a full hour interview. I have mastered the technique of asking these questions without holding a questionnaire in my hand. I know which ones come first, which ones are in the middle, and which ones come at the end. In other words, I am now able to ask them spontaneously. As soon as I became aware of some of the limitations of research, I immediately sought and found ways of how to solve them at an early stage. Below I talk about eight people I attempted to canvass for the purposes of participating in this study and the manner in which I approached each one of them. Some of these people were kombi taxi drivers (KTDs) while others were kombi taxi passengers (KTPs).

3. Canvassing kombi taxi drivers (KTDs)

There is a general perception (I do not think it has been scientifically tested), among members of society that kombi taxi drivers are difficult people to deal with. Before I embarked upon canvassing kombi taxi drivers, I had to rid my mind of this negative perception. The experiences I had with the people who run the kombi taxi industry when I was seeking permission to enter the field made it possible for me to succeed in freeing my mind. Those experiences helped me to realize that success or failure depended on me

– the way I approach not just kombi taxi drivers, but each and every potential participant in the field. Moreover, the letter from RETACO, together with the business card of the chairperson of this organization contributed a lot in making drivers in particular to agree to help me. The story of the first driver above did not end up in gloom. Before we parted, he made this promise: “We can talk about these things some other time” as he gave me his cell-phone number. This was good enough for me because the door that appeared to have been closed was proved to be still open.

With the second kombi taxi driver, it was the positive comment I made about the gospel music that was playing in his kombi taxi that made it easy for both of us to agree that we can meet at some other time to discuss about my research project. In the case of the third kombi taxi driver, it was the positive remark I made about a prayer displayed inside his kombi taxi that led to the cultivation of a promising relationship – a prayer which had three elements in it: it was conveying a sense of gratitude to passengers for supporting the business, the need for a safe road usage was acknowledged, and it also acknowledged God as the ultimate protector of all road users. In the case of the fourth kombi taxi driver, it was also the positive comment I made about the photograph of Isaiah Shembe that was displayed inside the vehicle that made it possible the cultivation of a promising relationship and a promise of a future meeting.

4. Canvassing kombi taxi passengers (KTPs)

One of the important lessons I have learned in the field when canvassing commuters who are also believers is that I need to be aware that religious beliefs together with religious practices and Road Safety are very sensitive issues. This means that lack of awareness of the sensitivity inherent in these issues can be costly to me as a researcher in two particular ways: 1) it can cost me an opportunity to cultivate a relationship that might be fruitful for my study. 2) It can cost me an opportunity to learn about other people’s religious beliefs and practices. It was a display of this awareness to the sensitive nature of the issues involved that assisted me to be able to successfully canvass four kombi taxi passengers mentioned in this field report: two who belong to the Nazareth Baptist Church – a male security guard aged 35 years, and a self employed 45 year old male. A thirty five year old female, who is a Christian member of a Revival Church, employed in one of the leading

retail stores in Pietermaritzburg, and a forty year old female employee in the local government offices in Pietermaritzburg.

5. Conclusion

The most important thing that is highlighted in this field report is that progress has been made in terms of canvassing potential participants for this study. The one thing that needs to be noted however is the fact that only one section of the Edendale Township has so far been used to canvass potential participants. This is the area which is easily accessible to me because I do not have to travel in a kombi taxi in order to get to the Edendale Hospital kombi taxi rank. It is necessary to mention here that the next individuals or groups of potential participants will definitely be canvassed in the other different parts of the Edendale Road network, including different kombi taxi ranks and stops within the different sections of Edendale and the city of Pietermaritzburg.

Field Report No.4

1. Introduction

This field report contains information that has been acquired in a spontaneous manner. This is because I encountered the participants involved by chance. I was simply attending to the ordinary management of personal matters outside of my research work. The lesson I have learned from this is that it is very important to be always ready to seize an opportunity whenever it presents itself. I came across informants who helped me to get a glimpse of what might be in store for me in the process ahead of collecting data.

2. The First encounter

I had come to the university campus for the purposes of renewing my library books. At this stage of my research project I had just completed a couple of field visits whereby I was simply canvassing and cultivating relationships with commuters who showed a willingness to participate fully in this study. I had originally envisaged that coming to the campus and sorting out the library matter will not take more than two hours. However, at the campus I realized that there was an HIV voluntary testing campaign going on. After the library, I decided to go for HIV testing. I was assigned to a woman of between thirty five and forty years. She was the one who was going to counsel and test me. I was surprised when I saw that the clothes she was wearing were those of a traditional healer (*umlaphi wendabuko*). After I had been tested, I learned that she was indeed a traditional healer who had also been receiving training as an HIV/AIDS counsellor at the Edendale hospital.

This knowledge brought to me the idea that a traditional healer willing to learn western ways of dealing with health issues ought to be open minded enough to appreciate the importance of my own research work. I then gave her a brief overview of my research work and then asked her whether or not she would be willing to be a participant in my study. She suggested that I visit her at the Edendale hospital where she is receiving training at the 5B2 ward to discuss my proposition further. At the hospital, she suggested that it would be more beneficial for me to have an interview with her spiritual mother

from whom she had received training as a traditional healer. Her reasoning was that her spiritual mother would be an ideal candidate because she is also a kombi taxi operator/owner. She then gave me direction to their place of residence and assured me that she would inform her mother about me and my work before I meet her.

2.1 Face to Face with a traditional healer (KTO)

The household I visited two weeks later is located at the area commonly know as the original Edendale. This area is about 12 kilometers from the Pietermaritzburg's Central Business District (CBD). The one thing that strikes a visitor about this household is a mixture of the colourful modern day middle class house, a couple of rondavels (traditional Zulu houses), about ten or so goats roaming around the yard and about three male traditional healer trainees (*amathwasa*). The rondavels and presence of the trainees were a clear sign that I have arrived at the space occupied by spiritual chiefs (*amakhosi*) – a holy space. After all protocol had been observed from the gate, I was invited into the house by the very same traditional healer I had met at the university campus. Before getting into the sitting room here the interview took place I had to take off my shoes and leave them on the veranda like everyone else as a sign of respect. No one told me to take off my shoes. I did on my own because I saw pairs of shoes and sandals lying on the entrance to the house.

Once inside the house, I was also impressed by the way the prospective interviewee displayed her understanding of the kombi taxi industry as well as the manner in which she showed an appreciation of my research work before I even started explaining in detail what my project is all about. She started off by stating that,

When I first heard about your project, I was convinced that it can go a long way in helping to solve problems associated with travel on the roads. I am saying this because our African traditional and customary ways of understanding and dealing with road travel related danger and death are being undermined by African people themselves. The main contributing factor in this regard involves African people who consider themselves as the “saved” Christians and as a result tend to look down upon African religious beliefs and practices, including every person who adheres to such beliefs and practices. This is sad because people are killed and injured on the roads now and then. The irony is that some of these things can be prevented.

I wanted to know how deaths and injuries on the road could be prevented according to her own point of view and so I asked this question: “What do you think needs to be done

to stop road accidents? Her response to this question was quite revealing when she stated thus:

There are too many abandoned spirits of people who have been killed on the Edendale Road for example. First of all, those spirits were never taken from the scenes of accidents, to their family homes and then lastly shown the places where their bodies were buried with the help of a traditional healer performing the ritual designed for this purpose. In this case I am speaking about using resources such as a red chicken as an animal sacrifice, the burning of incense and a branch of the *umlahlankosi* tree [carisna anduina] which serves as a transporting agent for the spirit of a person who has died under mysterious circumstances on the road. This is the way whereby we Africans have always taken care of our own people who have died on the road or anywhere outside the homestead. These abandoned spirits are causing havoc around the vicinities where people have lost their lives. Nobody and nothing on the road is safe. There is a spot on the Edendale Road which I can show you. It is about a hundred meters from our house. On that spot both domestic animals and human beings have been consistently killed and there is no indication that this will end soon.

The informant then told me to get ready for she was about to tell me what one Christian family did after a male member of their family as killed in a car on the spot she had been referring to. She stated that,

The relatives of that man adhere to the Roman Catholic faith, and so they came and placed a cross with the name and surname of their loved one and also placed some flowers next to the cross on the side of the road just a few meters opposite the scene of he accident. I have no idea why they did this, especially because people normally place crosses and flowers on the grave of a deceased person. I have no doubt that the spirit of that man is among those that do no have rest and are therefore, causing havoc on that part of this road. Because these people insist that they are Christians and that they have left African ways of doing things behind and they may also be convinced that their new faith is superior to African religious beliefs and practices, they have in the process abandoned the spirit of their own relative and at the same time caused problems for all other road users. I have no doubt that many of our own African people are confused, especially those who have been converted to the Christian faith and this prevents them from practicing their own religion and customs. The sad thing is that they do not even know that they are lost (*balahlekile*).

At this point, I wanted to know about how the informant's own family deal with problems associated with road travel, especially when considering the fact that her family owns more than five kombi taxis and three family cars. This is how she responded to this question:

Our family tradition is that we slaughter and sacrifice a goat for each kombi taxi every year. The motivation for this is to give thanks to the ancestors for the protection they have provided during the passing year and to ask for continued protection in the coming year. We do the same for the other three family cars. During this ceremony we talk to the family ancestors who are responsible for protecting our vehicles, our drivers, ourselves and our passengers. We tell the ancestors about the sacrifices and offerings we have made on their behalf and we invite them to be present when we, our neighbours, and other guests are celebrating their care and protection the ancestors

themselves have provided. We also sprinkle each and every vehicle with gall liquid (*inyongo*), herbal medicines (*izintelezi*) to prevent both natural and unnatural causes of road accidents. We do not display any visible religious symbol inside any of our kombi taxis. This is motivated by the understanding that we serve customers (passengers) who belong or adhere to different religious faiths. There is therefore the need to be sensitive to the fact that some of our passengers may feel offended by having certain religious symbols imposed on them. However, family cars are treated differently. There are always religious symbols displayed in them, for example, a gall pouch is usually displayed on the steering wheel as a protective charm.

After listening to all these accounts, I decided that the last question I needed to ask was this one: What do you think needs to be done in order to deal effectively with problems associated with travelling on the roads including the Edendale Road? The answer to this question came out spontaneously as if it had been prepared a long time ago, and this is the response:

Projects like yours need to be supported by everybody who really cares about African people and their cultures and everybody who really cares about the saving of lives on the road – the government, the different church groups and both the public and private transport sectors. There is also the need for willingness on the part of society as a whole, to understand and accept the usefulness of some of the African religious beliefs and practices. Finally, for African Christian people in particular, to understand and accept that there are many African religious beliefs and practices which are meant to promote the good of society and therefore, these cannot be said to be inferior or even opposed to Christian religion and values.

Field Report Number 5

1. Introduction

In this field report the discussion revolves around my encounters in the field with three groups of people I met as I was canvassing people to participate in my study. The first group was made up of five Christians who call themselves *abantwana bakaNkulunkulu* (children of God). These are the people who believe in the “saved” experience – that Jesus has saved them from their past (African traditional / or cultural beliefs and practices) and that they are now living a new Christian life. The second group consisted of four African traditional healers/diviners (*abalaphi bendabuko/izangoma*). The third group was made up of two members of one of the mainline churches (an ordinary member and a pastor in the Lutheran Evangelical Church). Below, I will discuss the different experiences I had with each of these groups respectively.

2. My encounter with the children of God

I got into a kombi taxi from iMbali units 3 and J to Pietermaritzburg at the Edendale Mall Crossing kombi taxi stop. I then found myself sharing a seat with two other female passengers. I greeted them while making myself comfortable on the kombi taxi seat. Before I knew it, I was participating in the two women’s talk about the weather – how hot it was going to be that particular afternoon. I found myself making this remark:

My grandmother used to say to me – ‘my grandchild, stop complaining about the sun and how hot it is, use it to your advantage by washing your clothes’. That is the lesson I will never forget – I do not complain about the rain, why should I complain because it has inspired me to have a garden in which I plant a variety of vegetables (Ngcobo, S. C. in a conversation with two other passengers in a kombi taxi, April 2012).

The above remark contributed a lot in terms of making it possible for the woman who was sitting next to me to agree that I can come to her place of work so that I can explain to her what my research was all about. Two days later I visited the centre where she is employed. I approached the enquiries desk and then discovered that the woman behind the desk was reading the Bible. Before I even introduced myself and ask for the person I was looking for, I found myself making this comment: “I am glad that I have come to a holy place”. This became the beginning of a relationship which led to her introducing me

to her other two colleagues. I came to that place looking for one potential participant and I ended up getting four people who were willing to participate fully in the study at a later date and although they were residents in different parts of Edendale, they were all members of the Apostolic Faith Mission. It was during the lunch break in this initial stage that I learned that these prospective participants call themselves “*abantwana bakaNkulunkulu*” (the children of God). One of them said: “When we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we became the children of God”. When I asked them as to how do they understand problems associated with road travel, one of them said:

The blood of Jesus has cleansed us in such a way that even Satanists – those people who cause road accidents by evil ways because they want to drink the blood of road accident victims, can never touch a kombi taxi in which one of us is travelling in, because they are afraid of being burned by the blood of Jesus. Prayer to God the Father, to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit is the only thing that saves us from road accidents, and all the other road users can also be saved if they just pray and accept Jesus to come into their lives.

3. My encounter with African traditional healers/diviners

In one of my previous field reports I had indicated that I had successfully been able to canvass a female traditional healer/diviner (*umlaphi wendabuko obuye abe yisangoma*). After reading that report, one of my supervisors suggested that I must make an effort to canvass two or more other traditional healers for the purposes of corroborating what I will learn from the first traditional healer. In order to follow up on this suggestion, I visited the Edendale Hospital on Monday 11 June 2012. I had learned from the first traditional healer that the Edendale Hospital has an initiative whereby traditional healers attend workshops for the purposes of training them in Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) so that they can encourage their own clients to test for HIV/AIDS. The visit to Edendale Hospital led me to attend a meeting of traditional healers at Grey’s Hospital on Thursday June 2012. The guest speaker in that meeting was the National Minister of Health (Dr. Motswaledi), and he was assisted by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Minister of Health (Dr. Sibongiseni Dlomo). It was in this meeting that I was able to canvass at least one traditional healer who resides at one of the sections of Edendale – KwaPata (Mount Patridge). After the meeting at Grey’s Hospital I decided to set aside a day whereby I will revisit the first traditional healer I had canvassed in order to confirm the date for a full hour interview.

Our meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 25 July 2012 at her place of residence. However, when I arrived there, I was told that she had to perform a household cleansing ceremony not far away from her house. I eventually met her at her place of residence the following day – Thursday 26 July 2012 as per our telephonic agreement. In our discussion she gave me a detailed account of two African traditional religious practices related to the prevention of road accidents and explained to me that failure to perform any those rituals could lead to a road accident. She described the first of these rituals as *ukubika imoto esanda kuthengwa kwabaphansi* (the obligation to report to one's own ancestors immediately after acquiring possession of a vehicle before it can be used as a means of transport). Failure to do this is more likely to lead to one road accident after another, because the ancestors do not take it lightly when they have been excluded in the affairs of their living relatives.

The practice of informing one's ancestors about a newly acquired motor vehicle follows the following procedure:

- *Ushunqisela imoto entsha noma esanda kuthengwa ngemphepo ngaphakathi nangaphandle kwayo.* (An incense burning ritual is performed on the inside as well as the outside of a newly acquired motor vehicle). During the burning of incense, the following words are spoken and they are directed to the ancestors: *Nanti ihhashi lenu enivumile ukuba ngibe nalo. Ngicela ukuba ngiligibele nani.* (I present to you your horse which you have made it possible for me to own and use. I am now appealing to you to always accompany me in it whenever I am using it.
- *Uhlaba imbuzi yokubonga bese ugeza imoto ngomswani, nangenyongo okuhlanganiswe nezintelezi.* (The vehicle is then washed with the not yet digested food from the stomach of the sacrificial goat, the gall liquid mixed with herbal medicines.
- *Futha inyongo bese uyilengisa esitelingini semoto. Ebusuku iyakhishwa ibekwe emsamu.* The gall sack is inflated with air, its top is tied with a string (to prevent air from escaping) and it is tied on the steering wheel. At night it is removed and placed in a special sacred place reserved for communication with ancestors.

The second ritual is called: *ukuvala uMkhokha* (preventing death from wiping out all the family members - one by one). A whole family can be destroyed if one of its members has been killed in a violent manner. This could be through a road accident or any other form of violent death including murder.

UMkhokha (The contagious nature of violent death) can be prevented through ritual performance by following this procedure:

- People usually remove the body from the scene of an accident and then think that is enough. The soul of a person also needs to be removed through performance of a proper ritual. In this way the whole person would be considered to have been properly buried.
- The spirit of a person who died violently on the road is brought home by means of a branch of a tree known as *uMlahlankosi* (carisna anduina). This branch is soaked into traditional medicines (*izintelezi*) before it is used. The person is then called by name in this way for example: *sibanibani asihambe siye ekhaya kwabakini* (Son and so, let us go home where you belong).
- When the spirit of a person has been brought back home, a hole is dug outside the gate of the household. A red cock is then killed by strangulation and then buried in the hole together with a knife, a bullet and a piece of a motor vehicle tyre. All these items symbolize the violent nature of the kind of death experienced by the person on his or her behalf the ritual is performed.
- Finally, a goat is slaughtered to celebrate the fact that the person who has died a violent death has been joined with his or her ancestors in a respectful and dignified manner. If this ritual is not performed, the spirits of such people become bitter and they cause trouble including road accidents within the vicinity where they had died.

4. My encounter with members of a mainline church

I was in a kombi taxi to Pietermaritzburg when I befriended a man I was sharing a seat with. As soon as we arrived in town I briefly explained to him about the kind of study I was involved in. He then suggested that it might be a good idea that I visit him at his parish church immediately after the service the following Sunday. His parting words were: “You will never know, there might be a couple of people who will be interested to participate”. When I arrived at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Edendale, I could here that there was a choir practice. I spotted the pastor walking towards his house, so I made up my mind that it will be a good idea to ask permission from the pastor to see the person I was looking for. I briefly explained to the pastor why I was visiting his church. He looked at me with surprise and asked this question without looking at me: *ifunani itheology emgwaqweni?* (What has theology got to do with the road?)

5. Conclusion

There are a number of lessons for budding researchers like me in this field report. However, I will highlight the following: that canvassing people who will participate in a research study needs patience and the ability to endure whatever discomfort may come your way. I guess this is the same for all the other stages of the research process – sometimes there will be joyful moments. At other times there will be disappointing moments. But when discomfort becomes the order of the day, giving up is not an option. A long time ago I read the following words in one of the editions of the Readers Digest magazine: “Tough people are ordinary people with an extraordinary amount of determination”. Determination is a good antidote for disappointing and frustrating moments.

Field Report Number 6

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present and discuss findings of interviews I had recently with three Edendale Road users. Two of these use the Edendale Road as employee drivers on a daily basis, to transport passengers from the different parts of the Edendeale Township to the city of Pietermaritzburg for various kinds of social and economic activities. The third participant used to be a kombi taxi driver but is now an owner of a fleet of taxis. He uses the Edendale Road by traveling in his own private car. The three participants adhere to different religious groups. The first kombi taxi driver belongs to the Nazareth (Shembe) religious group. The second kombi taxi driver belongs to a revivalist religious group known as the United Kingdom of God. The kombi taxi owner belongs to the Roman Catholic Church.

Since I started doing field work, I have learned that road safety is one of the most sensitive subjects to discuss. Those who are directly involved in the operation of kombi taxis appear to be suspicious of anyone who is interested in asking questions concerning their industry. The members of the public on the other hand, appear to be too judgemental about the ways in which kombi taxi operators and drivers relate to them. Because of the existence of these negative currents, I have also learned to identify opportunities or signs which suggest that introducing my subject of inquiry would not make certain people uneasy and thus distort my true intentions – learning about religious beliefs and practices of people using the Edendale Road. It is this approach that made it possible for me to get the information which forms part of this field report.

2. Interview responses

2.1 Response from a Nazareth Church adherent (KTD)

I had just arrived at the taxi rank that is located at the basement of Sibusiso Nyembezi Centre in the Central Business District (CBD) in Pietermaritzburg. In IsiZulu, we refer to this taxi rank as Emgodini. This is because entering it is like entering a big hole – it is really like entering a deep pit. The purpose of my coming to this taxi rank was to canvass a couple or more kombi taxi drivers to participate in my research study. While I was

standing there planning my next move, my attention was drawn to a kombi taxi nearby. What actually caught my attention was a voice which sounded like a recorded sermon coming from a sound system of this particular kombi taxi. All the kombi taxis that operate from Emgodini Taxi Rank go through the Edendale Road to reach the various parts of The Edendale Township. After listening for a few seconds from where I was standing, I heard that the sermon like rendition was about the Nazareth Church because the speaker would now and then say: *yiyo infundiso kaShembe lena – this is what Shembe teaches*. This made me decide to board this kombi taxi. Because the kombi taxi had at that moment only five passengers, instead of fifteen (they only leave the taxi rank when they have a full load of passengers depending on the capacity of each taxi), I made it a point that I choose a seat that will make it easy for me to talk with the driver. As soon as I was inside the kombi taxi, I became aware that the sermon like teaching was coming from a CD player. So, I waited for the drive and the taxi to move.

I can say the teaching from the CD was about good behaviour in general and, why and how AmaNazaretha should hold on to their faith at all times. The one issue emanating from this talk which I found particularly interesting was that the speaker repeatedly stated that: *uShembe uyinkosi emhlabeni nasezulwini* – Shembe is the king on earth and in heaven. This for me was interesting especially, with respect to my research project focus – religious beliefs and practices and road safety. When the taxi was full of passengers, the driver came along and the taxi started moving out of the taxi rank.

The kombi taxi driver is about twenty five years old and he continued playing the CD as the kombi taxi was moving out of town. Next to the mirror above the steering wheel, a picture of Isaiah Shembe – the founder of the Nazareth Church, is displayed. The volume is moderate, in such a way that all of us passengers could hear the sermon like message clearly. Everybody is silent (which is unusual in a moving taxi), except for the conductor who says: has everyone paid the taxi fare? And afterwards: Have I given everybody their change?

After a while I started by saying to the driver:

For a person like me, who is interested in learning about how different religious faiths can contribute in solving the problem of road accidents; I would appreciate it if you as a member of the Nazareth Church could explain to us the significance of the message from the CD for road safety.

The kombi taxi driver responded by saying:

We are a church that believes that each individual person will find it difficult to survive the perils of life including road accidents, without the occasional communication with his or her own ancestors. This communication takes the form of rituals such as offering an animal sacrifice in accordance with African customary norms and values; the teachings and principles about how to live a life free from the dangers of life including road accidents. These teachings and principles were created and taught by our founder – Isaiah Shembe himself who protects his followers and all those under the care of his flock – that is why we have pictures of him in our bodies, in our vehicles, in our homes and in our places of work.

I then found myself saying: But road accidents are a concern for everybody, including drivers who belong to no religion at all. To this the kombi taxi driver replied:

Those of us in our church, who are responsible for transporting members of the public, are regarded as a blessing to passengers as well as to society at large by being good exemplary drivers capable of influencing others to drive responsibly and safely. This blessing was handed down to us by our founder and it is still practiced today by all the members of our church in this format: Inkosi ikubusise – the lord or king bless you. We believe that it is Shembe himself who blesses us everyday and thus makes each one of us a blessing to others.

2.2 Response from a United Kingdom of God adherent (KTD)

I am back at the same kombi taxi rank as mentioned above. Two kombi taxi drivers are discussing ways of contributing to crime prevention. One of them says to his colleague:

Everybody is complaining about crime in our areas but very few are prepared to do something about it. I have decided that my own contribution will be to train boys from 5 to 14 years of age soccer skills.

This talk about developing young talent gave me the opportunity to attempt to make friends with the two drivers. So I joined them by making this comment:

You will need to train them not only on how to play soccer, but on other life skills as well such as respect for the elderly and other children regardless of their family background, doing homework and other schoolwork regularly.

The two welcomed me with keen interest and I used this opportunity to introduce my study. The other driver excused himself from us because his kombi taxi had just got a full load. But before he left he made this comment directed to his colleague:

My friend, I congratulate you, It seem to me that you have found yourself someone who can help you to develop your idea into something bigger that you had imagined.

This sounded like an encouraging observation to me and it made me realize that I had also just found a kombi taxi driver who was more likely to participate fully in my study. I was basing this on the assumption that since we both share something common – contributing to the development of our society trust was not going to be difficult to develop between the two of us.

The kombi taxi driver is forty five years old and he lives with his family at Ashdown Township – one of the sections of the Edendale Township. He and his family belong to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. As a kombi taxi driver he travels on the Edendale Road seven days every week. Although Sunday is his off day from normal taxi driving duty, he drives the kombi taxi to Pietermaritzburg for a one return trip transporting his family and other believers to attend a church service. The kombi taxi driver then asked me to come with him to his kombi taxi so that he could show me something which he felt was relevant to my study.

What he showed me inside his kombi taxi was a triangular shaped sticker, displayed inside the kombi taxi and on the sticker the following words were written: Please Pray For This Driver – A Call from the Highway Centre. I had seen a sticker like this one before I had started doing field work in one of the kombi taxis from the Scottsville Mall to the City Centre. When I first saw that sticker which was similar to the one I was being shown, it did not occur to me to enquire about its significance for Road Safety to the driver. But now, I realized that it was necessary for me to use it as a starting point for everything I would like to talk about that was related to my study. So, I began by asking the kombi taxi driver this question: How did you get hold of this message and what does it mean for you as a kombi taxi driver, as well as for your passengers? He responded by stating that,

One of the elders in our church offered us drivers these stickers and I accepted it because I thought that it was going to be a wonderful idea to have passengers praying for me given the problems prevailing on the road on a daily basis. It is really comforting, for those of us in the taxi industry who believe in the power of prayer to know that we also have members of the public praying for us. God promised us that he will never forsake us. Joining hands therefore, and each person doing his [or her] own part is necessary – passengers praying for drivers and us drivers doing our part by

not only just praying for ourselves and for our passengers, but also adopting good and responsible behaviour on the road.

I then asked the informant these controversial questions: As an African who is working within an industry which appears to have an unending problem of road accidents sometimes resulting in the loss of life and or permanent disability, do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on the road at the same time? And I continued, if so, what is the basis of this belief? To this, the informant simply replied without hesitation in this way:

In the industry that I am in and as an African I have to go with both because some of the problems found in our industry demand that I seek solutions from my cultural background. For instance, if I happen to be involved in a road accident in a way that does not make sense to me and praying appears not to be the key in providing understanding and a solution.

I must mention here that I was tempted to suggest to the informant that some people might perceive this mixture of Christian religious belief and practice as an indication of a lack or weak Christian faith on his part. But I decided against this because I was not sure how he will take such a suggestion. I reasoned that if he takes it in a bad way, this might weaken our new found relationship. I was not prepared to lose this relationship because of the difficulties involved in gaining a sustainable relationship on the field. So, I reserved further observations for our next meeting when the informant would be free again to talk to me.

2.3 An Adherent to the Roman Catholic Faith (KTO)

The idea of seeking an interview with this person was prompted by the fact that I had met him before, at the beginning of my field work when I was going about seeking permission to enter the field and then to conduct interviews from people responsible for the daily running of the affairs of the kombi taxi industry within Edendale. I met this potential participant at his house. He is between 55 and 60 years of age. One of the persons I know in my area gave me the direction about how to get to his house. I had been advised that the best time to meet my potential informant would be on a Monday morning before ten o'clock. The purpose of my visit was to ask for the possibility of conducting an interview at a later date. I had no reason to doubt that he will agree to have an interview with me because he was the one who made it possible for me to meet with

members of the Dambuza Taxi Association when I was visiting their offices for the first time.

Although our meeting was shorter than I had anticipated because my host was preparing to attend a meeting in an hours time when I arrived the following information is what I learned from that short encounter:

In our family kombi taxis we display miraculous medallions blessed by a priest from our church. This also applies to the private family car. The reason for this is that as adherents to the Roman Catholic Faith we believe that the medallion together with the accompanying novena [a special prayer] to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus provide protection for our family vehicles. This is manifested by the fact that that our drivers usually behave in a responsible way and they also have respect for their work as well as for passengers. All this is possible because the medallion and the prayer we do in the morning and in the evening bring God's graces through the intercession of the mother of our Lord. Thus, our family, our properties and our activities including travelling on the road are all protected because of those graces.

When I asked about whether or not there is a possibility of his family sometimes appealing to both God and the ancestors at the same time protection on the use of the Edendale Road, this is how the informant responded:

Our grandparents as well as our parents handed down to us only the Roman Catholic faith. We as the present generation therefore, have chosen to follow on the footsteps of our ancestors by embracing the same faith that they themselves embraced.

I was satisfied with the way in which I was accepted even though I had arrived unannounced. I was also promised an opportunity for a full interview as long as time was available.

3. Reflection

One of the first points which stand out for me in this report is the fact that, in the Nazareth Baptist Church, African cultural religious beliefs and practices are taken very seriously. Secondly, it is clear that the Bible is an important resource in the life of this church. This is especially true about those parts of the Bible (especially the Old Testament) which talks about purity, animal sacrifice, the Ten Commandments and / or the code of conduct – how the Jews were expected to conduct themselves as a chosen race. These parts seem to be regarded as being compatible with African traditional religious beliefs and practices in the Nazareth Baptist Church. The responses of the

informant from this church seem to suggest that there might be some of the adherents to the Nazareth Baptist faith who are more likely to see their faith and founder as the legitimate custodians of African religious beliefs and practices. There is nothing wrong when people embrace their religious and / or their cultural heritage. However, some people, especially those who embrace a “modern” or “scientific” perspective with regard to a safe road usage, might interpret this as embracing fatalistic beliefs and therefore, an undesirable approach to problems associated with road travel.

The response from an adherent to the Roman Catholic faith seems to be too formal. It sounds like the church’s response designed by trained theologians and handed down to ordinary people (in this case road users) to adopt as their own. There is nothing wrong with the formal teachings of any church, but one of the main concerns of this study is that ordinary people are able to do their own theology. This means articulating it in their own ways by presenting their own insights and theological wisdom. The responses from the member of the Universal Kingdom of God Church, is the opposite of the response from the Roman Catholic faith. This is in spite of the fact that they are both linked to the Christian tradition. The question then becomes, whether or not combining a Christian religious ritual with a ritual based on African Traditional Religion does point to weak faith for the informant concerned. Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger*, says this about what she refers to as “Magic and Miracle”,

[Sometimes] we can get naïve about the beliefs of others just as the old anthropological sources have shown. They are full of the notion that primitive people expect rites to produce an immediate intervention in their affairs, and they poke kindly fun at those who supplement their rituals of healing with European medicine, as if this testified to lack of faith (1966:p.58).

The issue here is about the promotion of one religious faith (Christian faith) at the expense of others (e.g. African traditional religious faith). In other words the issue is about the promotion of one faith and the suppression of others at the same time. But Douglas further suggest that those who practice religious suppression fail to recognize that, “As a social animal, a human being is a ritual animal. If ritual is suppressed in one form, it crops up in others more strongly, the more intense the social interaction” (p.62). This study is about allowing all the religious traditions available within the boundaries of

the Edendale Township to enlighten us about their insights and wisdom on matters related to road travel on the Edendale Road.

Field Report Number 7

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present responses from three informants. The first one is an African male member of the Nazareth Baptist Church (people who belong to this church are popularly known as *amaNazaretha akwaShembe*). The second informant is an Indian male member of the Islamic Religion. The third informant is an African male traditional healer/diviner (*umlaphi wendabuko/iSangoma*). The significance of having these three participants in this field report is that while the two African males would make it possible for me to compare information from other informants who adhere to the same religious beliefs and practices as these two, the member of Islamic Religion gives a different perspective from the informants who adhere to other religious formations and faiths. Each one of the three informants above was willing to participate for a shorter period of time due to personal commitments. So, I asked them questions which I assumed would give me basic ideas about what they think and believe about travel on the Edendale Road in the light of their faith. In the next section I will present responses from the member of the Nazareth Baptist Church.

2. An encounter with a member of the NBC

2.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is fifty (50) years old. His place of residence is at KwaCaluza, where he has been living with his family for the past fifteen years. He runs his own small business venture from a stall in Retief Street in Pietermaritzburg. He uses his own private car to travel to his place of work five days a week. He is a committed member of the Nazareth Baptist Church in Edendale where he also serves as an elder. This informant was recommended to me by another member of the same church whom I had canvassed before him. The interview took place at the informant's place of work.

2.2 The interview

After I had introduced myself and explained to the informant as to what my research project was all about, he responded by saying:

The Shembe way is the only way that has what it takes to solve problems associated not only with road travel, but also problems associated with all the social and economic ills troubling each and every one of us.

I then asked this question: How often do you use the Edendale Road? His response was: “I usually use this road six days a week, as from Monday to Friday I use my own private motor vehicle to get to work. On Saturdays, I use this road again to get to our place of worship near Georgetown High School”. I continued my inquiry by asking this set of related questions: How much risk do you think there is on this road? And, what is in your experience, the exact nature of risk? This was his response:

There is too much risk of being involved in a road accident because of speeding, reckless and negligent driving. It is not only us human beings who are in danger, but domestic animals such as cows and goats which are usually seen crossing this road looking for grass are also in great danger.

I continued and asked the informant this question: Do you believe in any kind of divine assistance which might help to protect you on this road and if so, please explain to me in what form, does this assistance takes place? The informant answered this question without hesitation in this way:

Yes. I usually invoke Shembe – the King of ekuPhakameni (iNkosi yasekuPhakameni) because I believe that he is the spirit of God the creator of heaven and earth and everything that exists. Again, I believe that Shembe is the greatest in heaven and on earth and that he has no equal. I also believe that he is doing many great and unbelievable deeds on earth which no living human being can do. The protection against road accidents I get from Shembe depends on me believing and internalizing the following words handed down to us by Shembe himself: *iNkosi ikusize mntanami* (may the Lord help you my child). If it is protection from road accidents that I am seeking when I invoke Shembe, then that is definitely what I am going to get from him.

Then, out of curiosity, I found myself asking the informant this question: Is Jesus involved in any way in the religious beliefs and practices that are of relevant to the Nazareth Baptist Church? I felt I needed to ask this question because I could not shake off the impression that in this church only God the father and Shembe appear to be the

only supernatural beings that are usually mentioned. This is the response that I got from asking the above question:

The person who was baptized by John the Baptist – where God is quoted saying: ‘This is my beloved Son, listen to him’; his name is Jeshua or Jesus. He was actually Isaiah Shembe himself.

In response to the question I asked about performing any religious ritual with regard to travel on the Edendale Road network, the infoemant replied:

I have a photograph of Shembe displayed on the inside of my car. This serves as a sign and a reminder of the blessings bestowed by Shembe on all of us who believe in his teachings. This also means that Shembe is always with me and is protecting me from any danger that might befall me in the course of road travel.

Before I brought the interview into a close, I asked the informant this question: What about your own ancestors, do you believe that they have a role to play in protecting you from the perils of the road, and if so, how does this work between your ancestors and Shembe? The informant replied:

There is no contradiction here. Shembe himself taught us about the importance of remaining in close association our own ancestors, by performing all the rituals that come from our cultural tradition. On the other hand, Shembe is the main link between us and God.

My final question to this informant was this one: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied: “Shembe is the only way *mfowethu* (my brother), Shembe is the only way to a safe road usage”.

3. An encounter with an adherent to the Muslim Faith

3.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is a twenty nine (29) old Indian male. He uses the Edendale Road six days a week (and sometimes seven days a week) to travel from his place of residence in a private car to get to work at the Edendale Mall. The informant adheres to the Islamic Faith and he is a member of a mosque in Pietermaritzburg. I met this informant for the first time at a Music and Electronics shop at the Edendale Mall. One day I went into this shop intending to buy a voice recorder because initially, the plan was to use this instrument when conducting interviews. The person who attended to me asked me why I needed a voice recorder. I then told him about my study and he said “very

interesting”. That remark encouraged me to canvass him by asking him to participate in my study even if it meant for a short period of time given the fact that the shop is one of the busiest at the mall. The interview took place at the informant’s place of work during a lunch break.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking this question: Do you believe there is any risk in using this road and if so, what is the nature of this risk? This is how he responded to this question: “I believe that there is too much risk of experiencing a road accident on this road because of bad behaviour by some of the drivers”. I then followed up my first question with this one: Do you believe in any kind of divine intervention to help protect you when you travel on this road? His response to this question was this one:

Divine intervention for me depends on whether or not I remain true to the path every Muslim is called to follow each and every day, that is, submission to God who is one, almighty and merciful.

I then asked the informant to clarify for me as to how the practice of submission works while using the Edehdale Road, either as a driver or a passenger. I was under the impression that he was talking about a practice related to reciting a special prayer while travelling. The informant patiently clarified this for me in this way:

As a Muslim, I believe that submission to God would lead me to have a pure mind. This in turn would enable me to become conscious of how I drive, how others drive, how other road users – pedestrians conduct themselves on the road and also me being conscious of any other possible hazardous situation on the road. Now, because I am conscious, I am able to realize that the vehicle I am driving is just a means to help me reach my destination and that it is not an object that I can use as I please. I also become conscious of the fact that a vehicle has also the potential of making me and other road users lose our lives if we treat it as an instrument of my own selfish indulgence. All this begins with submission to God, who wants all of us to live in harmony.

After this I asked the informant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? This is how he responded to this question:

At the beginning, our prophet Mohammed saw Islam as a way of life. In fact he wanted it to be a way of life. So, if all or at least, the majority of us road users can begin to value consciousness by striving to be aware of what is happening in each one of us and around us, what is also happening in our cars and within the road environment, problems associated with road accidents can be reduced bit by bit until they are eventually all eradicated. All road users, especially drivers have the ability to adopt the way of consciousness.

I then asked the informant this final question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied in this way:

If I say using this road hinders my faith I would be suggesting that the situation is so hopeless so much so that there are no solutions, and that is not true. One of the solutions is that each one of us need to treat material objects like motor vehicles, the way they are meant to be treated – material objects created for the purposes of helping us to reach our various destinations not more quicker than our contemporaries, but for us to reach our destinations much easier than our forefathers.

4. An encounter with a traditional healer

4.1 Background information

The informant in this section was recommended to me by one of his colleagues, a female traditional healer whom I met at the UKZN during a Voluntary Counselling and Testing HIV and Aids campaign. I met him for the first time at the Edendale Hospital where he was attending an HIV and Aids Counselling Evaluation Workshop. I also met him for the second time at the Grey's Hospital during a meeting of traditional healers with the National Minister of Health and the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Health MEC. It was during this latter meeting that this informant gave me his cell-phone number so that I could make an appointment to see him for further discussion about the possibility of him contributing in my study. He then agreed telephonically to give me the opportunity to interview him. The interview took place at the Edendale Hospital during a lunch break.

4.2 The interview

Due to time constraint, I started of the interview by asking this question: Do you believe in any kind of divine assistance to help protect you in your travels on the Edendale Road? His answer was short: "Yes" he answered. I then explored this question with this probe: In what form does his assistance takes? The informant answered slowly and calmly when he stated this:

Idlozi liyabhekelwa ndoda (each one of us need to look after the interests of his or her own ancestors). I cannot expect my own ancestors to protect me from the perils of the road for instance, if I go about my life as if they do not exist. I therefore, take good care of the interests of my ancestors by involving them in all the affairs of our family, by showing them respect through performing rituals designed to strengthen the bond between the family and its ancestors and by rejecting any bad behaviour that can arouse the anger of our ancestors. I occasionally celebrate their contribution to the wellbeing of our family by slaughtering a goat or two or even a cow. The animal sacrifice is usually accompanied by *uTshwala besiZulu* (African traditional beer) and other offerings. In my house there is *umsamu* (a sacred place), which is reserved strictly for

communicating with my ancestors. Before I embarked upon road travel this morning to attend the workshop at this hospital for instance, I performed an incense burning ritual at the sacred place, made them aware that I was going to take a road travel trip to this place, I told them about the purpose of the trip, and then, I asked them to protect me on the road and in this place as well, and I also ask them to make sure that I return home safe and sound. I perform this same ritual each and every time when I had to embark upon road travel. My ancestors need to know about my comings and goings because they are an important part of my life.

The night before the feast, I take all the items mentioned above to the sacred place, invite the ancestors to be present in our celebration. This is done before the animal for sacrifice is slaughtered. I then ask them to protect me and my whole family from all dangers that might befall us including road accidents. A good sign that the ancestors are happy with the feast I have provided on their behalf is when the invited guests show appreciation by singing African traditional joyful songs accompanied by African traditional dancing, including singing even gospel songs during and after the feast.

My final question to this informant was this one: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your African traditional religious faith? The informant replied:

All the relevant African traditional rituals that are meant to promote the wellbeing of society need also to be given a chance to contribute in attempts to prevent road accidents alongside the modern strategies.

5. Conclusion

In this field report I presented views and opinions from three informants who were willing to contribute to this study for a short period of time because of time constraint. In spite of this limitation, their contributions are for me invaluable because they are also adding to the accumulation of a variety of religious beliefs and practices with regard to learning about the experience of road travel from a faith perspective. Moreover, the above contributions will also be useful when it comes to formulating a people's theology of the Edendale Road and its selected feeder roads.

Field Report Number 8

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present field data that was collected from a participant who belongs to the Saint John Apostolic Mission, an African Independent Church (AIC) which is popularly known in isiZulu as KwaMasango. John Paulos Masango is regarded by adherents as the founder of a faith which has become popular among many African people in South Africa. This popularity is attributed to the alleged power of healing all kinds of ailments and human sufferings through *iChibi* – Holy Water. There is also in this report, field data collected from a member of the Faith Mission Church and a member of the Rastafarian Religion in South Africa. After presenting some background information and field data, the report ends with a reflection on some of the key issues arising from the field data.

2. Field responses

2.1 A Response from KwaMasango

The participant in this section is a thirty two year old female, from Ashdown and a regular Edendale Road user. She travels every five days a week; on kombi taxis, from her place of residence to the Golden Horse in Scottsville, where she is employed as a trainee manager. This participant also travels on this road every Sunday to Imbali Township unit 13 where the KwaMasango church is located. She says, she was six years old when her late grandmother introduced her into this church.

I asked the participant to give me a little bit of the background about the founder and how, why and where this church was started. This is how she responded:

In the early 1940s, ubaba aMasango became very ill. He then went to consult a religious healer (uMthandazi), an uMswati woman known as Christina (uMama uChristina). One of the things she told uMasango after healing him was that God has called him to start a mission church through which uMasango will heal people suffering from all kinds of sicknesses, diseases and misfortune by using iChibi – Holy Water. This prophetic voice of uMama u Christina was fulfilled when uMasango started the Saint John Apostolic Mission at the place called Dukathole in Katlehong in Johannesburg.

I then asked the participant to explain to me why did uMasango chose the name saint John and whether this name is related to any of the Johns mentioned in the *Bible* for instance, John the Baptist or John the apostle of Jesus who wrote the fourth gospel. The participant's response was this:

Ubaba uMasango himself was known as John Paulos Masango. He had testified that at a certain period in his life he had died, went to heaven, came back to life after three days. In heaven, he had been inducted as a prophet who will heal people by using holy water – *uzophilisa abantu ngamanzi ayincwele*.

I pointed out to her that this testimony sounded to me like part of the story of Jesus' life and I therefore asked her to explain to me as to how is Jesus perceived in her church. Her response was: *uBaba uMasango* like Jesus is a prophet sent by God to heal the world.

I then reminded the participant that my interest in this interview lies in religious beliefs and practices pertaining to road safety from the perspective of her church. So I began by asking her this question: How much risk do you think there is in traveling on the Edendale Road and what is the exact nature of this risk? The participant responded in this way: Road accidents present too much risk on this road because of the manner in which some of the drivers behave while they are driving. My next question to her was: Do you believe in any kind of divine assistance to help protect you in your travel on this road and please explain to me if you can, exactly what form does this assistance take? The participant responded by saying this:

First of all, as an adherent to my church we have been taught that God and ubaba uMasango are always accompanying us in our traveling and in any other situation of our life. So before I embark on traveling, I say this prayer – Nkulunkulu kababa uMasango – God of my father Masango I ask you to protect me from any danger that might befall me on the road as I am about to travel. Help me to reach my destination safely and allow me to return home safe.

I then ask her this question: Is your belief in divine assistance based only on Christian religion, or only on traditional Christian religion or it is based on a combination of both? The participant responded by stating this:

In our church we believe that there are members of our families who are now our ancestors, who were reckless in life because they lived a life of being *iziXhwanguxhwangu* – people who harm other people in all kinds of ways. So there is always a possibility that these ancestors will create

problems for us who are still alive and sometimes bring all kinds of dangers to us. We believe for instance that, a reckless driver is made to behave recklessly on the road by his or her relative who has passed on (*isiDalwa esingasekho esiyisihlobo sakhe*) All of us have such ancestors.

With this, my question to the participant was this: Now what do you do in a situation like this from the perspective of your faith? To this she replied in this way:

It is common practice to offer a packet of candles in front of the cross in our church and then call upon my ancestors by our clan name (*isithakazelo*) saying – all of you my ancestors who left this world living in the dark and overcome by evil clean your spirits by joining me in the faith of KwaMasango. There are people in our church who are responsible for helping us to connect with our troublesome ancestors. These people are called *abaHlahlubi* – those who identify the source of trouble and give me direction as to what type of ritual I need to do in order to solve the problem I have. In the case of cleaning the spirits of troublesome ancestors who might lead me to experience a road accident, a *Bahlahlubi* can recommend that I be washed by using ashes or milk or holy water. This is a symbolic way of cleansing the spirits of my troublesome ancestors and inviting them to join my KwaMasango Church.

I further asked the participant to explain to me whether or not she wears any charms or armulets on her person or carry in her possession anything that she believes will help protect her on the Edendale Road, to which she answered: Yes. There are medallions with the faces each and every leader of our church together with his wife, beginning with *uBaba uMasango* and *uMama uAnna* his wife right up to the current leaders. I however, only have the medallion with the faces of the original founder and his wife.

At this point I got a feeling that the participant was slowly becoming exhausted with all the talking that has been taking place and so I said to this to her; if you do not mind I have only two more last questions which I would like to ask you. She agreed and I could see that she was relieved. So I asked her: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith?

To this she replied:

Those of us who believe in the power of prayer must pray for all road users and also maybe find a way of encouraging as many of them as possible to get in touch with their ancestors so that they can understand and appreciate the need to get those of their troublesome ancestors cleansed. In this way there will be fewer road accidents.

To end the interview, I asked her this question: From a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith?

And she replied in this way:

I have no doubt that using this road so often strengthens my faith because it makes me trust in God and be confident that the God I believe in cares for me and is always there to protect me.

2.2 A Response from a member of the Faith Mission Church

The respondent in this section is a forty three year old woman who lives at Nhlazatshe, which is another section of the Edendale Township. She travels on kombi taxis for six days every week to her place of work – at McDonalds next to the Royal Show Grounds. This place sells all sorts of agricultural plants, seeds and manure. The respondent also uses the Edendale Road every Sunday when traveling to church at Imbali Township. She is a member of a revivalist religious faith Christian group – the Faith Mission Church. I had had contact with this woman and two of her colleagues a couple of months ago. The relationship that had been created then came to a standstill after I had asked for permission to use a voice recorder when interviewing them. This second time she agreed to grant me an interview after I had informed her that we can have an interview without a voice recorder. The interview took place at her place of work during her lunch break.

I began by asking her this question: How much risk do you think there is in traveling on the Edendale Road? This is how she responded to this question:

As a parent and a mother of three little children, I sometimes worry about what will happen to my family especially my children, if I can be unfortunate enough to experience a road accident. The risk is too much to bear for a person like me who is on the road almost every day of the week. However, being a Christian helps a lot because I always remind myself that God is with me and that He wants me to take care of the children he has given me until they are old enough to take care of themselves.

I then asked her this: What do you think is the cause of your worrying when traveling on this road? She replied:

It seems to me that most of the drivers especially some of the kombi taxi drivers, do not think about the consequences of their reckless behaviour, getting more money appears to be more important to them than our own lives – we who are their paying customers.

To the question of whether she does believe in any kind of divine assistance to help protect her in her travel on the Edendale Road, her response was:

I have been traveling on kombi taxis for as long as I can remember and without believing in divine assistance, I do not think that I would have been able to cope with the thoughts of being involved in a road accident.

My next question required her to state the exact form this divine assistance takes; e.g. God, Jesus, Ancestors, a combination of any or all these or other. Her response to this was:

Jesus the Son of God our father is the one who protects me on this road because as someone who has accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, I have been washed in His Blood.

I then went on and asked her whether or not her belief in divine assistance is based only on Christian religion or a combination of two or more different religions. To this she replied:

Before I was saved, I used to accept that as an African, I must also believe that my ancestors can protect me from the perils of life and so on. However, when I became a child of God, I learned that those people were just like me – they also needed Jesus who has more power to save than all of us because He is the Son of God. I only pray to Jesus and put my trust to Him only. It is people who are still lost who combine different beliefs and practices.

Because the respondent had mentioned prayer, I wanted to know whether she had any special prayer directed to Jesus with regard to her travel on the Edendale Road, She then recited this prayer to me:

Almighty God, in the name of Jesus our saviour; protect me and all your people as we travel on the road to work today. It is you who have enabled us to travel. Let the thoughts, words and deeds of every driver on the road aim at doing what is pleasing in your sight so that all of us can return to our loved ones safe this evening. Let also the saving blood of Jesus which is in us your children, protect also those who travel with us and are not yet saved and are thus vulnerable to be attacked by Satanists through road accidents. Amen.

I then want to know from the participant as to why does she say that some road users are vulnerable to attacks by Satanists through road accidents. She responded by saying this:

Some road accidents are caused by Satanists who are eager to drink the blood of road accident victims so that they become one with them. The good news is that Satanists cannot succeed when road users have been washed by the blood of Jesus. In fact, Satanists fear the blood of Jesus in people who have been saved like me and many others. The blood of Jesus frightens Satanists away because it is too hot to handle and too dangerous for them.

To the question of whether the respondent does use any religious text in any way in her understanding of the use of the Edendale Road, her response was: “Yes and usually I use the verse from Isaiah 38:20 and I combine this with part of Psalm 43:5 and these texts read thus”:

Why are you cast down, my soul, why groan within me. Hope in God; (Ps 43:5). The Lord will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our life, at the house of the Lord. (Isaiah 38:20)

To the question; what does the participant explain road accidents from the point of view of her faith, she responded by saying this:

It is true that road accidents are caused by reckless driving and so on but there are evil and destructive spirits which are also a key contributing factor to road accidents. The existence of these spirits need not be taken lightly because these are the forces of darkness fighting all that is good in the world. It is God who has power over all things who is capable of saving us through the blood of Jesus whose name is above all other names.

My last question was this: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? And to this she responded by stating this:

The most important thing for me is for all of us to ask ourselves this question: what do we think about when we use the road; whether we are drivers or pedestrians? The Bible tells us that our lives are in the hands of God. Psalm 54:1 says: O God save me by your name; verse 9 says God’s name is good. I therefore think it will help to encourage every road user to take seriously the words contained in Psalm 119:55 which read thus: I think of your name [as I am on the road] and I keep your law. If the name of Jesus could be in the minds of most road users most of the time, there is no doubt that there will be fewer road accidents.

2.3 A Response from an adherent to the Rastafarian Religion

My meeting with the participant in this section was a chance meeting. Before this meeting my idea of adherents to the Rastafarian religion at least within the Pietermaritzburg region, was that they are a small group of people who had been attracted to the Rastafarian way of life and nothing more. My ignorance led me to make the assumption that they are just copy cats of something they do not really understand beyond the Rastafarian music especially from popular Jamaican musicians and their unique dreadlock hairstyle. The participant I met at the Imbali kombi taxi rank in Pietermaritz Street has made me realize that my ignorance nearly cost me an important perspective from the Rastafarian Faith. I instinctively approached this potential

participant at the taxi rank while he was waiting to board a kombi taxi to Imbali unit three and I introduced myself to him.

He looked at me with suspicion at first but after I had calmly explained to him about my study and its intention of learning about religious beliefs and practices from Edendale Road users who adhere to different religious formations, he became more relaxed and eager to talk. I had noticed that he had been reading a booklet which looked like something familiar to me – a booklet on Faith for the Daily living. It later turned out that the booklet was a copy of the Rastafarian Religion and its teachings based on the teaching of some of the Biblical prophets. I asked him to allow me to have an interview with him at a later date and I told him that as we have Doctor Hewitt from Jamaica in our school at the university, who is a scholar in Rastafarian Religion, it will be important to interview a committed Rastafarian adherent. I said this pointing to the booklet he had been reading. I made him aware that as he had agreed that he is also one of the Edendale Road users he qualifies for participation in the study and that his contribution from the perspective of his faith will mean a lot for me, the study, the University of KZN and for road safety. He agreed and told me that if I could make time one Sunday, he will introduce me to other adherents to the Rastafarian faith who worship with him. He then read this to me from his booklet before we parted:

False teachers of the Bible teach that when disaster strikes e.g. [a road accident], then it is the will of God. But listen to what the prophet Ezekiel says here: I take no pleasure in the death of anyone – declares the Lord Yahweh – so repent and live (Ezk. 18:32).

He then explained to me this way:

In the same chapter the prophet says God is not happy even when one evil person dies before changing from his evil ways. This makes it clear that God is not happy when he loses to the devil even an unrepentant person. How then can some pastors teach that it is the will of God when even very young children die on the roads?

I responded by saying that it will be wonderful to meet again and discuss the Rastafarian perspective on road safety and he agreed and ended up by saying: I can see now you and I were brought together by God to explore these truths so that they can be brought to the open for all to see. I was not sure whether or not I was thinking what he was thinking.

But the one thing I am sure I was thinking about at that moment was this: I wish this new recruit does not change his mind about the interview later on.

3. Reflection

Both the participants from the KwaMasango church and the adherent to the Rastafarian religion put an emphasis on the prophetic voice. However, although the former presents the founder as the prophet sent by God to heal and protects the world against all ailments, the latter stresses the significance of the teachings of the Old Testament prophets. To the Faith mission adherent however, the emphasis is on Jesus and the blood of Jesus. Again, John Paulos Masango is presented just like in the Nazareth Church, as being more important than Jesus in the sense that the adherent mentioned that asking for divine intervention in road travels means praying to the God of uMasango because it is believed that God sent uMasango in the same way that Jesus was sent to the Jews. Perhaps the idea here is that Africans needed an African Saviour and therefore uMasango saw himself and presented himself as that Saviour. Whether Africans from other African countries or even Africans from South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland where this church is said to be more active have actually accepted this perspective is another story.

The use of holy water for the purposes of protection against danger; is common even among some of the mainline churches like the Roman Catholic Church for instance. But in the Saint John Apostolic Mission (KwaMasango), holy water comes from iChibi (a pool) constructed within every church premises where adherents gather to worship. This perhaps seem to be an idea which is common in the New Testament where we hear for instance about the pool of Sloane in Jerusalem which was believed to have healing power during the time of Jesus. The effectiveness of the belief in the use of holy water, ashes and milk by adherents to protect themselves against road accidents and the extent of the fatalistic nature of this belief is anyone's guess. Again the fatalistic nature of a belief that says a reckless driver for instance, behaves badly on the road simply because he or she is possessed by ancestors who behaved badly before they passed on is not easy to comprehend for most people in the modern world. The revivalists seem to be consistent with the idea that Satanists or evil spirits or in the words of a Traditional Healer in the previous report – abandoned spirits of the dead on the road are a major cause of road

accidents. Perhaps it is this belief – amongst other things, that made Independent African Churches which also use the Bible as the basis of their faiths to adhere to the incorporation of the ancestors in their quest for divine intervention to in trying to understand and solve the problems of life like road accidents.

Field Report Number 9

1. Introduction

In this field report, I discuss and reflect on four field research experiences. The first experience has to do with my visit to the Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission Church (KwaMasango) in unit 13, Imbali Township. The purpose of this visit was to capture photographic pictures of the relevant religious practices, some of which were described by a participant in a previous report, who is an adherent to the KwaMasango faith. The second experience involves my encounter with a kombi taxi driver, whose duty is to transport passengers from KwaDambuza, a section of the Edendale Township, to Pietermaritzburg and back. The interesting thing (for me), about this participant is that, although he claims to have been brought up and still a committed member of the Presbyterian Church, he did not shy away from the fact that he also adheres to African Traditional Religion. The third experience involves my encounter with an adherent to the Rastafarian religion, whom I had canvassed a month or so back. Lastly, I present the experience I had during my encounter with five members of the Jehovah's Witness faith. Although, all five of the adherents to this latter faith contributed to the discussion, only one of them was responsible for answering most of the questions from my interview schedule.

2. Fieldwork experiences

2.1 A visit to KwaMasango

The purpose of my visit to the KwaMasango Church came about as a result a request, I had made to the first participant in this study from this faith. I wanted to have the opportunity to observe first hand, the performance of rituals, such as the washing with ashes, milk, ichibi (holy water), the offering of candles in front of a cross for the purpose of evoking ancestral spirits by adherents, who seek protection from the perils of life including road accidents. These religious practices had been described to me by the first participant from this faith. I had also made a request to take photographic pictures during the performance of such rituals. My contact had agreed to introduce me to the elders of this church and to present my request to them before I arrive.

I was advised by the key actor to come at eleven o'clock, during a Sunday of uMgidi – a special ceremony, during which adherents from all over South Africa and beyond its borders, will be present. I was also informed that during this ceremony the head of this faith – the Bishop from Lesotho will be present. I arrived at the church premises forty five minutes before eleven. It was easy for me to find this place because in the kombi taxi I was traveling in from Pietermaritzburg almost 70% of the passengers were adherents to this faith judging by this church's uniform they were wearing. The kombi taxi dropped us next to the gate of this church.

On arrival, I noticed that there were many people – approximately 2000 or even more. The majority of the women adherents were dressed in blue and white colour clothes. The male adherents on the other hand; were dressed in grey trousers, white shirts and black ties and black jackets. There was a brass band of about 60 to 80 men dressed in khaki uniform. Male and female adherents were positioned in a semi circle next to the pool. Perhaps as a sign that the pool is a holy place, it is protected by a steel fence with a locked gate. On the other side of the pool, there is a large concrete platform for the officials and the brass band. The pool itself is shaped like a cross. The temple is located on the western side of the pool. In front of the main door of the temple, I saw a large number of plastic containers (20 or 25 liters) filled with water. Perhaps this was holy water from the pool or just ordinary water waiting to be blessed.

After passing through numerous tent made stalls - with adherents selling items such as; cooked food, fruits, snacks, tea/coffee and soft drinks, church attire, medallions with pictures of pastors from the various branches of this church, candles and many other goods, I then decided to enter the premises with the aim of first locating my contact person. On entering the gate I also noticed that among the buildings, there was a square shaped building with about fifteen or twenty rooms. I gathered from one adherent that these were consulting rooms used by aBahlahluli (the Prophets), who enlighten adherents about the causes of their problems in their daily life. These church officials then advise adherents about the kind of religious practices they need to perform in order to make things right with their ancestors and with God..

I then decided to go where the action was – in the area next to where the Bishop was preaching and where a large number of adherents were standing and listening to the sermon. About how Jesus healed a man who claimed that no one was willing to help him get into the pool so that he also could be healed in Jerusalem. As I approached this area, I was suddenly confronted by five ushers with *iZimvubu* (sjambok made of plastic melted in fire) in their hands. One of them said to me in a harsh voice: *Uyakuphi wena?* (Where do you think you are going?). All five of them were staring at me with suspicious eyes from my head to my feet.

I calmly replied: “I am going there, a relative of mine who worships with you invited me and she told me that I will find her among those women sitting there”. To this, one of them responded:

You are not allowed to go there. Go back to the main gate and watch from the road. As you can see for yourself there are many people who are watching from there.

I went back disappointed – there was no way I could find my contact, watching from outside the premises. Nevertheless, I had no choice. I had to obey the instruction. Outside the gate on the road, I tried to contact the person who had invited me by my cell-phone but her own was switched off.

I also sent her an SMS but she only responded when I was already at home, after I had waited for about an hour and a half. My last attempt was to ask three adherents who looked more or less the same age as my contact. When they responded with: “We do not know her”, and continued to chat among each other, I decided it was time for me to leave.

2.2 An encounter with a Presbyterian kombi taxi driver

I am sitting in a front passenger sit next to the driver’s sit inside a kombi taxi to Dambuza. I had been attending the first day of a Post-Grad Seminar at the UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus and I am on my way home. Once the taxi is full the driver comes in and sits at his place. While he is switching on the engine, he makes this comment slightly facing the young woman seated behind the driver’s seat: “During these days of democracy the law and the courts favour women more than men”. The young

woman to whom these words are directed says nothing except to smile back at him as if in acknowledgement of his word. I thought they know each other and that the woman understands the context of his words. I kept quiet trying to mind my own business.

But when the kombi taxi started moving, the taxi driver turns to me and say: “is that not true uncle, what do you say?” Of course he was younger than me, that was why he was calling me uncle, and so I respond by saying this:

Perhaps it can be better if you make me understand why you say what you have just said – right now I do not understand the reason for your assertion.

And so he said:

Do you know that in this time of democracy your wife or your girlfriend can take you to court and tell the magistrate or a judge that you have raped her and you can be arrested, because they will agree with whatever she had told them. Now tell me uncle how can you, or me, or any man be accused of raping his own wife? It is only the rich, people with lots of money who are able to win a case like that.

My response to him was this:

I am not an expert in legal procedures and the law itself but the important issue for me with regard to this matter is perhaps our failure to listen to our women partners as men. Suppose she tells you that she is not feeling well and out of selfishness you force yourself into her because she is your wife. I will agree with the decision which says that you raped her. A caring husband or boyfriend would want to know what is troubling his partner and then make an effort to help her become better before he insists on getting what he wants.

I did not realize at that moment that a bond of friendship – a relationship had been cultivated between me, and the kombi taxi driver. It was only two days later at the same taxi rank when I heard someone saying to me: “*Sesiphinde sahlangana futhi*” – (what a coincidence we have come together again). He then called on a couple of other drivers and said to them: “This is the man I was telling you about, we are now meeting again by the grace of God”. He then invited me to come and take a seat next to the driver’s seat. I then saw this development as a perfect opportunity to introduce my study to him and to canvass him to participate fully in the study. Eventually, the kombi taxi driver agreed to participate fully in the study at a later date.

2.3 Rastafarian potential participant re-visited

2.3.1 Introduction

I had previously met the participant in this section at the Imbali kombi taxi rank. At our initial meeting he had indicated that he was willing and will have time to participate fully in the study. I contacted him telephonically in order to ask for a date of the interview that will be suitable to both of us. After this I agreed to his suggestion that the interview will take place at his place of residence – an informal settlement next Imbali unit J section. The interview was conducted in isiZulu and I was using questions from an interview schedule as a guide. He indicated that he would be more comfortable with me writing his responses in a note book than having them recorded in a voice recorder. I agreed to this because he had previously suggested that he could introduce me to a couple of other Rastafarians who worship with him. The interview took shape in the following manner.

2.3.2 The interview

I started off by asking him about the religious faith he adheres to as a way of formalizing the interview and this was his response: “I adhere to the Rastafarian faith and I have been a member for almost twelve years now”. I then followed this up by asking him a two in one question in this way: “Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time and if so, is there a special reason for this?” He was very enthusiastic when he responded to this question. He looked me in the eye and said:

Yes, I do adhere to two other faiths besides being an adherent to the Rastafarian faith. The reason for this is simple – there is only one God who is worshipped in all faiths and his insights enrich each and every faith depending on how each faith seeks the understanding of God’s ways.

I asked him to tell me what these other two faiths are to which he adheres to and he replied:

A Christian religion that is rooted in the bible, and an African Traditional Religion that helps me as an African to connect with my ancestors and African values like *uBuntu*.

Responding to my question of whether he is a member a church or other religious community given the fact that he adheres to more than one religion, he replied in this way:

I am a member of the Rastafarian community in Dambuza. At the moment we do not have our own temple like the other Rastafarian communities in KwaZulu-Natal. We are still planning to build our own temple for worship purposes. At the moment, we meet every Sunday at one of our members' house. If you have time, you can visit us on any Sunday so that you can see for yourself how we worship.

I nodded indicating that I would love to do that in future. It was time now to get into the gist of the study with regard to asking questions, and so I put this question to him: "What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as an Edendale Road user?" To this he replied:

I am a self employed business person. I own a tuck shop. Every week I have to travel on Kombi taxis to buy stock from town as I do not have my own vehicle. The thought of being involved in a road accident sometimes worries me because my family can suffer if anything can happen to me. Some of the drivers on this or any other road behave as if a road belongs to them only. They do not consider other road users at all. But what can I do? My children need to go to school, they need clothes and food, the whole family is dependent on me.

I responded to this by mentioning that the way he has put it makes me appreciate the fact that he has agreed participate in the study and share this part of his life story. And so I asked him: How does your faith assist you as a road user? To this he replied in this way:

My faith makes me strong in such a way that it enables me to face and deal with any difficult and threatening situation with courage – I can safely say that I am not a fearful person or someone who is easily overcome by fear.

I then asked the participant whether he performs any rituals connected with the use of the road and his answer: "Yes and I cannot afford not to under the circumstances". And so, I proceeded with the other parts of this question. Would you mind telling me what these rituals are? The participant answered:

I read the word of God especially; the prophets, Psalms and other spiritual books, and I also pray to God and sometimes I burn incense (iMpepho) as an offering to my ancestors and ask for their protection on my travels.

I wanted to ask him about the role of Marijuana or Dagga within this context of rituals but, at first I was not sure whether or not he will feel offended. However, I eventually

gathered enough courage to ask him with the hope that I will apologize if he feels offended indeed. So I asked him in this way:

I do not mean to be rude or to offend you, but I have a burning desire to ask you if you do not mind, whether or not the use of Marijuana does feature in any way in the rituals you perform either as part of one ritual or on its own as a ritual in itself.

The participant looked at me and smiled and then responded calmly in this way:

You do not have to apologize about this question. I will also not apologize to anyone for using the African herb passed on to us by our African forefathers. I also do not think that you want me to give you an apologetic speech of why, Rastafarians like me do not agree with the idea of criminalizing the use of Marijuana. I think it is enough for me to say that, yes it is indeed one of those rituals I perform now and then.

I was relieved and then I asked him: “Where are these rituals performed?” To this he answered:

They are performed mostly at home especially the burning of incense and the use of Marijuana, the other rituals are performed at home, at our meeting place or on the road.

To the question; “what benefit do you think these rituals will achieve?” The participant responded by saying this:

Reading the word of God and prayer instil in me a sense of trust in God that no harm will befall me and a sense of freedom from fear and anxiety. The offering of burnt incense help me to connect with my ancestors and through communicating with them, makes them aware of my concern about road safety on my travels. In this way they are sure to protect me because I usually ask them to accompany me on all my journeys. As for Marijuana, it keeps me pure in mind and helps me to stay focused on the things that matter most to me especially, my survival and that of my family.

After this, I put this question to him: “Why are these rituals drawn from different religions?” To this he replied:

They may seem to be drawn from different religions to some people but for me as a Rastafarian, they are not. You see, our ancestors worshipped God – uMvelinqangi (The one who was there before everything else). They understood that we all come from him because he created us. The holy herb (Marijuana) was also created by him for our use and his word in the Bible teaches us about him and his relationship with us. So these rituals are connected because they relate to the religion of the one true God – the almighty and creator of the world and everything in it. It is the people like you and me and many others who have created different religions.

My next question to the participant was this: “Do you use any specific text in any way in your understanding of road use?” To this question, the participant replied thus:

I do and some of them are: Ezekiel 18:31b, 32 where the prophet tells us that God says to us: Why are you so anxious to die....I take no pleasure in the death of anyone – it is the Lord who speaks. Repent and live! Now when a road accident occurs due to the recklessness of either a driver/ or the owner(s) of a bus or a kombi taxi or a private car, people say it is the will of God. How can death caused by someone else’s wrong doing be said to be the will of God? Another text is Psalm 94:19 where it is said: When anxiety increases in my heart, your consolation calms my soul.

I then pointed out to the participant that from what he has said, it sounds as if that he believes that both God and the ancestors protect him on the road at the same time, and if that is the case, then what is the basis of this belief. The participant replied in this way:

God loves me; that is the reason why he created me. So, how can he not protect me when he loves me and also knows that I do my best to live my life according to his commands? As for my ancestors, they were chosen by God to be my parents and my forefathers. They also love me because God brought us together in the same family.

At this point my question to the participant was this: “How do you explain road accident from the point of view of your faith?”

Road accidents, in as far as my faith is concerned, happen and people die or are severely injured or both not because it is the will of God but, because some of the road users do not want to listen to God when he speaks to them through other people – these could be passengers or, law enforcement agencies or, the media in its various forms and even those pastors who teach God’s truth and not their own.

I further asked him this question: “What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith?” To this, he replied:

We all need to listen to God through his ways of speaking to us. This can happen through consistent prayer and the reading of the word of God in the holy book – the Bible.

My last question was: “Does using the road help or hinder your faith?” And to this he replied: “It does help my faith because it makes me aware how vulnerable I am and thus, how much I need powers beyond this world to survive”.

2.4 An encounter with the Jehovah's Witness road users

2.4.1 Introduction

I met the main respondent in this section at the iMbali taxi rank. She is the one who approached me with a view to canvass me to join her faith just like they do in most of the street corners and in every possible space in Pietermaritzburg. I have no idea how they select people to canvass because with some people they just leave them alone without even greeting them. After listening to her for a few minutes, I then told her that I would also like to interview her about the study I am doing concerning road safety. She agreed and we made an appointment to meet at her family's home at iMbali unit 1 in a week's time from the date of our first meeting. When I arrived at her home there were five other people with her – two men and three women. These, I was told, were also members of the oFakazi bakaJehova (Jehovah's Witness) Church in Pietermaritzburg. The other members, I was made to understand; will stick around, while the interview is taking place. I was pleased about this arrangement because I felt that she will be more relaxed knowing that she had her companions around who will give her support if need be. Besides, I had just met her once and in a very short space of time. The following account is what transpired from the interview whose questions were drawn from the interview schedule.

2.4.2 The interview

As I have mentioned above, the participant in this section is an adherent to the Jehovah's Witness faith only and she is a member of a church within this faith in Edendale. She uses kombi taxis five days every week to travel from her place of residence in iMbali Township stage 1 to the city of Pietermaritzburg and back. The main purpose of these trips is ukushumayela izindaba ezinhle ezivela kuNkulunkulu – to bring the good news which come from God, to all people with the aim of eventually canvassing those who will be interested to join this faith. She is in a group of five adherents who go with her on this mission. So my first question to her was this: "What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user?"

In response, she said:

Usually one encounters arrogant, reckless, self-centered drivers who disobey the laws of the road – speeding, going through red robots, overtaking where they are not permitted to do so and so on. Occasionally we as road users encounter a well behaved driver but such people are very rare to find.

I then asked her: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant replied:

Well, as an adherent to the Jehovah's witnesses faith, I understand that these things are the signs mentioned in the Bible, which point to the fact that God is about to intervene very soon in order to end all the suffering in this world. You see God wants all people to live a better life – free from all kinds of troubles on this earth. So, my faith helps me to be free from the fear of other people and it assists me to trust in God especially in his word.

I then asked her this question: Do you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road and if so what are these rituals? The participant replied:

There are two main rituals that are common for all of us who adhere to the Jehovah's Witness faith and these are; bible sharing usually in groups and giving witness to God's good news to those who are ready receive them.

Where are these rituals performed? I asked the participant; and she replied: "They are performed in our church, in our homes, in street corners, in taxi ranks and everywhere possible". Further, I asked the participant this: What benefit do you think these rituals will achieve? In response, she replied;

God's blessings and eternal life free from all trouble and suffering in a world that will be ruled by God and this is going to happen very soon.

My next question to this participant was this: Do you use any religious text in any way, in your understanding of road use? To this question the participant replied:

Road accidents just like all the other ills in this world are the cause of suffering. So the Bible helps me understand the sources of / or the reasons for suffering and how God is going to overcome all the suffering in this world. For instance in 2Timothy3:1-5 the Bible tells us this: You may be quite sure that in the last days there will be some difficult times. People will be self centered, and avaricious, boastful, arrogant and rude; disobedient, ungrateful, irreligious; heartless and intractable; they will be slanderous, profligates, savages and enemies of everything that is good; they will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, preferring their own pleasure to God. They will keep up the outward appearance of religion, but will have rejected the inner power of it.

Following up to this I asked the participant this question: Do you believe that God or other spiritual powers and forces help to protect you on the road; and if you do, in what ways does this happen? And she replied:

I believe that only God helps to protect me on the road. You see, in Isaiah 25:8 the Bible teaches us this: Lord Yahweh has wiped away the tears from every cheek; he has taken his people's shame away everywhere on earth, for Yahweh has spoken.

Then I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? And she replied:

No government has ever been able to end suffering on earth. This includes suffering caused by road accidents. But the good news is that God is about to intervene by taking over the governance of the earth we live in and this is going to happen very soon.

I further asked the participant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? She replied:

We need to study the bible consistently with much zeal so that we can learn and understand the good news coming from God. In this way we will know and understand why it is so urgent to give witness to the good news and we will also understand what we need to do in order to be right with God. The prophet Zephaniah 2:3 says: Seek Yahweh, all you humble of heart; obey his commands. Seek uprightness, seek humility; you may perhaps find shelter on the day of Yahweh's anger.

My last question to the participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? To this she replied:

As far as I am concerned, using the Edendale Road has made me strong in faith in the sense that I have been able to identify and confirm some of the things which are written in the Bible about suffering, death and causes of these things – why things happen the way they do. I also understand that suffering and death will soon come to an end because of what God is about to do. Lastly my faith is stronger because I know what I need to do in order to find shelter when God takes over the governance of this world.

3.5 Reflection

One of the things I am learning through my field work experiences is that there is no one fixed way of cultivating a relationship. It is becoming more and more obvious to me that success in cultivating a sustainable relationship (at last for the duration of a study), is a process which is complex and which is also unpredictable. Sometimes it takes a longer time to happen. At other times it happens quickly and in a spontaneous way so much so that by the time an ethnographer realizes it, a bond has been created between him or her

and another person in the field. It can be triggered by a simple contribution to a discussion on an issue that is even outside the scope of a researcher's topic. This is exactly what happened to me when I encountered a kombi taxi driver who adheres to the Presbyterian Church. A bond of trust at first sight is overwhelming but at the same time it can become a confidence booster that the project will be completed. Fettermen (1998 p140) says this about trust:

Ethnographers need the trust of the people they work with to complete their task. An ethnographer who establishes a bond of trust will learn about the many layers of meaning in any community or program under study. Ethnographers build this bond on a foundation of honesty and communicate this trust verbally and nonverbally.

To learn that a taxi driver I had just met had become so impressed with my contribution in our discussion so much so that he even told his colleagues about me was humbling and encouraging at the same time. I say encouraging - because most people are more likely to accept an outsider or a stranger who has been introduced and recommended by their best friend. Now, with respect to my seemingly 'unsuccessful' visit to the KwaMasango Church, because of the fact that I was prevented by the ushers to search for my contact person, I have learned that the following words from Fetterman are more appropriate in this regard:

Ethnographers do not work in a vacuum, they work with people. They often pry into people's innermost secrets, sacred rites, achievements, and failures (Fetterman: 1998: 129).

A controversial moment came about as a result of my desire to find out whether or not the Rastafarian participant does also use Marijuana. Although I was at first hesitant to ask this question, I eventually did. Fetterman: p143/4 has enlightened me this regard by defining for me what exactly I was dealing with, when he says:

During the more advanced stages of fieldwork, the ethnographer is likely to encounter the problems of guilty knowledge and dirty hands. Guilt knowledge is confidential knowledge of illegal or illicit activities. Dirty hands refer to situations in which the ethnographer cannot emerge innocent of wrongdoing.

In the case of the participant who adheres to the Rastafarian faith I was asked him about guilty knowledge. It is important to have clear definitions about such things so that we can make decisions in future (whether or not to ask about such things), with a reasonable understanding of what is involved.

Field Report 10

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present detailed accounts of the three participants whom I interviewed during the month of December 2012. One of them is a kombi taxi driver and the other two are kombi taxi passengers. The three participants use the Edendale road on a daily basis – transporting passengers and travelling to work respectively. The participants claim to adhere to the Christian faith. One of them admitted to also employing religious practices associated with African Traditional Religion. Each one of the participants tells his or her own story of experiences as a road user and a believer. I conclude the report by reflecting on some of the key issues which struck me during the interviews.

2. An encounter with an adherent to the Presbyterian faith

2.1 General introduction

The participant, whose views are outlined and discussed in this report, had agreed to participate in a full interview, at the time of my attempt to cultivate a relationship with him for the purposes of this research project. This participant had made it easy for me to introduce myself and the topic of my interest to him during a discussion - about rape, and the law today. He had this discussion with another passenger in a kombi taxi we were travelling in from Pietermaritzburg to Dambuza. The interview took place in the kombi taxi terminal located under the Sibusiso Nyembezi Centre. I have indicated in the previous reports that this taxi rank is popularly known among the passengers who use it as eMgodini, simply because entering this taxi rank is like entering a big hole. The Sibusiso Nyembezi Centre itself is situated between Boshoff Road on the East and Symons Street on the West and, between Church Street on the South and Pietermaritz Street on the North. There are two entry points for passengers – one is on the south side and the other is on the north side. Kombi taxis enter this rank on the east side and leave either from the north side or from the south side depending on the size of a kombi taxi.

2.2 The interview

I began the interview by asking the participant this question: How did you become a kombi taxi driver – was it something you always wanted or did it happen by chance? The fact that my relationship with this participant had started off by us discussing openly a sensitive issue such as rape and the law suggested to me that I can ask the participant some personal knowledge about himself without fearing that he might perceive me as patronizing him. So with this kind of a question I was attempting to do two things; to acknowledge that he has shown that he trusts me and, to gain some knowledge about the making of a kombi taxi driver. In the end it turned out that the participant had no problem with sharing with me personal information about his life. Here then is how he responded to my question:

I never planned to become a kombi taxi driver but, the circumstances under which I was brought up made me realize that becoming a kombi taxi driver would be the best route for me to take, if I wanted to create a better future for myself. I was about sixteen years old when I became a kombi taxi conductor. In fact I started off by cleaning kombi taxis in one of the kombi taxi ranks in Edendale. I then graduated into becoming a conductor and today, I am a licensed driver. It would not therefore be a mistake to say that, I practically grew up in the Edendale Taxi Industry, that is, in as far as work experience is concerned.

This was an interesting revelation for me because at this point it seemed to me that I had stumbled upon someone who was about to give me more information than I had anticipated. I then asked the participant this question: What is it exactly that actually prompted you to seek work at such an early age - I mean at age sixteen were you not supposed to be still at school? He looked down for a moment as if he was summoning some courage and then he replied in a low but firm voice and said:

Yes you are right, I was supposed to be at school but I could not afford to. In actual fact, I was brought up by people who were not even biologically related to me – they were the relatives of a woman who was a friend of my own mother. She (my own mother) had left me with her friend when I was about two years old and my mother disappeared for good. The only thing I know about my own mother is that she and her friend were working as domestic workers and that their bosses were neighbours. My ‘adoptive’ mother then lived with me for about ten years before she died. In all those years she would try to console me with these words: “Do not worry my child, your mother will one day come and take you to live with her and the other members of her family.” Unfortunately she never came back. So after my adoptive mother had died I began to feel that no one cared whether I go to school or not, and that no one cared whether I had eaten or not. So at age sixteen I dropped out of school.

For a moment, I was not sure what the proper response from me should be after hearing this story. Eventually I simply said:

I cannot pretend to understand what it was like to grow up under those difficult conditions but, the one thing I admire about you is that you have managed to make something good out of a very difficult situation. Now, what is it that actually motivated you to move from being a conductor to becoming a kombi taxi driver – how did you manage to do this?

This is how the participant responded to this question:

Being a kombi taxi conductor does not pay much – one lives from hand to mouth. I wanted to have a place of my own where I could live without being reminded of my hopeless past. The first step then for me was to make an effort to save as much money as I could so that I could rent a room so that I could become independent and have time to plan for the future I wanted to have. I had come to the conclusion that at eighteen years of age, I was old enough to live on my own and take care of my own needs. I had also, become aware that there was an opportunity to learn the basics of driving especially at the main taxi ranks. So I made use of this opportunity to learn such things as switching on and off the engine, using the correct control panels and the gear lever, as well as learning to move a car in different directions and parking it without damaging it or other vehicles. After two years of this I became more confident with my driving so much so that the driver I happen to be working with would allow me to drive the kombi taxi out of the taxi rank for about a hundred meters or so and then he would take over. This was done to prevent a situation of getting into trouble with the road traffic police because at that time I did not even have a learner driver's license. Now, seven years after I had become a kombi taxi conductor I became an officially licensed driver.

At this point I felt it was necessary for me to ask questions that are directly related to my research project. So I began by asking the participant a question which required him to confirm what he had told me in our first meeting. So, I then said: In our first meeting you told me that you adhere to both the Christian faith and African religious faith. Now, is this true; If it is true, I would like to know if there is any special reason for this? This is how the participant responded to this:

Yes it is true, the woman who brought me up was a devoted member of the Presbyterian Church and she always made sure that she took me to church with her on Sundays. That is the reason why even today I am still a member of this church. I have no doubt that she wanted me to live my life according to Christian principles and values. Now, my adherence to African religious faith has been influenced mostly by the work that I am doing – being a kombi taxi driver is a notoriously highly competitive and difficult job. An obvious example of this is the competition for customers, which is largely caused by the demand from most of our employers, that we as drivers must collect a specific amount of income per day.

This kind of competition encourages all kinds of beliefs and practices – especially those related to African culture. For instance; any distress that happens to me such as failure to attract a number of customers that will make it possible for me to collect the income demanded by my employer; or, If I happen to get involved in a road accident, Anyone of these is simply attributed to bad luck, caused by some competitors, who want to be the only ones who succeed in this industry. Hence the phrase – *iZinto zabantu* meaning my misfortune is caused by people's doings through magic or witchcraft or sorcery. This leads to an understanding which says; a solution for such a problem must come from the people's cultural religious practices. This is backed up by the proverb which says: *Iva likhishwa ngelinye iliva* – a thorn must be removed by using another thorn and nothing else.

I then proceeded by asking the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? To this, the participant replied in this way:

One of the temptations that I am faced with everyday is related to what I have just talked about - the demand, to collect a specified amount of money each day. The temptation is that I always aim to collect more than the required income. This in turn leads to other temptations such as disregard for some of the road traffic rules and sometimes ignoring the feelings of passengers in the process. Although I know that this is not right, the desire to make extra cash for myself overrides any feeling of a sense of right or wrong. Again, for a person like myself who was born and bred under controversial circumstances, driving a kombi taxi everyday makes me feel important. Whenever I am behind the steering wheel, I feel like I am a special person who can do as he pleases.

I then asked the participant this: In the face of the temptations you have just mentioned, and given the fact that you have mentioned that you adhere to both the Christian faith as well as the African traditional religion; I would like to find out from you as to how your faith assists you as an Edendale Road user? This is how the participant responded to my question:

I believe like many others in my position that a safe and successful work environment depends ekuqineni kwami kanye nokwendawo engiphila kuyo – that is, I and the space where I work in must be well protected by African traditional medicine. This helps to prevent me from falling victim to the evil intentions of those who are jealous in society, who do not wish to see me succeed in life. Sometimes I pray to God asking him to help me not to allow myself to be overcome by greed.

Judging by the above response, I had no doubt that this participant does perform some rituals connected with his use of the Edendale Road and so I said: Your response to my last question seems to suggest that you perform rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road and if that is true, could you enlighten me on the following questions: What are these rituals? Where are they performed? And, what benefit do you think they will achieve? This is how the participant responded to these questions:

There are two rituals that are very important to me and these are; cleansing my body with African herbs and, prayer. The cleansing ritual is always performed at home once or twice a week before I go to work and sometimes in the evening. As far as prayer is concerned I do it at home as well as at work. The benefit I derive from the cleansing ritual is that it takes care of the practicalities of my working environment as well as the circumstances found in such an environment. Put simply, it is an environment which I can say demands the survival of the fittest. This is simply a way of looking after my life. The cleansing ritual helps to ensure that people do not take me for granted – that they treat me with respect. With regard to prayer, the purpose is to take care of the needs of

my soul. It helps me to remember that we all belong to God and that we are ultimately all depended on him for everything. So prayer is a way of communicating with this God who created me and who has also redeemed me in Jesus Christ. I see nothing wrong with this. Herbs were also created by God.

After this, my next question to the participant was: *Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use?* This is how he responded to this question:

I do use religious texts, and the one that provides a good understanding for me of the situation I am faced with everyday on the road is Psalm 23. It is common knowledge that there is danger of road accidents and that there is also the possibility of death. So we all need every kind of protection we can get, even more so the protection that comes from God.

I then asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the points of view of the Christian faith and African traditional religion? The response of the participant was this:

The one thing we need to accept if we want to deal effectively with the problem of road accidents is that there is more to road accidents than just road unworthy cars, speeding and other causes that are commonly put forward. As long as we consider only those causes and preventative measures which have been identified by scientific means, it will take a long time before we are able to deal effectively with the problem of road accidents.

My last question to this participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? To this question, the participant replied:

As far as I am concerned I can say that using the road helps my faith in the sense that I believe in those things which work for me given the existing circumstances one finds in our line of work. There is no way that I can only rely on prayer alone. Take for instance, people who believe that they have been 'saved' and that it is only by praying to Jesus that they get protection from any distress that life throws at them. What do they do when they have a severe headache? I am sure you will agree with me when I say that most of them will definitely pray but they will also take pills that will practically stop the pain. I therefore see no reason why I should not use both prayer and African herbs in order to protect myself from evil spirits sent by jealous people who want to see me suffer. If I am suffering because of someone's devious acts, while I am driving a kombi taxi full of passengers, I may experience a road accident and innocent people including myself might get killed or maimed. My last word in this conversation is that *kufanele ngihlale njalo ngiqinili* – I must always make sure that I remain strong by making sure that I perform a cleansing ritual before I start working every day.

3. An encounter with an adherent to the Anglican faith

3.1 General introduction

The participant in this section is a female nursing assistant who is employed in one of the government clinics in the city of Pietermaritzburg. Her place of residence is in the area

called *KwaNoshezi*, an area which is on the western side of that part of the Edendale Township, which is known as Esinathingi. Both KwaNoshezi and Esinathingi are connected to the Edendale Road and thus the city of Pietermaritzburg by a feeder road which runs through these areas and joins the Edendale Road next to a BP garage opposite another feeder road which leads to KwaCaluza. People from KwaNoshezi who are employed in Pietermaritzburg (like the participant in this report) and in other institutions within the Edendale Township like the Edendale Hospital, schools, social welfare offices and so on, use buses and or kombi taxis to their places of work and back. The interview with the participant took place at her place of work in the afternoon because, as she said: “there are usually fewer patients to attend to at this time of the day especially, on Thursdays and Fridays”. The participant also insisted that: “The interview cannot take the whole hour because I might be needed in the event of an emergency”. The interview itself took place in an unoccupied space next to the patients’ waiting room.

3.2 The interview

I started off by asking the participant to name the religious faith which she adheres to and whether or not it is possible that she adheres to two or more religious faiths. The participant’s response to these two questions was this:

From the time I was a child until I became a young adult, I belonged to the Roman Catholic Church simply because my parents adhered to the catholic faith. But when I got married in the Anglican Church, I became an Anglican faithful because my fiancé and his family adhere to this faith. This made sense because I was going to be part of my future husband’s family. Although I am still a catholic at heart, I now adhere to the Anglican faith and that is the only faith that matters to me right now.

I then asked the participant this question: are you a member of a church community and if so, please specify? This is her response to this question: “Yes I am a member of Saint Martin’s Anglican Church in Edendale and that is where my family and I attend church services every Sunday”. After this I asked the participant as to what mode of transport does she use to go to work and to attend a church service. The participant replied:

When I am travelling from home to work I normally use a bus but when a bus is not available or it is late, I use a kombi taxi in order to avoid being late for work. As far as travelling to church is concerned, my family and other members in our area who are also Anglicans, have an arrangement with a local kombi taxi operator to transport us to church and back. This is because the location of our church makes it difficult for us to find transport that will allow us to

arrive on time for the church service and to bring us back home immediately after the church service.

I then asked the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? This is how the participant responded to this question:

As far as I am concerned, one of the major issues for me is to try daily to deal with anxiety. I am anxious to get to work early, to arrive back home on time in order to be able to attend to family chores and there is also anxiety caused by the lack of concern for the safety and respect for us passengers displayed by some of the drivers on the road.

Then I asked the participant as to how does, her faith assist her as a road user to deal with those challenges. This is how the participant responded:

My faith always reminds me that God loves me and that I am under His protection all the time and that therefore, it is not necessary for me to allow anxiety to overcome me. My faith has also taught me to pray not only for myself and those who are dear to me but to pray for other people as well including those who sometimes put our lives in danger.

Out of curiosity I asked the participant this question: What do you say about those road users who believe that other spiritual powers and forces such as ancestors and or the use of all sorts of charms and so on protects them in their daily travels on the road? The participant replied:

All of us have a right to make our own choices about what to believe or what not to believe. I do not think it will be fair for me to judge or decide what is right or wrong as far as other people's choices are concerned. My humble opinion is that as long as whatever other people believe in does not harm others, we who do not believe in those things need to respect their choices.

Moving on I asked the participant whether or not she performs any rituals connected to her use of the Edendale Road and that if the answer is yes; I would be pleased to hear what these rituals are, where does she performs them and also what benefit does she think the rituals will achieve. This is how the participant responded:

There is only one ritual for me – prayer. I pray at home, I pray while travelling and I also pray at work. The most important benefit out of this is that I feel strong in my faith in God after every prayer. I also feel re-assured of the love that God has for the world and all of us in Jesus Christ.

I proceeded by asking the participant if she does use any religious text in her understanding of road use. The participant replied:

As a Christian, there is no better way of understanding my use of the road with all that goes with it except through the reading of scripture. Now and then, one experiences fear and anxiety because of some arrogant, rude and reckless drivers. Religious texts are more useful under these

circumstances. –I have learned from them of the effectiveness of prayer. So, in Luke 12:32 one learns that: “There is no need to be afraid [of anything] because it has pleased God to give you the kingdom.” All we need to do is to trust in the providence of God. Prayer is the building block of this trust. In Mark 11:24 we also learn that: “I tell you, therefore; everything you ask and pray for [including protection from road accidents]; believe that you have it already and it will be yours.”

After this I asked the participant whether or not it is possible that she sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religion and if so why. The participant answered:

The religious texts I use come from the Bible only. What kind of a Christian would I be if I allow myself to be informed and guided by texts other than those that come from the holy book? That is why some people get confused because they read all kinds of things which are simply the thoughts of other people like themselves. God speaks to us through the Bible in order to make it possible for us to know his truth about every situation that confronts us on a daily basis.

I then put this question to the participant: Considering what you have just said, I take it that you do believe that God help to protect you on this road. If that is the case then, I would like to know this; in what ways does God protect you on the Edendale Road? This is how the participant responded to this question:

We all know that road accidents happen at anytime when most of us least expect them and that they are a common occurrence. Travelling from home to work and back each day safely is for me a sign that God had been taking care of me during a travelling trip. It might be that the driver of the vehicle I was travelling in that day was considerate and willing to respect road traffic rules or something else contributed to a safe trip in a particular day, that for me will happen only if God is involved and nothing else.

But, I asked the participant: what about your ancestors, do you believe that they also play a role in protecting you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? To this the participant responded:

I believe that my ancestors were also protected by God when they were alive and that since they have passed on they are with God. This means that the power to protect me and all my other relatives who are still alive rest with God alone. After all it was my ancestors – my parents themselves who made me become a Christian because they understood that God alone is the almighty.

I then asked the participant to explain to me about road accidents from the point of view of her faith. The participant responded in this way:

Road accidents are a sign that other road users have abandoned the ways of God and that they want to do as they please. Those road users believe that they do not need God when things are going well for them. It is only when they are in trouble that they may start crying to God asking him this question – why them? They usually do not see themselves as responsible for the accidents caused by their own deviant behaviour.

In order to bring the interview to a close and to respect the participant's original wish of not taking more work time than was necessary, I asked the participant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith?

This is how the participant responded:

Each and every road user must re-examine his or, her behaviour before, during and after every journey on the road. Road accidents affect and disrupt the kind of life that God wants us to have and live. They are a problem for all sectors of our society. I do think that my faith can contribute a lot if a reasonable amount of time is set aside for a vigorous teaching on this subject and Christians are encouraged to adopt practical steps in ensuring safe road usage, beginning within their small communities.

My last question to the participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The following was her response to this question:

Using the Edendale road has helped to make me strong in faith in such a way that I am able to cope with the fears that sometimes threaten to overcome me whenever I think about the consequences for my family and me, in case I get involved in a serious road accident. It is generally soothing for me to go on my daily travels with a faith filled conviction that nothing will happen to me no matter what, because God cares.

4. An encounter with an adherent to the U N C Lutheran faith

4.1 General introduction

The participant in this section is a male member of the U N C Lutheran faith He resides in Landoville, an upmarket section of KwaCaluza which is itself one of the sections of the Edendale Township. The participant is a qualified male nurse who is employed on a full time basis at the HIV and AIDS unit within the Edendale Hospital. The participant uses kombi taxis as a mode of transport to travel from his place of residence to work and back. He also uses the same mode of transport for other social activities like shopping and attending church services. The first time I met the participant was in a kombi taxi from Pietermaritzburg to Edendale. We were both seated at the front seats (next to the driver's seat) of the kombi taxi we were travelling in. What actually encouraged me to canvass this participant to participate in my study was the comment he made about the significance of a gospel song which was playing on the kombi taxi's C D player. The gospel song is one of the popular songs today and it is sung by one of the popular gospel singers in South Africa from the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of this song is

– *Kulungile* (It is OK). It is basically a song about the will of God and all kinds of sufferings. The singer says among other things; that if there is a marriage breakdown, if a person is living in abject poverty, or, is suffering from any distress, it is OK because it is the will of God. The kombi taxi driver seemed to like this tract because when it came to the end – he repeated it again and again.

4.2 The beginning of the discussion

I am of the opinion that it was the above mentioned action of the kombi taxi driver which sparked the following discussion (between the participant and the driver), about the kind of message conveyed by this song. This is how the participant commented:

It is a shame that this singer who is himself an African who also comes from an area where there are many poor people, should actually say it is ok for people to go to bed hungry, that divorce is ok, that suffering is ok because it is the will of God. This message does not come from God – it actually comes from the devil. When this singer wrote this song, I do not think that he gave himself enough time to consider the feelings of the people who are directly affected by suffering. He should know better. It is easy for a person like him; who have become rich to say bad things are ok. It will never be ok for instance, for the children of divorced couples to suddenly find that they can no longer live with both their parents as before and that they have to cope with other consequences associated with divorce.

The kombi taxi driver responded by saying this: But too many people have bought for themselves copies of this CD, which means that they like the message from this song.

The participant then responded by saying:

The fact that too many people have bought copies of this song does not make the message correct. Will it still be the will of God and therefore ok if there is a road accident and some people get severely injured and others die?

The driver did not respond and the participant concluded:

That is why I say the message of this song has nothing to do with God. As far as I am concerned, this singer has allowed himself to be used by the devil to confuse people.

I then found myself commenting like this: “Perhaps the singer was not ‘working’ with the devil when composing this song, perhaps it is just sheer lack of understanding about the will of God especially from the perspective of those who are actually experiencing distress and suffering”.

The participant appeared to be in agreement with my contribution. This was confirmed by the fact that when I introduced myself and the topic of my research interest after the kombi taxi trip, he readily agreed to participate in an interview. The interview took place at the hospital during the participant's lunch hour.

4.3 The interview

I started off the interview by pointing out to the participant, how I appreciated the comments he had made while we were travelling on the same kombi taxi. I made it clear to him that his passionate and brave comments, made me realize that he can make a very important contribution in as far as my study purposes were concerned. I then asked the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to - Christian, Muslim, African Traditional Religion or other? The participant responded thus:

I am a Christian and a member of the U N C Lutheran Church here in Edendale. Other people call us abahlubuki – rebels because our church is a breakaway formation from the ‘original’ Lutheran Church. That however, does not bother us, as far as we are concerned, we regard ourselves as Lutherans and nothing else. After all, the most important thing is that we all worship the same God.

As a matter of interest, I inquired; is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so is there any special reason for this? The participant responded:

I know that it is usually common amongst us Africans, to look for answers to our daily life problems, from different religious perspective. Some of the professed Christians even go to the extent of embracing perspectives which appear to be contrary to their own faiths. I am personally satisfied with my Christian faith and I have not so far found any reason to mix it with any other faith or whatever.

I then continued: I understand, I said; Well then what struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant responded:

Besides the lack of consideration for passengers which is sometimes displayed by some kombi taxi drivers, there is the usual over speeding and the unnecessary dangerous overtaking of vehicles which puts us passengers at risk, so much so that one can not avoid being fearful for one's life. Another thing which is a challenge is being bombarded with loud meaningless music everyday and sometimes being forced to listen to music, which conveys messages which goes against ones faith and conviction, as you yourself did hear the other day. But what can one person do? Most passengers seem to have resigned themselves into accepting anything that comes their way. Perhaps the intention is to entertain passengers but, it is not done in an acceptable way, at least for people like me.

I responded to this by saying: What you have just said fits in well with my next question for you. How then does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant then responded:

I have no doubt that without faith, it will be almost impossible for me to cope with most of the challenges one faces as a road user. We all need faith. Mine helps me to understand first of all that God is really true to his promises; that he will always take care of his own and that he will never abandon his people especially those like me who trust in him and pray to him believing that he is on our side.

Then, taking into account the fact that the participant had made it clear that he adheres to the Christian religion and nothing else and that he is only devoted to the Christian God, I continued: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road, could you explain to me – what are these rituals, where are they performed and what benefit do you think they will achieve? This is how the participant responded to these connected questions:

As I have already hinted before, prayer is very important in my life. Otherwise, it would be foolish for me to expect God to help me in times when I feel my life is threatened with fear and danger. So prayer is the only ritual that makes sense to me. I always make sure that I make time for prayer every morning before I go to work. I also sometimes pray on my travel trips to and from work. Further than this we pray at work every morning before we start our daily duties and I also pray at home with my family before we go to sleep. The main benefits meant to be achieved with prayer with respect to what we are talking about, are God's guidance, strength, protection and consolation. These are important not only for me but also for all the other road users including those who are reckless on the road but, are not even aware of this.

That is very interesting. I commented. Now, do you use any religious text in anyway in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Road use fulfils two main needs. It helps to connect us road users with our places of employment and so on. But it also makes us face the reality of danger each time we are on the road. This means that while we need to be on the road in order that we can work for the benefit of ourselves and our families, being exposed to the dangers that go with being on the road reminds us of how limited we are in terms of doing something to prevent ourselves from becoming victims of road accidents. This is where God comes in, in our limited state. Psalm 23 reminds me of the importance of trusting in God. It says; The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. Through this text I have understood that although being on the road is usually like walking in the shadow of death, there is no need for me to be anxious because God is always there to protect me. Perhaps through a considerate and well behaved driver or, through the availability of road traffic officers in any particular day and many other happenings that occasionally prevent road accidents from taking place.

After this I asked the participant to explain road accidents from the point of view of his faith and this is what he had to say:

Road accidents in most cases are caused by human error. Christianity is a religion which since its inception has taught that bad human behaviour can be changed specially, through abandoning our own crooked ways of doing things that end up harming us and others. Christianity is further a religion that is teaching us that God's ways are always enough for each one of us and that they are placed at our disposal to help us deal with the matters of life and death. Road accidents are one of those matters of life and death.

I appreciate your time and the way you have contributed in this interview; I said to the participant. Now, by way of closing our discussion; in balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? To this last question the participant responded:

I have no doubt that using this road helps my faith to grow everyday especially after every trip when I reflect about the fact that God has done his miracle once more by protecting me from experiencing a road accident. This encourages me to 'remain strong in faith' as the apostle Peter says in one of his letters

5. Reflection and conclusion

In this section, I begin my reflection by looking at the openness displayed by the first interviewee – the kombi taxi driver, and a couple of other issues related to this openness. This participant, although he says he adheres to the Christian faith, does not shy away from stating that he also practices religious rituals associated with African Traditional Religion. This means that this participant believes in a multiplicity of possible agents besides God – the supreme-being; for example traditional medicine and traditional healers on the one hand and, Christian religious texts and prayer on the other-hand. This means that he employs both the substances of both traditional culture; as well as, Christian religious rituals at the same time. He claims that traditional medicine helps to protect him from possible harm or danger which might be caused by competitors on the road in his line of work. In this way the use of traditional medicine becomes a means by which this kombi taxi driver is empowered. As far as this participant is concerned, there seemed to be no contradiction between the use of prayer and traditional medicine.

Mary Douglas (1966: p58); seem to agree with this attitude in chapter four of her book where she talks about magic and miracles, when she says:

Old anthropological sources poked kindly at the beliefs of primitive people and the combining of their rituals with [Christian rituals] as if this testified to lack of faith. How naïve can we get about beliefs of others.

Nurnberger on the other hand, writing in 2007 about African spirituality in his book introduces another perspective on this matter. When he talks about African spirituality within the context of African Christians who belong to the mainline churches he asks these questions:

My motive is to figure out why so many Christians in the mainline churches, while they confess Christ as the Redeemer of the world, continue to appeal to their ancestors in times of distress. Who is more proximate in African Christians, the ‘risen Christ’ or the ‘living dead’? Who is more relevant? Have the mainline churches failed to address the spiritual needs of traditionalist Africans (Nurnberger Klaus: 2007: p19)

Although the above quotation refers to ancestors and not traditional medicine, it is important for us to note that there are connections between the two. Ancestor veneration goes hand in hand with the use of traditional medicine and other cultural substances like *impepho* – incense. Again according to traditional beliefs, traditional medicine is believed to have been handed down from generation to generation as a cultural product.

Another issue which I have noted from the same participant is the assertion by the kombi taxi driver that bearing in mind his poor background which was caused by being abandoned – driving a kombi taxi makes him feel important. This is similar to what John Cohen and Barbara Preston wrote about in their book on *causes and prevention of road accidents*. These two authors identified certain social features as some of the causes of road accidents. One of those social dimensions, which seem to apply here, is what the two authors called a stooge effect; and this is how they explain it:

The vehicle is used by its owner [or any driver] as a means of self-inflation. Some men are apt to treat their vehicles as they treat their dogs, in relation to which they imagine themselves to be supermen. The dog must obey all-his master’s whims; cringe when necessary, fawn on him, run and bark to welcome him and guard him from attack. By comparison with the dog, the master is somebody. In similar fashion; by comparison with his car, the owner [or driver] is somebody and, especially, when he is in the car with his hands at the wheel and his foot on the acceralator, he becomes somebody whereas outside it he may be of little consequence. Everyone is literally empowered by [driving] a car to a degree which may be intoxicating, and enabled not only to

travel at a breathtaking speed but also to push aside or crush any human being or animal that dares to stand in the way. Fantasies of a hero and demi – god are not far away (Cohen and Preston 1968: pp 27-28)

The idea of feeling important seen from this perspective seem to fit in well with somebody who experienced vulnerability from an early age of his life. It also seem to have some connection with this next issue, the concept of *Ukeqina* (to be strengthened), particularly through the use of traditional medicine in a ritualistic manner. In order for us to be able to understand what is involved in this concept, let us look at what Nurnberger has said about the operation of this concept. He states:

Traditionalism does not distinguish between religion, worldview and culture. It is all one package. Reality is believed to be determined by ‘animistic’ or ‘dynamistic’ power....In dynamism communities ‘float’, as it were, in a volatile ‘ocean of forces’ that is replete with beneficial and detrimental potential. This situation must be stabilized as far as possible. People are strengthened by beneficial power flows and protected against detrimental power flows. Power flows can be channelled into beneficial directions through rituals, or into detrimental directions [*ubuthakathi*] through magical means used by sorcerers and witches [*abathakathi*].

Again the kombi taxi driver participant claims to also employ prayer in order to prevent himself from being overcome by greed which, according to him, has the potential of making him disregard road traffic rules and in the process make him cause an accident.. There seemed to be an element of rationality in this way of thinking and it probably comes from the participant’s Christian background.

The last issue to reflect upon in this section concerns the last participant in this report – the one who belongs to the U N C Lutheran church. This participant was very vocal about the issue of the meaning of a gospel song played in a kombi taxi we were travelling in. Even during the time of the interview afterwards, he brought this issue up. It is true that most Christians have their own views about what the will of god is or is not on any particular experience. One of the interesting comments for me about discussions of this nature was made by Preston and Cohen (1968:13), and they state that:

[Road] traffic like God (religion), football and politics belong to that select group of subjects on which everyone, when the spirit seizes him, instinctively feels that he can speak with overriding authority and conviction (Preston and Cohen 1968: p13)

Perhaps it is important to ask this question with regard to this matter: What kind of spirit seizes anyone person to speak out strongly about road safety. And perhaps we also need

to inquire further as to what kind of authority and conviction would be more likely to contribute more effectively towards improving the seemingly bleak and gloomy outlook for road safety in South Africa today. Government statistics for the period December 1 to the end of the festive season in early January 2013 shows that 1465 people were killed on the South African roads. This number was 10 people less than those killed during the 2011 – 2012 festive season. On top of this it is said that more than 14000 people die on the South African roads every year. As things stand right now, it is unlikely that the South African National Department of Transport, together with its Arrive Alive wing will be able to achieve its goal of halving the number of death casualties very soon.

The singer whose gospel song conveys the message that was challenged by one of the participants in this report is also a pastor. He has been portrayed by the music industry and the media in South Africa as one of the present day success stories. This is due to the fact that he is always reminding the media audience when an opportunity presents itself that he comes from a very poor background and he was raised by a single parent - his mother, and that he had never had the opportunity to go to school. In other words he is regarded as a role model for many. Indeed, he has earned this role. But to say *kulungile* when people are experiencing all kinds of suffering seem to be going over board. Perhaps there is a lack of proper theological training. But then again it is puzzling when an ordinary believer - in this case; one of the participants in this report; is able to reflect about the distortion that is more likely to be created by the message conveyed by a pastor's gospel song. However, Philpot in his book *Jesus is tricky and God is Undemocratic: the Kin-Dom of God in Amawoti*; helps us to understand the significance of involving ordinary members of the community in the creation of theological knowledge when he says:

Ordinary members of the community are often the invisible participants of society; the superfluous unknown people....yet they are usually the majority of society....Not only are they invisible, but their knowledge and practices, their wisdom and experience, are also invisible or undervalued (1993:29).

This is what I believe the participant in this report who adheres to the U N C Lutheran faith has displayed – knowledge, wisdom and experience of discerning the will of God within the context of suffering. Freethem (p108) in his book; *The suffering of God*

teaches us that one of the reasons we must understand God as the kind of God who is suffering is because – *God suffers with the people who are suffering*. With this understanding in mind, I have no doubt that God also suffers with all those road users and their next of kin who are suffering because of the scourge of road accidents.

Field Report 11

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present interviews from three participants – a kombi taxi owner who adheres to the African Traditional Religion ; a kombi/ bus passenger who adheres to both the Christian faith (a Zionist) and African Traditional religion and a kombi taxi passenger who also adheres to the Christian faith (a Roman Catholic). Each one of these participants tells his or her own story with respect to religious beliefs and practices connected with their use of the Edendale Road. The last part of this report is my own reflection of what appears to me to be the key points from all three participants.

2. An encounter with a Kombi Taxi Operator – an adherent to A T. R.

2.1 Introduction

The participant, whose views are discussed in this section, was canvassed by me for a full interview, on the basis of the fact that he was present when I first introduced my study in a meeting I had with one of the local taxi associations. What is more than just being present, is that he had shown keen interest by clarifying some of the issues which seemed misunderstood during our meeting. His positive attitude when I was explaining the aims and objectives of my study, made me assume that he was open minded enough, and that it is unlikely that he would refuse or make an excuse in having an interview with me in future. The following interview responses from him, clearly show that my assumptions turned out to be correct The interview took place at the participant's place of residence.

2.2 The Interview

After all protocol associated with being accepted into another person's residence was observed, I began by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Christian, Muslim, African Traditional- Religion, or any other? This is how the participant responded:

Mayelana nezenkolo mina ngisabambelele kokwakithi – as far as religion is concerned, I am still holding on to what belongs to us as Africans. We Africans, we all need to cling to our own ways of doing things, in order for us to have any chance of solving our daily life problems. Look at the Muslims; in most cases they are successful in their business ventures, why? This is because they have not abandoned their own religion. For instance, every Friday afternoon they close their shops and then go to pray or do whatever their own religion demands of them. We Africans on the other hand, have abandoned what is culturally ours. That is why most of our people are struggling to

make it in life. There is no shame in tackling life and its problems by using the ways that were handed down to us by our forebears.

I responded by saying this to the participant: I suppose you are one of the few Africans I have encountered who are so passionate about your cultural beliefs. Now then; I continued: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If that is the case, is there any special reason for this? The participant responded:

Kuvamise ukuthi kube ngabantu bakithi abadidekile abaxuba izinkolo ezahlukeni – Usually it is those of our own people who are confused who mixes different religious beliefs and practices. Such people are not honest to themselves, to their own cultural heritage and to the other religions they also adhere to. African Traditional Religion is enough for me. I believe that Umvelinqane - God gave us this religion; because in his wisdom he saw that it is suitable for our own way of life.

After this, I decided to go straight to the heart of my inquiry. So I asked the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? This participant as an owner of a number of kombi taxis operating on the Edendale Road uses this road directly – that is, driving his own vehicle to attend to various activities, and indirectly – through his fleet of kombi taxis. So, it was very much appropriate that he gives a response to this question. This is how the participant responded:

I believe that a road accident is a bad omen and it is very costly for any business person. The possibility then of having one or more of my vehicles involved in road accidents in any given day is the biggest challenge. This is coupled with the fact that some of our drivers are sometimes not careful enough to make sure that they drive in a manner that can lead them in not getting involved in road accidents. So trust is another challenge. I am supposed to trust daily that all my drivers are acting in a responsible manner all the time. One of the proverbs in *IsiZulu* says – *Kungcono ukuthemba itshe kunomuntu* – it is better to trust a stone than to trust a human person. Now the reality is that stones cannot drive cars, it is people who drive them and so I have no choice but to trust that they will behave well on the road.

All what you are saying; I said: leads us to the question of faith. How then does your faith assist you as an Edendale Road user? The participant responded:

As I said before, a road accident is a bad omen which is generally if I may add, understood according to African Traditional Religion to mean that the ancestors of a person involved are not happy about something. Sometimes; a road accident happens or it almost happen as a warning or a sign that something that is bad, is going to happen or has already happened within my family. Let me give you a practical example of what happened to me a while ago while I was driving on the Edendale Road. On that day I was driving on the correct side of the road, keeping to the correct speed limit, I had my seatbelt fastened and my car was in a perfect condition. Then suddenly I was almost hit from the back by a huge goods truck which went past me at a terrible speed. I almost died. When I was at home later on I received a phone call from my aunt to the effect that my

uncle, who is the first born from my father's family, had passed on. He had died in the morning of the same day I almost had an accident. It was after the phone call that I realized that what had happened to me was a warning from my ancestors that instead of driving around and minding my own business, I should be mourning the death of my uncle with the other members of my extended family. I believe in the active participation of my ancestors in everything that happens to me. I also believe that I should venerate and appease them now and then so that they could look after me and everything that belongs to me.

This was very interesting for me, because I had never met someone who had articulated his or her religious beliefs and faith in this manner as far as African Traditional Religion is concerned. I then went on and asked the participant these related questions: If you perform any religious rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you tell me what are these rituals; where are they performed and what benefit do you think they will achieve? The participant then replied:

Our African culture demands that a person like me, whom the ancestors have seen fit to give a gift of a car for instance, as a sign of my loyalty in upholding the family name, needs to perform certain rituals in order to avoid disappointing the ancestors. Their disappointment could have disastrous effects. So, immediately after buying a vehicle, I need to inform the ancestors through ritual about my new acquisition before I can take the vehicle to the road. *Singabantu ababikayo kwabakithi abangasekho* – We Africans are the people who report to the ancestors about important happenings in our life. This is what I always do when I am in possession of a new vehicle: 1. I buy a goat to celebrate with my ancestors, my family and relatives and my friends and neighbours. 2. I ask my wife and other women in my family to prepare *utshwala besintu* (Traditional sorghum beer) as part of the elements needed for the ritual. 3. When the animal is slaughtered and *utshwala* is almost ready I burn incense and talk to my ancestors, *emsamo* – a sacred dwelling place within my homestead. All the elements are placed in this sacred place because the ritual takes place there. 4. When the goat is being slaughtered and the incense is burning, I talk to my ancestors 'showing' them the car they have given to me, thanking them for the gift and asking them to always protect me from all the dangers on the road. 5. The vehicle is then smeared with gall juice from the goat on the wheels and also with a little bit of traditional beer and *intelezi* – a special herb for protection against evil spirits – *imimimoya emibi*, which could be sent by sorcerers – *abathakathi*. 6. The following day is the actual celebration day and some of the elements (cooked meat, dumplings, *utshwala*, soft drinks, sweets and fruits) are placed at the sacred place for the ancestors as a symbol of them celebrating with us. This food is later consumed by members of the family and other relatives and friends. The main benefit here is protection against all forms of road accidents.

I then said to the participant: Thank you for this information, I am learning a lot indeed from our encounter. I would also like to ask you this question which I think is related to what you have just said. Do you believe that both God and the ancestors help to protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The participant replied:

I do believe that both God and the ancestors protect me on this road on the basis of the fact that the ancestors themselves were created by God and that when they passed on they went to live with

God. The power the ancestors have of protecting me is derived from God in the same way that the religion they passed on to us together with all the wisdom found in our culture was given by God for the purpose of enabling us to manage our daily life in ways that are suitable to us. One of the most important things you need to understand about ancestor veneration is that – *abaphansi bayathethiswa uma ukhala kubo* – When I am addressing my ancestors especially with regard to a request for relief from any distress in my life, I need to be firm in my address in order to make sure that a positive response is more likely to be forthcoming. This is because our culture has taught us that ancestors are like children who take time to understand and respond to our demands. After all ancestors are living in a different place than us, so we cannot address them as if they are still living and thinking like us. When I or one of my vehicles has been saved from a road accident, I say – *abakithi basangibhekile* – my own ancestors are still looking after me because God (*uMvelinqangi*) has ordered them to do so.

How then; I continued asking the participant, do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

There is only one particular way, which is being promoted as the key to understanding problems associated with road safety. Unfortunately, other perspectives are ignored. As someone who is not only rooted in African culture but someone who has invested money, energy and my life in the transport business, I believe that other perspectives like the African Traditional Religious perspective should be taken seriously. Evil intentions, witchcraft and sorcery are a common reality for most of us road users. Traditional healing methods are being slowly incorporated into the mainstream health sector, why not do the same with road safety campaigns and strategies. Africans will never stop being Africans – that is, using African cultural ways of understanding and dealing with the ordinary everyday problems of life. It does not matter how educated and or saved they have become. The belief in cultural causes (*izinto zabantu*) of all forms of problems will always be a norm for many Africans.

What then, I asked the participant; do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

Road accidents affect all of us. We need to be open-minded enough to use solutions from all our diverse cultural backgrounds. I believe that although not everything is good from African Traditional Religion, there are however, a number of practices that can contribute a lot in helping to solve problems associated with road safety.

My last question to the participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

Using this road or any other road will always be a challenge to all road users. However, because I am aware of the problems and the possible dangers associated with travel and the fact that I am deeply rooted in the religion of my culture, using this road helps my faith a lot because I always do what I have learned from my faith in order to survive.

3. An encounter with an adherent to the Zionist faith

3.3 General introduction

The participant in this section resides within Taylors Halt at an area known as Emafakatini. He is employed by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) at its Edendale Township office. The participant uses the Edendale Road five days every week to travel from his place of residence to work and back. He uses both kombi taxis and buses as modes of transport. The interview which follows hereunder took place at the participant's place of work during his lunch hour.

3.3.1 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Are you a Christian or a Muslim or an African Traditionalist or a member of any other faith? The participant replied:

I have been a Christian since I was born. I grew within a family which adhered to the evangelical Lutheran faith. When I was old enough to make my own decisions I decided to join one of the Zionist groups within our area.

I then said: Well, whichever religious denomination you belong to now I guess does not matter, either way you are still a Christian. However, if you do not mind, I would like to know if there is any special reason for this switch – from one religious denomination to the other? The participant replied:

There was a time in my life when I felt that I do not want to be associated with any Christian faith that does not recognize African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices. Although my grand parents and my parents adhered to the Lutheran faith, they never stopped performing African cultural rituals whenever there was a need for this. This did not make sense to me – even some of our neighbours would sometimes sarcastically remarked – *amakholwa anjani lawa enza izinto eziphambene nenkolo yobukrestu* – what kind of Christians are these who continue performing rituals which are contrary to the Christian faith? The reason therefore for me to join the Zionists was this – I never wanted to be in a situation where I would have to choose between our cultural heritage as Africans and Christianity.

My response to this was: It is the first time that I hear a Christian being so honest about these matters – I really appreciate your openness. Now; I continued questioning the participant, are you a member of a church, and or, other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant replied:

Yes, I am a member of a religious community in our area. We do not have place of worship which is our own – we are a small group of people united by a desire to worship God in a simple way. What is more than this is the fact that most of our members are too poor – many of them are pensioners, children and, a few people who are employed on a full-time basis. The usual Sunday contributions are used to pay rent for the nearby school classroom we use as our place of worship. At some other times we gather for worship in one of our members' place of residence.

After this, I felt it was time to get to the gist of the interview, so I asked the participant this questions: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

There is always a conflict like situation which I think I face every day- the desire to arrive early at work and the thought that I may one day experience a road accident because everybody is rushing in the morning. The most difficult part for me as a passenger and an employee is that I have no control over this situation. Other people – the drivers in particular are in control of everything that may or may not happen on the road – good or bad.

I then said to the participant: given what you have just shared with me about you feeling not being able to control what happens during your travels on this road – how does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant replied:

As I have indicated to you at the beginning, both Christian faith and African culture are equally important for my life. In a way, they complement each other. On the one hand, the Christian faith gives me hope that I can survive even where I have no control of the situation on the road. On the other hand, I always travel with the assurance that my ancestors are accompanying me all the time (*ahamba nami ngasonke isikhathi*), and are therefore ready to prevent any harm from happening to me. You need to understand that it was God himself who decided that I should come into this world through the family I belong to. Those members of this family who have passed on have a responsibility to protect those of us who are still living.

I then said to the participant: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you explain to me; what are these rituals? Where are they performed and, what benefit do you think they will achieve? The participant replied:

There are mainly two rituals that I perform almost every day for the purposes of my travelling on this road – prayer and the burning of incense while talking to my ancestors (*ukushisa impephopho ngikhulume nabakithi abangasekho*). The burning of incense and communication with my ancestors is done at home in a sacred place set aside for this (*emsamo*). With regard to prayer, I do it at home, on the road while travelling and at work. I do not just pray for my own safety, I pray

also for other road users especially vehicle drivers that those who are reckless and endanger our lives may see the light and drive with care for other road users. As far as the benefit of burning incense is concerned, I always inform my ancestors about the travelling trip I am about to undertake and I ask them to accompany me on each trip, so that they could guard and protect me in case of danger on the road.

I said to the participant: I understand that you perform these two rituals to your ancestors and to God respectively; then I asked him: but why are the rituals drawn from two different religions? The participant replied:

African Traditional Religion originates from the wisdom of God and this wisdom was handed down to our ancestors as our own way of life. This way of life has in turn been handed down to us to use for our wellbeing and especially to help us deal with situations which make our life unbearable. Every nation has been given by God its own ways of managing difficult situations like sickness, death and so on. As far as I am concerned, there is no reason why I should not use different ways as long as they are not against life.

After this, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant responded:

To use the road almost everyday usually brings uncertainty and anxiety. This is because I am aware of the fact that there is nothing I can do to influence all those road users who are less considerate about the situation they put in by their unbecoming behaviour on the road. However, in the Bible there are texts which help me cope with this situation of uncertainty. For instance, in the book of Deuteronomy, a text that speaks more profoundly to me is Deut 4: 7 which says – ‘What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?’ Fear and anxiety have no place in me whenever I remind myself of this great truth.

I then said to the participant: It is clear to me that you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time; now then, I continued asking: how does this happen, and what is the basis of this belief? The participant replied:

God has many ways of protecting people like me who trust in him. When an accident which almost happened but does not happen because for instance, a driver was vigilant enough to prevent it from happening, I see the hand of God in that situation. At the same time when I reflect back at what almost happened, I also get confirmation that my ancestors were also there with me at that moment to protect me. This becomes even more clear when there is actually a road accident (This has happened twice in my life), and I find myself being counted among those passengers who were not hurt or injured in the accident.

Well then; I continued asking: how do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

Television news, radio news and news papers say that road accidents are caused by people who drink and drive, reckless driving and faulty vehicles. Although this is true, these are not the only

causes of road accidents. There are other causes which culturally based and which need to be acknowledged and dealt with in a cultural way. For instance, there witchcraft and or sorcery (*ubuthakathi*) and the tendency to neglect to perform the African cultural ritual, which helps to remove the spirits of those people who had died on the road. The threat to road safety posed by those abandoned spirits is real and the sooner it is given serious consideration the better for us all.

I began moving towards closing the interview by asking the participant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith?

The participant replied:

At the beginning of our conversation, I told you that I am not in favour of a Christian religion which views African Traditional Religion as contrary to Christianity. There are good and bad elements in every culture or religion. I have no doubt that there are many good elements from African Traditional Religion which can successfully be used to reduce the casualty rate of each class of road users.

Lastly, I asked the participant this question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

I can safely say that using the Edendale Road does help my faith to grow stronger after every travel trip because the reality of the problems associated with travel on this road make remain constantly in touch with God, my creator, with my ancestors Whom God decided that I take their identity and I also get the opportunity to embrace religious values rooted in my culture.

4. An encounter with an adherent to the Roman Catholic faith

4.1 General introduction

The participant in this section is employed in one of the well known furniture shops in Pietermaritzburg as a salesperson. She has been doing this job for about fifteen years. Her place of residence is at Esigodini – another section of the Edendale Township which is actually the western end point of this township. Esigodini is just a few kilometres below the Taylor’s Halt area where the Henley dam is found. It is separated from Taylor’s Halt by a railway line which runs from Pietermaritzburg station through the Edendale Township and to Bulwer, Ixopo and Kokstad. The participant uses kombi taxis to travel to work six days every week – Monday to Saturday. What actually drew my attention to this participant the first time I met her at the taxi rank, was the fact that she was wearing a rosary around her neck. The interview took place at the participant’s place of residence on a Saturday afternoon.

4.2 The interview

I started of the interview by asking the participant to confirm that she adheres to the Christian religious faith. The participant did confirm this and then I asked her: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths and if so, is there a special reason for this? Although the response to my double question initially took me by surprise, it however, became more and more interesting as the participant continued to share her story. This is how she put it:

I only adhere to the Christian faith especially, the Roman Catholic faith. There was a time in my life when I had to make a decision whether or not I should become a traditional healer while practicing as a Christian at the same time. That was a very difficult time because to decide not to become a traditional healer, meant that I would be going against the wishes of my late husband.

This was shocking and interesting for me at the same time. So, I asked the participant if she would not mind to explain to me briefly as to how did this situation came about. This is how she explained it:

Both my husband and I belonged to the Roman Catholic and that is where we were married. At the time we got married my husband was employed as a road traffic inspector and he had been doing this job for ten years. Then out of the blue he felt he had a calling to become a traditional healer, resigned from his job and received training and finally initiated as a traditional healer. I supported him throughout this process because I believe that God is in the heart of each and every person and that God talks to any person who is willing to listen. This means that God can talk even to a traditional healer as long as his or her intentions are pure and not against God's intentions. I continued to support my husband even though some of my relatives raised some doubts about an educated man like him who has a good job suddenly becoming a traditional healer. Some of my relatives openly stated that this does not make sense. The trouble started five years later after my husband had become a traditional healer when he started persuading me to become a traditional healer as well, so that we could work together as a team. At first he was gentle about it and when he realised that I was totally against it he tried to force me into it. He even went to the extent of making arrangements for me to be initiated as a traditional healer trainee (*ithwasa*) without my consent. I objected to this and with the help of my original family we were separated, unfortunately he died two years later while we were still on separation. My objection was based on the understanding that for him, it was no longer about a calling to help heal those who are suffering from especially culture related distresses in our society. My husband had been overcome by the desire to make more money at any cost, even at the cost of exploiting suffering people without actually helping them.

This was a very interesting account for me of how other people corrupt a religious practice in order to advance their selfish interest. Making sure that I do not get sidetracked by this story from the interview, I asked the participant this question: Are you a member of a church, or, other religious community, if so can you specify? The participant replied:

Yes, I am an active member of the Saint Albert parish church and I am also a member of a religious sodality within the Roman Catholic Church which is dedicated to the veneration and adoration of the sacred heart of Jesus.

My next question to the participant was this: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

The biggest challenge for me is waking up in the morning and then I am reminded of all the horrible images of road accidents I had seen the previous night from television and sometimes those which also appear on the news papers. Add to this, the thought that at that particular moment, I need to prepare to travel to work. Sometimes I am tempted not to go to work but what can we do, we need to work in order to provide for our families.

I said to the participant: You are right travelling on the road is such an important part of our life that we cannot avoid. Now please tell me, how does your faith assist you as an Edendale Road user? The participant replied:

Let me put it this way. Without faith – something to hold on to, my life would be miserable. My faith gives me strength and the courage to go to work especially when I feel fearful to travel because of some of the recklessness that takes place on this road. It gives me the consolation that somehow God is watching over me and that he wants me to live my life free from fear of what might happen to me on the road to work and back to my house. In times of fear, my faith reminds me that God cares about me and all the other road users.

I then ask the participant this question: Do you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road, and if you do; what are these rituals and where are they performed and lastly, what benefits do you think they will achieve? The participant replied:

Of course I do – I pray at any available opportunity. I pray at home before I leave for work and after I come back from work, I also always carry the rosary with me so that I recite its prayer at the taxi rank as well as inside a kombi taxi while travelling. I also use about five to ten minutes of my lunch break time for prayer. I pray for myself my family and my relatives I pray for my neighbours and my community where I leave. And I pray for all road users especially those who are not able for one reason or another are not able to make time for communicating with God in prayer. The main benefit is to experience the grace of seeing some of the drivers especially, those who find it hard to act responsibly, doing so with ease.

I also ask the participant: who are these prayers directed to? She replied: “I pray to God, to Jesus and to the Virgin Mary the mother of our Lord”. I continued asking: Do you, use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Yes I do and the text I like most is found in the first letter of Saint Peter. I like it because speaks about fear and then encourages us Christians to have a strong faith in order for us to be able to cope with fear. The text reads like this: ‘Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him, strong in faith.’ (1Peter5:8-9).

At this point I felt it was time to bring the interview into a close. So I asked the participant this question: How then do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

Road accidents happen because of many reasons. Some are technical but most of them happen as a result of unbecoming human behaviour or because of human sin. This could be drinking and driving or the use of any substance that makes people behave badly on the road and sometimes people deliberately using road unworthy vehicles, greed and intolerance and so on. The worst part however is that some people do these things without considering the fact that they are putting other road users in danger of even losing their lives. My faith tells that sometimes we sin without even knowing that we are actually sinning. But no one in this day and time can claim that he or she does not know that drinking and driving for instance is a sinful act. People need to be responsible and mature enough to admit such wrong doing and further take responsibility to change for the benefit of all of us.

Well then; I said, what do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

Christian values need to be a driving force behind every road safety campaign. One of these has to do with relearning to value other people’s lives. The first step towards this is to promote respect for all road users – passengers must genuinely respect drivers and drivers must in turn begin to respect the other classes of road users. No one should see the road as a place where he or she can do as he or she pleases.

I then concluded the interview by asking the participant this last question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

Using this road helps my faith very much because it makes me realise first of all, how vulnerable and powerless I am to the possibility of the dangers prevalent on the road. At the same time however, each day I arrive back home from work safe I become aware how much God loves me and so I learn to trust him more than the day before. In this way my faith in him becomes stronger.

5. Reflection and conclusion

One of the lessons I have learned in doing field work for this project is that it is not easy to find a Christian (especially among Christians from the mainline churches and the revivalist groups), who is bold enough to admit that he or she adheres to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion at the same time. This means that the participant (a Zionist), in section two of this field report presents us with a unique opportunity to learn from those Christians who are not afraid of sharing with us what they believe in. Perhaps it is because he belongs to that section of the Christian religious faith which some of us might call marginalised. This is a very unfortunate state of affairs because it is common knowledge that most African Christians have not entirely severed their ties with ancestor veneration as well as the belief and the use of traditional medicines and rituals no matter how high they have climbed the ladder within Christian religion. One of the participants I have encountered in the field puts it this way - *thina Bantu abamyama sohlala singabantu abamyama njalo sikholiwe noma singakholiwe*. The English version of this is – we Africans will always embrace African religious beliefs and practices.

This is more evident in sport (especially in football or soccer). Just watch a soccer game on television at any given day. In this sport, notice when a striker attempts to score a goal and the ball hits one of the poles and does not go into the net – most African commentators will remark – *eish! Yizinto zabantu* – meaning the goal was prevented to go into the net by the use of *umuthi* – traditional medicine. In the context of this study, inside some of the kombi taxis you will sometimes find that both a Christian religious symbol and an African Traditional Religious symbols are displayed at the same time. But then ask any of these people whether or not they adhere to one or more religious faiths, the answer is generally this – no, no, no, I am a Christian. And I have nothing to do with those things – those things being *izinto zabantu*. What we have here is allusion to the idea that most African Christians are in denial of the fact that they at other times, are more likely to resort to African religious beliefs and practices in order to solve some of the problems they encounter in life. The one thing to note here is that those African Christians are not bold enough to admit like the Zionist participant that for them, both Christian and African Traditional Religions are of equal importance.

One of the things which stand out from the participant, who is a kombi taxi operator, is a perception or a view that there is no difference between African culture and African Traditional Religion. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why African Christians in general tend to adhere to both the Christian faith and the African Traditional Religious faith. I am not sure whether the proponents of inculturation have given themselves the opportunity to systematically and deeply look into this matter. One of the interesting things I have learned from the encounter with this taxi operator is the fact that ancestors are perceived to have revelatory power – the ability to warn or reveal what has happened or what will happen in future. What is even more interesting for me is that such revelation does not come through the chief actors in African Traditional Religion – that is, *izanusi* or fortune tellers or prophets or *izangoma* or traditional healers. The revelation comes directly from the spiritual beings – ancestors, to the person concerned. This is direct communication without the need for intermediaries.

With regard to the Roman Catholic participant the one thing that strikes me is the connection between religion and patriarchy on the one hand and the desire to accumulate financial resources on the other hand. This seems to be the case when the participant is canvassed (against her will) to become *isangoma* – traditional healer. The interesting thing for me in this case is the unshakeable commitment to what the participant believes in. For me the issue here is not about the choice between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, rather, the issue is about the selfish use of religion faith (it could be any religious faith), to exploit other unsuspecting people. What we have in this case is corruption and resistance (on the part of the participant) to be part of a corrupt relationship. This kind of corruption has the potential to undermine anything good that can be said about African Traditional Religion and African culture.

Field Report No. 12

1. Introduction

In this report I present religious views and opinions that emerge as a result of the experience of commuting on the Edendale Road on a daily basis. Three people are involved in the conversations with me (the researcher) in this field report – two of them are adherents to the Christian faith and the other one is an adherent to African Traditional Religion. The reporting of individual interviews begins with a brief presentation of the background information about each interviewee. This is followed by a detailed account of the religious beliefs and practices of the informant concerned. I conclude the report by doing a reflection on some of the key issues that have emerged from the interview.

2. An encounter with an adherent to the Christian faith

2.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is a forty five year old domestic worker who is employed in one of the suburbs within the city of Pietermaritzburg. She uses kombi taxis to travel to and from work five days a week. Her place of residence is at eNhlazatshe. This is a section of the Edendale Township that is on the western side of Georgetown – the area commonly known as the original Edendale Township. The informant does not only use kombi taxis to get to work, they are also the only means of transport she used to attend to other social activities like going to church or shopping. The interview took place at the participant's place of residence.

2.2 The Interview: (12.1 KTP [F] Presbyterian Church)

I began the interview by saying this to the informant: I understand that you adhere to the Christian faith, please tell me which denomination do you belong to? The participant replied: "My family and I belong to the Presbyterian church. This is the church that we were introduced to by our parents early in our life". My second question was this one: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this? The informant wanted clarity on this question and so she asked me: "What do you mean by this? I am not sure whether or not I have understood

your question correctly”. So I tried to explain by saying to her: Some people adhere to the Christian religious faith and Africa Traditional Religion at the same time because they feel that the latter faith is necessary for them to stay in touch with their cultural roots. What I would like to find out from you is that, is it possible that you also share the same sentiment or not with regard to religious beliefs and practices from the Christian faith and any other religious faith. After this explanation, the informant replied:

Although Christian religion is a major factor in almost all aspects of my life, I can say that some of the cultural practices are not easy to just simply do away with in spite of the fact that I am a committed Christian. For instance, it is common practice that if there has been death in our family, people who attended the burial ceremony need to be provided with cleansing traditional herbal medicines or herbs mixed with water. This is put into washing basins and placed outside the gate of the house so that everyone who attended the funeral will wash his or her hands there immediately after the funeral. As far as I understand this practice, it is based on the assumption that death brings with it contagious misfortune or a ‘dark cloud’ (ishwa noma isinyama) to anyone who had participated in a burial ceremony and therefore, the need for a cleansing ritual afterwards. So, people who have supported a family in mourning need to be offered an opportunity to cleanse themselves in order to prevent any perceived harm which might befall them. If this is not done, I have no doubt that those in attendance at a funeral would be suspicious and starts spreading all sorts of rumours about the family concerned. Now, this is a cultural practice which has been in existence from time immemorial and it is generally accepted in almost all African communities. This is a common practice even among some of those Africans who claim to be totally detached from all African cultural practices. If I do not do some of these common practices, I can end up being called a witch, pretending to be a Christian or hiding behind Christianity. This however, does not mean that I value African Traditional Religion more than I value Christian religion. My opinion is that, I do not see any harm in doing something that has the potential of dividing a community and create unnecessary tension if it is not done.

After this long explanation, I then asked the informant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The informant replied:

A road user like me is faced with many struggles each and every day. Just consider the fact that I can get into a kombi taxi and then discover that the only seat that is available for me is not properly fixed and my travelling becomes uncomfortable in spite of the fact that as a passenger, I am expected to pay a full taxi fare. Just imagine what can happen to me in case there is a road accident while I am sitting on an insecure seat inside a moving vehicle. Complaining to a driver does not help – they usually ignore you or pretend to be sympathetic and the next day the problem is still there. The road traffic officials are only interested in checking speeding vehicles and the validity of a driving licence for example. Although there are many kombi taxis in a good condition, some of them have windows which do not open easily even when it is too hot and doors which do not close properly – a conductor needs to bag it now and then in order to force it to close. Add to this, drivers who find it very difficult to show respect to their customers and the absence of a functional formal structure where one can report these things and get an appropriate response. Perhaps if there is an alternative transport service competing with the kombi taxis the situation would improve. Unfortunately there is none and we have no choice but to be content with what is given to us.

I then asked the informant this probing question: But now, given all these challenges you have mentioned, how does your faith assist you as a road user to cope day after day? The informant replied:

Nothing is more important than to have faith to hold on to under the circumstances. I have no doubt that without faith, one would easily become insane. It is the only thing that helps me to consider these things with a spirit of understanding and forgiveness. An understanding which says that perhaps praying for all those who are involved in this transport sector will one day make them realize the need to be considerate of the passengers in their quest to make as much money as possible. I also pray that it does not take them too long to realize that it is necessary for kombi taxi operators to spend some money to repair broken vehicles in order for them to make more money and at the same time also have happy customers – passengers. I do not think it would be easy to be positive about anything without faith.

I then asked the informant the following connected questions: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road could you answer the following questions: What are these rituals? Where are they performed? And, what benefit do you think they will achieve? This is how the informant responded to this cluster of questions:

The only ritual I perform in this regard is prayer. I pray everywhere an opportunity presents itself – at home, at work, and sometimes while travelling in a kombi taxi. Prayer is powerful enough to help even the most stubborn change their ways. People in the kombi taxi industry especially; need our prayers and we must pray believing that God can work miracles through our intercessions.

I further asked the informant this next question which is closely related to the latter question above: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? This is how the informant responded: “I do, and the most meaningful text for me comes from the book of Wisdom, chapter 14:1-5. This text reads thus”:

...someone else, taking a ship across the wild waves...but your providence, Father; is what steers it; you having opened a pathway even through the sea and a safe way over the waves, showing that you can save, whatever happens.

“This text helps me to understand that God is always with us on our road travels regardless of the challenges we are facing on a daily basis”. I then asked the informant this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The informant replied:

Although I am not sure whether or not Africa cultural proverbs are perceived as religious texts, I do sometimes use them in my understanding what is happening on the road. For instance, in isiZulu we say – *akusilima sindlebende kwaso* (no matter how foolish a person’s behaviour may

appear to many; such a person is always treated with respect, compassion and understanding within his or her family circle). Now, with regard to some of the drivers who are reckless and inconsiderate on the road, there is no way we can help them change their bad behaviour, if we treat them as if they are not part of the human family. We therefore, need to show them that we do care and love them. After all, they are our fathers, our brothers, our sons and sometimes our sisters and daughters and our neighbours.

I then went on and asked the informant this question: Do you believe that God / or the Ancestors /Spirits / divinities / other spiritual forces and powers help to protect you on the Edendale Road? The following was the response to the above question: “I believe that only God has the power to protect me on this road and that there is no other power equal to God’s power”. I then probed further: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

Road accidents are a sign of our weakness as human beings. We refuse to be considerate, in other words we refuse to love others as we love ourselves. Some people act as if they are the only ones who have a right to use the road. Such people are self-centered and they conveniently forget that roads are meant to serve all road users equally so that each person can improve his or her own life. Now, road accidents destroy life and make it miserable.

I enquired further: What then, do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant answered:

Individuals, communities, and society at large must learn to treat drivers with respect and show them that they are an important component of society. Perhaps in this way even those drivers who do not care about anyone but themselves can begin to be considerate and change the way they handle themselves on the road.

In closing the interview, I asked the informant this question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

Travelling on the Edendale Road on a daily basis helps my faith very much because of the fact that I know that I do not have a choice but to use one mode of transport – kombi taxis every time I go to work whether I like it or not. On top of this, choosing which kombi taxi to travel in is not always feasible. I have to take any kombi taxi that is available at any given moment. I always console myself, by convincing myself that any available kombi taxi which I find at a taxi rank has been chosen by the Lord for me. I further convince myself that the Lord cannot choose a kombi taxi for me that is going to be involved in a road accident. Whenever I arrive home from work safe, my faith grows stronger each day.

3. An encounter with an adherent to ATR

3.1 Background information

The informant in this section is a self employed 37 years old African male. He sells sweets, chips, fruits and cigarettes at the corner of Symons and Church streets in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. His place of residence is in one of the new human settlements (which came into existence after 1994), which is known as eNtabeni (the Hill). It is one of those human settlements made up of what is popular known as RDP houses and is an extension of KwaDambuza – a section of the Edendale Township. The informant uses kombi taxis six days a week (Monday to Saturday) from his place of residence to the city center where he runs his informal trading business. The interview took place at the informant's place of work.

3.2 The interview: (12.2 KTP [m] African Traditional Religion)

I began the interview by asking the informant this question: What religious faith do you adhere to: Christian, Muslim, African Traditional Religion or other? The informant answered: "*Mina mnewethu ngikholelwa enkolweni yendabuko*" ("I, my brother adhere to African Traditional Religion"). This was my next question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The answer to this question was:

I have no problem with other religious faiths but African Traditional Religion is enough for me, otherwise I would end up losing my identity by not knowing where exactly do I belong.

I then decided to raise this issue with the informant in order to make sure that I understand what he meant by saying that he has no problem with other religious faiths: I am not sure whether or not you know that there are some Christian people who embrace both African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith – what is your take on that approach? He then answered this question by stating that:

I know about that but I am not sure about the real motives for doing that. It would be much better if they are doing this not because they want more members, but because they have the desire to use the wisdom from both sides in order to help adherents to better manage their social and spiritual lives and also to help them deal effectively with daily life problems.

The next question I put across the informant was this one: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as an Edendale Road user? This is the response I got from the informant:

I am a self employed informal trader and this business requires me to come to town very early in the morning – potential customers who start work at six in the morning must find me waiting for them before they can get to their places of work. Again, potential customers who finish their work at six in the evening need also to find me ready to serve them. This means that I always travel during peak hours – when kombi taxi drivers are in a rush to do more trips. In a situation like that, it becomes easy for any driver to forget about the safety of passengers as well as his own safety. A safe road usage means life for all of us. I guess all of us road users do sometimes have an underlying fear of the possibility of having our lives disrupted because of the pressure drivers have in the course of road travel.

After this, I asked the informant this question: How then does your faith assist you as a road user who is faced with these challenges? The informant replied:

Firstly, I always have to remind myself that in every road travel trip I embark upon, I am accompanied by my ancestors. They know that what I am doing is for the good of our family and they also know that I am looking after the family on their behalf – it is their family. Secondly, I focus on my destination – where I am going to and why I need to reach my destination, rather than focusing on things that I cannot change. I do not bother myself about negative thoughts such as whether or not a driver has a valid driver's licence or that the kombi taxi he is driving has not been serviced since it was bought.

I sometimes had to give the informant a few minutes in order to make it possible for him to attend to some of his customers who needed his full attention. After one of those short breaks, I continued and asked this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the road could you please tell me – What are those rituals? Where are they performed? What benefit do you think they will achieve? And, who are they performed to? The informant took me by surprise and said to me:

Before I answer your questions, I would like to share with you this real life story: In our area there was a road bend where it had become common to have road accidents. Some people consulted a diviner/traditional healer for the purpose of trying to understand what was happening and with the hope that this problem might be resolved. The diviner indicated to the people concerned that, there were spirits of people who had died on that spot. Those spirits were the ones causing road accidents because proper African cultural burial procedures were not followed, that is, removing the spirit of a person killed on the road immediately after death through ritual. So, a request was made that drivers need to throw white (SA) coins each time they drive through that spot. This 'fine' was meant to appease the bothersome spirits and also to put an end to the problem of road accidents that had become a common feature in that vicinity. Vehicle drivers were willing for some time to part with a few coins each time they drove through that spot. They had no problem with paying for their safety, as well as the safety of their vehicles. This story demonstrates how powerful African traditional beliefs and practices can be among us African people. Now, I am going to answer your original questions.

Every morning before I embark upon travel to get to my place of work, I burn incense at home *emsamu* (a sacred special place reserved for communication with ancestors) and ask my ancestors to accompany me on my journey to work and back. I begin by thanking them for looking after our family and me, I ask them to continue looking after us. Sometimes, I make an animal sacrifice and offer traditional Zulu beer (*uTshwala besiZulu*) and invite the ancestors to be present when the family shares these gifts with neighbours and relatives. I cannot hope to have my ancestors looking after me and my family if we are not occasionally connected through ritual. The most important benefit I can think of is that there is usually harmony in my life and there are no major disruptions whatsoever, because performing rituals means that I involve my ancestors in my life at all times.

I followed up the above explanation with this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

The most important thing is that we the people of South Africa do not really respect each other. Some among us think they are better than others and therefore, they are the only ones who have all the right solutions for all our problems. Let me take religious believers as an example. Those who believe that they are 'saved' Christians, say African traditional religious beliefs and practices are an indication of backwardness – paganism and even anti-Christian. These are the people who refuse to remove through African rituals spirits of their relatives who have died on the roads. The interesting thing is that road accidents affect all of us regardless of what one believes or does not believe. This means that we all need to contribute in dealing with this problem. Some people need to put aside their pride and put the interests of society first.

Moving towards closing the interview, I asked the informant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

I firmly believe that if people from different religious faiths can agree to work together without harshly judging other faiths and with the sole aim really wanting to contribute in solving problems associated with road accidents, then we might get somewhere.

My final question was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

The occasional uncertainty that goes with using this road, caused by the often unbearable situations, help to strengthen my faith each day, especially when I realize that I have gone through another hectic day and yet I am safe and sound in my place of residence, eager to face another day tomorrow.

4. An encounter with a member of the Dutch Reformed Church

4.1 Background information

The informant in this section is a male member of the Dutch Reformed Church in Edendale. This church is one of the Christian groups which have been operating in Edendale for as long as anyone can remember. The informant is employed as a salesperson in one of the furniture shops in the Pietermaritzburg Central Business District. He uses kombi taxis sit days a week to get to work and back. The interview took place at the informant's place of work during lunch break.

4.1 The interview

At the time of the interview, I already knew that the informant adheres to the Christian faith. This information was given to me by the interviewee during our first contact. It was therefore because of this prior knowledge that I began the interview with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The interviewee replied:

Why are you asking me a question like this? Some people would decide to end the interview there and then because this is a very sensitive question. Most people do not want to admit that although they are Christians, they however, still cling to their cultural beliefs and practices. But do not worry. I am not ashamed of telling you or anyone that the fact that I am a Christian does not mean that I must throw away everything that is connected with African culture. So, my answer is yes. I do adhere to the Christian faith and African traditional religious faith at the same time.

Before I asked my next question, I said: "I really appreciate your honesty and the fact that you did not end the interview even though you felt that my question was inappropriate says a lot about you". I then asked another question which is connected to the first question: Is there any special reason for you to adhere to two faiths at the same time? The informant replied:

In our ordinary everyday attempts to manage our life, there are situations which require only Christian faith based responses. However, there are also other problematic situations which definitely require African cultural solutions. Let me give you a typical example. Suppose I am being bewitched (*ngiyathakathwa*) by someone in the community where I live for any reason whatsoever. I can either, pray and do nothing more, hoping that the problem will eventually disappear because I believe that God will do something to save me and release me from this burden. Alternatively, I can pray about the problem facing me but also as an African and umZulu (a Zulu), I can follow the wisdom of our culture by paying heed to the saying that *iva likhishwa ngelinye* (a thorn in a person's body is removed by another thorn). In other words, I can pray about my problem and at the same time, I can also find and use herbal medicines or perform some cultural ritual to deal with the problem at hand.

My next question to the interviewee was this one: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as an Edendale Road user? The informant replied:

One of the challenges we all face as commuters is that the chances of choosing which kombi taxi to travel in and which one not to are very minimal. It is not possible for me as a passenger for example, to know that the vehicle I am getting in is regularly serviced and that it is road worthy. Add to this the recklessness displayed by some of the drivers in the road. I have sometimes wondered how I have survived for so long without personally experiencing a road accident under these conditions.

This response led me to ask the informant this question: Given the challenges you have just mentioned, how does your faith assist you as a road user? This is the response I got from the interviewee:

My faith assists me in many different ways. It inspires me to pray regularly. It helps me to become positive about anything that has the potential of contributing to saving my life, and it also helps me to live my life with less fear as is humanly possible.

I carried on and asked the informant this question: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions: What are these rituals? And, where are they performed? The informant replied:

First and foremost, as a Christian I pray a lot of times. I pray at home and sometimes I pray during my travel trips. Secondly, I occasionally burn incense when communicating with my ancestors and asking for their protection. I only do this at home whenever I feel the need to connect with my ancestors, because they are a very important part of my life.

I then continued and asked the interviewee this question: What benefits do you think these rituals will achieve? And who are they performed to? The informant replied:

I pray to God, I pray to Jesus and I pray to the Holy Spirit. Prayer helps me to cope with fear and anxiety and it also sets me free from doubts about God's love and mercy. Prayer reminds me that God will always save me from difficult situations because he loves me. As far as my ancestors are concerned, I believe that they are now closer to God. It is therefore easy for them to intercede for me and ask God to spare my life. I do not believe that my ancestors will be able to do this if I do not communicate with them regularly through ritual as an African.

I also asked this question which is related to the latter question: Why are these rituals drawn from different religions, that is, Christian religion and African Traditional Religion? This is how the informant responded to the above question:

I do not believe that it would be proper for me to neglect my ancestors. God himself chose that I come into this world through them. Communicating with ancestors is an African cultural thing which defines who I am as an African and I believe that this is what God intended me to be. I therefore see no problem in using healing rituals drawn from the two different religions because both religions give meaning to my life.

Another important question I asked was this one: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The following was the response to this question: “My favourite religious text which helps me in my understanding of road use is Psalm 34:4 and it reads thus”: - “I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears”.

This text does not only help me to understand road use, it also helps me to cope with all the challenges I encounter on the road because it reminds me that I am not facing the challenges associated with road travel alone.

I also asked the informant this further question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The response to this question was prompt: “Oh no. I only use religious texts drawn from Christian religion”.

One of the controversial questions I asked some of my informants, including the interviewee in this section is this one: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors help to protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? This is how the informant responded to this question:

Yes I do believe that both God and my ancestors help to protect me at the same time and I am basing my belief in this on the understanding that God protects me through people who are much closer to me (my own ancestors). I also believe that God does the same with each and every person in this world we live in.

Now, moving towards closing the interview, I asked this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? And this is the response I got:

Road accidents are persisting to haunt us and they will continue to do so as long as individuals think only about themselves and as long as society in general is content with a diminished sense of sinfulness. We live in an era where those who do wrong things are praised and those who do the correct things are considered boring and are even vilified. To give you a simple example, one day

I was in a kombi taxi with a couple of school children and they were talking to themselves saying: *lelitekisi liyabhora aligqomi nomshayeli walo uhamba kancane* (This taxi is boring, there is no loud music and the driver is driving cautiously – not speeding). You see, even our children become upset when a kombi taxi driver is driving considerately and obeying the road traffic rules and regulations.

I probed further: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith. The reply to this question was this one:

There was a time when a lot of people were talking about moral regeneration in South Africa. It seems to me that we need to revisit this issue of moral regeneration and not only that, but we also need to tackle it with much vigour and to tackle it with the seriousness it deserves.

My final question to this informant was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? The interviewee replied:

Just imagine what would happen if some of us were to lose our faith because of the challenges we face on our daily travels. For starters, we will not have the strength and courage to go to work. The result of this is that we and our loved ones will not be able to survive because we will not be able to provide our basic needs for all of us. What I am actually saying is that using this road does help to make me strong in faith because of the realization that life is worth living in spite of the challenges we face on a daily basis.

5. Conclusion

One of the key issues that have emerged from the responses of the informants above is that the mixing and the combining of religious elements from different religious traditions is a reality that can no longer be simply ignored as something of less significance. Something needs to be done theologically in order to get a proper understanding of what is really involved from the people who adhere to this practice. This study is providing me (the researcher in it) with the opportunity to do just that – to advocate for the possibility of taking marginalized issues seriously. Another core issue that also needs to be taken seriously is the significance of Christian prayer in the lives of ordinary people who use the road on a daily basis to get to work. These two issues, together with all the other issues that have also emerged from the interviews conducted thus far, make it difficult for all of us to ignore the point raised by one of the informants in this field report that, road accidents affect all of us regardless of our different religious beliefs and practices.

Field Report Number 13

1. Introduction

In this field report, I begin by presenting field information which came about as a result of my encounter with an adherent to the Christian faith, who is a member of the Lutheran Evangelical Church. One of the key highlights of this encounter has to do with the fact raised by the participant that; sometimes road accidents happen as a result of road users who have lost hope in life and have thus decided to commit suicide. The second participant in this field report is a female isangoma – a traditional healer. Again the highlight with regard to this participant is the fact that she is the first participant who has been able to give both the isiZulu and the English names to traditional herbal medicine and another element (a tree), whose branch is used in ritual performance. The third part of this field report is a result of an observation made by me on a bus parked along the Edendale Road. A full interview was not possible to conduct due partly; to the fact it was a chance and first time encounter between the driver of the bus and me. I hope that one of these days; I may be able to find regular passengers of this bus who will be willing to take part in a full interview.

2. An encounter with an adherent to the Lutheran Evangelical faith

2.1 General introduction

The participant in this section is a female road user, aged 47 years old. She is a primary school teacher, who resides in that section of the Edendale Township known as kwaCaluza. The feeder road which connects this area to the Edendale Road is called Caluza Road. The participant uses kombi taxis seven times a week to go to her place of work and to attend other social activities such as shopping and going to church. Our first meeting took place at the Kombi taxi rank (eMgodini), the location of which has been explained in previous field reports. The interview took place on a Saturday, at the participant's place of residence, as per the agreement between the participant and my self.

2.2 The interview

I started off the interview by saying this to the participant: I remember that when we first met, you told me that you a Christian and a member of the Lutheran Evangelical Church. Is this correct? The participant said: “Yes”. I then, continued: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time and if this is the case, is there any special reason for this? The participant replied:

I have been a member of the Lutheran Church for a long time. If it was not my faith in God and my belief in his love and mercy, I do not think that I would have managed to turn my life around and become an educator, given the circumstances under which I grew up. My parents separated when I was about two years old. On top of this my own mother died two years later. So, I and my two younger brothers were brought up by an aunt – our father’s sister. Sometimes we would go to bed without food because we were told that our father, had not send the money for our upkeep – he was said to be working in Johannesburg. Later on, when one of my younger brothers was about thirteen years old, he managed to find piece jobs as a gardener in Pietermaritzburg on Saturdays and Sundays. In this way, we would manage to buy bread with his earnings. We are all grown up now and each one of us; is able to look after his or her own needs. The problem is that even though we are all working, we have not been able to create a better life for our selves. There are always problems in our life. One of my brothers is very keen on consulting *Izangoma* (traditional healers) and *abathandazi* (faith healers). He has told me many times that the aunt who brought us up under harsh conditions has been branded by all the people he has consulted as the cause of our misfortune. It is said that she has sworn that nothing good will come out of our life no matter what. So, To answer the last part of your question; yes, I do believe that *ukuthakatha* – witchcraft and or black magic, is commonly practiced amongst us black people, but I as a Christian do not seek help or consult traditional healers and faith healers. My own life experiences have proved to me that God’s love and mercy are enough for me.

My next question to the participant was this: Are you a member of a church, or religious community? If so can you specify? The participant replied:

Yes, I am a member of the Lutheran Evangelical Church in kwaMachibisa, and I have just recently been accepted, as a full member of our church’s women’s guild and I love it because that is where I get the strength to stick to my faith in God.

Now, getting into the gist of the interview, I asked the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

Before I answer that question, I would like to tell you this life experience story. When I was in my final year at primary school, I came to the conclusion that it was better for me to die than to continue living a difficult life. I even selected the method by which I was going to end my life. My aunt’s house – the one we were living in, was at kwaDambuza and it was very close to the road. The part of the road close to my aunt’s house was very busy – especially with buses and kombi taxis moving up and down all the time. My plan was that I was going to throw myself in from of a speeding kombi taxi or bus during the busiest time of the day – in the afternoon, and then I would die and finally have the peace I had never experienced in my life. Now, while I was standing at the gate watching vehicles moving up and down and waiting for the right moment to end my life, a thought came to my mind in this way; ‘do you think if you think by killing yourself you will find

peace, murderers have never found peace because God forbids murder. On top of this; the driver, who will kill you because of your fault, will also never find peace because he will think that it was his own fault.' After this I could not continue with my plan of killing myself. Later when I had grown in faith, I realized that in the first instance, it was the devil who; was encouraging me to kill myself. Secondly, I also realize that the warning not to continue with this plan came from God. Today I am glad that God saved me from succumbing to the devil's prompting lie. So, the way I see it, some of the trials and temptations that we face as road users are of our own making, by simply rejecting the fact that God loves us.

After this, I asked the participant this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant answered:

My faith assists me by reminding me whenever I am in doubt that, when my hope is in the love of God, it cannot be disappointed, no matter what is happening or not happening in my life.

My next question to the participant was this: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant replied: "The only ritual I do perform is prayer and nothing else".

I continued asking the participant: "Where do you perform this ritual of prayer?" The participant answered: "I pray everywhere; here at home, sometimes I pray while travelling and at work whenever the need arises". Again, I asked the participant: What benefit do you think prayer will achieve? The participant replied:

The most important thing for me is that prayer gives me courage to go on with my life without worrying about situations I cannot change or do not understand. I also believe that if I pray for other road users, especially; those who are allowing themselves to be overcome by problems in their lives while travelling the road, maybe they can see the light and choose to concentrate on the love and the goodness of God instead.

And then I enquired: Who are your prayers performed to? The participant answered: "I pray to God through Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour". My next question to the participant was this: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Yes and one of my favourite religious texts is **Romans 4: 13-17** because it says something about the law, promise, faith, the right relationship with God and God's grace. You will agree with me that there are laws and or regulations governing the use of roads. Sometimes I wonder as to what is the problem given all those laws. I also am of the opinion that the question of right relationship amongst us road users first is not taken seriously and that is why we have problems on the roads. Besides, it is not reasonable to think that we can have the right relationship with God if we cannot have the same amongst each other as road users.

Now, moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

One of the things I think is important in this regard is that is that most of us road users live a life which has left God out of the picture of road usage. It seems to me that many road users have banished God from their life in order that they can do as they please, regardless of the consequences.

I then, continued to ask the participant: Given this way of looking at it, what do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

We all need to make an effort to bring to an end our human ways of doing things, which usually does not involve God. Further than this, we need to seek the faith which will make it possible for us to take God at his word – that he loves us and that he wants to be involved in all our life experiences including, road travel.

My last question to this participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

Using the road helps my faith to grow stronger each and every day especially; because sometimes, I am reminded of the day when I was a young girl and then God saved me from the brink of ending my life unnecessarily. The love of God together with his mercy is always at our disposal. All we as road users need to do is to play our part in helping to reduce and eventually end the problem of road accidents in South Africa.

3. An encounter with the third African Traditional Healer

3.1 General introduction

I came across the participant in this section at the Imbali Taxi Rank in Pietermaritzburg. Before I approach her, I had this thought in my mind: I have so far interviewed two traditional healers; perhaps this one can give me another perspective and or more information on African Traditional Religion. This thought gave me confidence to stop hesitating and simply approach the then potential participant. My gut feeling was right, after a preliminary introduction, she agreed to participate in an interview, the following week. All I had to do was to come to her place of residence at Imbali unit J at ten o'clock on Wednesday the following week. The interview took place at the participant's place of residence.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this first question: Which religious faith do you adhere to; Christian, African Traditional or, any other religion? The participant replied:

About ten years ago, I was initiated into becoming a traditional healer. I received the calling while I was working as a professional nurse. Before this I was a member of the Presbyterian Church. After I became a traditional healer, I joined one of the Zionist groups. The reason for this switch was because I felt that I was no longer accepted in the church which I had been a member for most of my life.

I then asked the participant: Does this mean that you adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion? And if this is the case, is there any special reason for this? The participant responded:

I was brought up by parents who were Christians and I continued as a Christian in my adult life. I saw no reason why I should not continue to believe in God and to be a practicing Christian, just because I had become a traditional healer. After all, my calling is specifically meant to help God's people who are troubled by many ills which make life unbearable. I am not doing any harm to any body. The way I see it, I help people who are in trouble to connect with their cultural religious roots and we must never forget that those cultural roots explain who we are as Africans. Besides this, it was God himself who made us Africans. The sad thing is that African Traditional Religion and customs are mocked by those Christians who belong to long established churches including those who claim to have been saved. They even claim that biblical authority makes it clear how bad African Traditional Religion is.

I continued to ask the participant: Are you a member of a church, or, other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered:

Yes, I am a member of a church although we do not own a church building. What we normally do is that on Sundays, we meet at one of our members' house, on a rotation basis – if this Sunday the service is at my house, on the following Sunday it will be at someone else's house and so on.

My next question to the participant was this: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

One of the characteristics of being a traditional healer is that I have the power to see things or events in the future or out of sight. These are usually harmful things or events that will result in a harmful situation. Now, one of the major challenges I face as a road user is this; not knowing what to do when travelling on a kombi taxi and I suddenly become aware that one of the passengers is carrying in his or her possessions, traditional medicine that may be harmful to the other passengers especially, very young children. I cannot just accuse that person as uMthakathi (witch) – they are found everywhere and in every community, in a situation where people are travelling and are minding their own businesses. What you must understand is that the person concerned could be any one – a passenger or even a driver.

I enquired further: Given the kind of challenge you have just mentioned; how does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant replied: “There are rituals that I perform on a daily basis which help to prevent me from being affected by any traditional harmful spells or charms”. I then said to the participant: I am glad you have just mentioned rituals because my next question is about rituals. Now, if you perform rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road as you have just mentioned, could you answer the following questions? Firstly, what are these rituals? The participant replied:

The first of these rituals is; ukuziqinisa (to make myself strong in the sense of being immune against magical, harmful and dangerous substances made from animal fats or human remains). I do this by bathing in the herbal remedy prepared from *izintelezi* (the group of succulent plants) and other plants. These have to be thoroughly boiled with water. If a road accident happens because of witchcraft for instance; the chances of me being affected are very minimal. I can be one of those passengers whom everyone would ask after an accident: how did you survive? One of my brothers was killed in a road accident about three years ago in the vicinity of that dreadful spot – the Pantritch corner, just before you reach Aluminium factory and the other factories from town. He was one of the kombi taxi passengers who died in that accident. There are two very important rituals we have performed as a family in this regard. One of them is called *Ukuvala umkhokha* (to make sure that other family members do not suffer a similar fate as a deceased relative).

I have decided to leave this ritual out of the discussion because it was explained in a similar manner in a previous field report by the first traditional healer I interviewed. Suffice to say that it is based on the belief that once a family member dies tragically, the other family members will also experience tragic deaths if the ritual of *ukuvala umkhokha* is not performed.

The other important ritual has to do with what is culturally referred to as ukubuyisa (to bring back the spirit of a dead family member back home). This is done in order to make sure that a deceased relative is united with the family spirits of the other ancestors. Ukubuyisa is done at the end of a year after a dead relative has been buried. We as a family slaughtered a bull (because the ceremony was for a male member), as an offering. Utshwala besizulu was prepared for the occasion. As a family spirit like the others who went before him, my brother is now known as an ancestor or ithongo or idlozi. It is common practice that before the sacrifices are made all the other ancestors are notified of what is about to happen and the reasons for the ceremony are given. This is done by way of a senior male member of the family reciting the family praises (*izithakazelo*). These praises are coined from the original ancestors of a family. The recitation of the praises is based on the belief that the family ancestors are the custodians of everything the living family members own. Thus whatever offering is made, their permission need to be sought first. If this is not done properly, the anger of the ancestors can result in serious consequences for the family concerned. Another ceremonial ritual will have to be performed in order to appease the family spirits. The following day, all the family members, relatives and friends enjoy the feast. When everything goes smoothly right up to the end of the ritual, family members will see this as a sign that the ancestors were happy with the ritual and also an indication that they will be protected from all ills.

The other ritual I do perform of course is prayer. As a Christian who believes in the power of God, I value prayer very much. Not a single day goes by without me calling conversing with God in prayer. I believe that I am what I am and that; I do what I do because of him. He chose this calling for me. All I ever dreamed about when I was a young girl was to become a nurse and nothing else. I have accepted this calling and I do it without any regret. That is why I pray to him so that I do nothing other than to help people in need.

I could not ask the participant any further question with regard to the performance of the rituals mentioned above, seeing that she had almost answered the other questions before I could actually ask then. My next question therefore was this: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied: “Yes, I do and I am going to can give you two of my most favourable texts if you do not mind”. After I had said I do not mind and that I will be happy to hear both of them, the participant continued:

The first one comes from the book of the prophet Isaiah 28:16 and it reads thus; ... ‘every one who believes in him will not be put in shame.’ The second text comes from the book of the prophet Joel 2:32, and it says; ‘All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.’ You see, when my brother was killed in a road accident, we all said it was a bad way to die. This is the same as saying; God made our brother to experience a shameful death. We were in the grip of sorrow and we allowed it to blind us so much so that we forgot that our brother was a Christian and he believed in God in all the days he was with us. We also ignored the fact that it was not God who was driving the kombi taxi, nor the truck that collided with it when the accident happened. The simple truth is that the driver of one of these cars lost control and the vehicle moved to the opposite road and the two cars collided. There is no shame in being killed because of the mistakes of other people. That is how I have come to understand road use.

Going further with my enquiry, I asked the participant this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religion? If so why? The participant replied:

I firmly believe that African culture has a lot of sayings or proverbs which have social and religious significance. One of these proverbs is this one: Isala kutshelwa sibona ngompho – a person who rejects reproach and, persist in wrong doing does so at his own peril. Unfortunately for us road users, it is not just a reckless road user who suffers, usually a lot of people experience suffering because of one reckless person.

I continued asking the participant: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The participant replied:

Yes I do, simply because I believe that God chose our families for us for a purpose. I also believe that God more often than not, will use people who are close to us to help us in times of trouble. This is because it is more easy to understand when you get help from one of your own than from a stranger. Besides, it makes more sense to me to say that the God I believe in is the God of my parents and my grandparents – they were the first persons who introduced me to the knowledge and beliefs about God and everything else. I therefore, cannot say that because they have passed on, they no longer matter in my life.

I then asked the participant: How do you then explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

One of the main things for me is the lack of respect. Those in power do not respect those who have no power. A driver of a vehicle for instance, thinks that he is more important than people who are walking or those who are passengers. In the same way, some cultures and religions are more respected than others. Let me give you the example of the ritual known as *ukubuyisa* (the bringing back of a family spirit). We all know that there are many people who have died on our roads. Some of our own African people are rejecting this important customary ritual on Christian grounds. Yet, there are many wandering spirits causing havoc on our roads because they have been abandoned by their own family members. Now, according to the ritual of *ukubuyisa*, those spirits can be brought back so that they join other family spirits of their own relatives and thus be buried in peace. All that is needed is a goat, herbal medicine made from *izintelezi*, traditional isiZulu beer and a branch of an *umlahlankosi* tree (carisna anduina tree), dragged from the spot where a person was killed to his or he homestead and then to the grave. After a year has lapsed the same process is repeated and the spirit is brought back home for good to be joined with other family spirits. In this way, there will be no roaming spirits causing unnecessary deaths on our roads.

My last but one question to the participant was this: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

I am of the opinion that perhaps; if, African Traditional Religious solutions are given a chance to contribute in solving some of the major problems associated with road safety, maybe half the battle could be won and many lives could be saved. Communities must be educated in a way that will make them aware that in the final analysis the issue is not about religious beliefs – what we as people believe or do not believe. The real issue is about saving people's lives, about preventing the increase of orphans and about saving financial resources which could be used to improve other people's lives.

My last question to the participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

To use the road on a daily basis in my opinion; is one of those activities which are capable of testing a person's faith to the limit. This is especially true if a person has experienced first hand the horror of a road accident. Now, as a person who has experienced loss of a relative through a road accident, I have no doubt that using the road myself, helps my faith to grow because I managed to bear that accident without breaking or losing my faith.

4. An encounter with a bus driver

4.1 General introduction

This day, I was on my way to the Plessislaer post office with a view to apply for a personal post box. This post office is located at the new Edendale Mall which is one of the many establishments along the Edendale Road. It usually takes me about 15 to 20 minutes to walk from my place of residence to the Edendale Mall. The walk also means going past the Edendale Hospital. As I was passing one the hospital's main gate, I saw a bus parked next to the gate. I now that this bus is a means of transport for a number of the hospital staff seven days a week. The bus travels from the different sections of the Imbali Township and joins the Edendale Road through a feeder road and then brings its passengers to the hospital in the morning and collects them after work in the afternoon. As I was moving closer towards the bus, I noticed that the two back wheel tyres as well as the front wheel tyre on my side were completely worn out – there were no threads on the tyres whatsoever.

As the bus was stationary, checked on the drivers seat and there was no one there. I thought that the driver had gone somewhere for a while, perhaps to the informal traders who ply their trade next to the hospital entrance. So I decided to check the front wheel tyre on the other side of the bus to see if it was also in the same condition as the others. It was indeed the same and worse – this tyre had an about 6 or so centimetre gash. I started to wonder whether or not the passengers who travel on this bus every day are aware of the possible danger they are faced with. Just as I was about to leave and continue in my journey, a man I had not noticed suddenly said: "I am the driver of that bus, how can I help you" (*ngingakusiza ngani?*).

I introduced myself to him and I told him about my research project. I then requested that he gives me permission to interview him and a couple of some of his passengers some other time. His response was firm and final (though he appeared to be trying to give me the impression that he was being polite), as he said: “*Angeke kuze kulunge lokho ndoda, sihlale sisebenza, asinaso isikhathi sokuxoxa nje*” – that will not be possible, we are always working and we do not have time for casual talk. I came to the conclusion (rightly or wrongly) that to try and convince him will not make him change his mind, so I said: “thank you very much, perhaps one of these days there will be time for us to talk when you and your passengers are off duty”. He did not say anything except looking at me as I continued on my journey.

5. Reflection and conclusion

There are three issues I have singled out for reflection with regard to the first participant in this field report. The first issue has to do with the honesty of the participant. The participant is first and foremost a Christian who belongs to one of the mainline churches. Yet, she is not afraid to say that she believes that black magic / or witchcraft exists and is real and is practiced by many African people. The reality of black magic she is alluding to is that it affects people’s lives badly. So, it does not help to deny its existence and practice; whether by non Christians or by the Christians themselves. What is even more important in this regard is whether or not the mainline churches themselves are doing something to help their members to deal with this issue in a non judgemental way. What is interesting about this participant is that after acknowledging having had a personal experience of being affected by black magic or witchcraft, she was not tempted to deal with it through African Traditional Religious practices. Her faith was enough to help her bear the scars of this problem. That being so, the question can still be asked: how many Christians are resisting, as it is said; to ‘fight fire with fire?’ If there are many, or even a few, another question would be; what is the Christian church going to do about this situation?

The second issue is the fact (rarely or never mentioned), that some road users deliberately cause road accidents because they have given up on life and have thus decided to commit suicide. The said thing is that such people use drivers, other people’s vehicles and so on

to kill themselves. Perhaps they even blame God and or their ancestors for not looking after them. All this; points to the complexity of understanding the causes and prevention of road accidents.

The third issue I want to highlight with regard to the first participant has to do with the fact that prayer once again is showing to be one of the key elements with regard to religious beliefs and practices of people using the Edendale Road. Prayer is indeed proving to be the most 'popular' ritual associated with road use. I am not for now, sure whether or not it is important to ask this question: why is prayer so popular amongst road users? I am also not sure whether answers to this question should be sought from road users themselves or from theological books or from both.

The second participant who is a traditional healer is the opposite of the first participant in the sense that she adheres to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. It is common knowledge that most African Christians, who adhere to both, have a tendency to be in denial of this situation. This in spite of the fact that they; do secretly seek help, from African Traditional Religious practitioners on certain occasions.

The most interesting issue about the second participant is that she proved to be an invaluable source of theological knowledge. The participant has proven that people who have no formal theological training can indeed contribute a lot in the creation of theological knowledge. First, she has knowledge of some of the elements needed for ritual performance in both isiZulu and the English language. Secondly, her knowledge of selecting meaningful and relevant religious texts is admirable. Combine this with a relevant African proverb she selected. Lastly, the participant has taught us that rituals in African Traditional Religion must produce signs that they have been performed correctly. Failure or success depends on this.

By way of conclusion, I want to say that knowledge and ignorance play a very important role in understanding religious beliefs and practices of road users. People who are involved in road traffic awareness campaigns, though not concerned with religious beliefs and practice, are also concerned about the concepts of knowledge and ignorance. In the context of my study project and this field report, I will conclude by the words of William

Barclay; 1975: 143, commenting on what he calls – destruction of excuses based on Romans 10:14-21. Here, Barclay mentions three kinds of ignorance which he says “...are not excusable.” For the purposes of this field report we will look one of these –

There is the ignorance which comes from wilful blindness. Men [and women] have an infinite and fatal capacity for shutting their minds to what they do not wish to see, and stopping their ears to what they do not wish to hear. A man [or woman] may be well aware that some habit, some indulgence [drinking and driving and speeding], some way of life... must have disastrous results; but...may simply refuse to look at the facts. To turn a blind eye may be in some few cases a virtue; in most cases it is folly.

The question I want to end this field report with is this: Is it possible that Christianity has turned a blind eye on some of the religious beliefs and practices which many of its African members still cling to in spite of their professed loyalty to Christianity alone.

Field Report Number 14

1. Introduction

In this field report there are responses from four informants. Two of these use kombi taxis as a means of transport to get to work (one of these is a passenger and the other one is a kombi taxi driver). One of the four informants uses a bus as a means of transport. The fourth person in this group is self employed and he uses his own private vehicle to transport school children to various schools within Pietermaritzburg, as well as to schools in Mountain Rise and Northdale. Although, there are a number of buses using the Edendale Road, their operation (as compared to kombi taxis) is minimal for commuters who reside within the sections which constitute the Edendale Township. Below, I present conversations in the form of the interviews I had with each of the four people mentioned above.

2. An encounter with a member of the African Gospel Church

2.1 Background Information

The interviewee in this section is a forty three (43) year old female. She is employed in one of the leading retail stores within the Pietermaritzburg CBD. The informant resides in that part of The Edendale Township known as *eNhlazatshe* – an area whose geographical position begins at about one hundred meters or more where the Edendale Road ends. She uses kombi taxis six days a week to get to work. I met the informant for the first time at the *eMgodini* taxi rank. This is the taxi rank located at the basement of the Sibusiso Nyembezi building between Boshoff Road in the east, Simons Street in the west and Church Street in the South. The interview took place at the informant's place of residence on a Saturday afternoon as agreed in our first meeting.

2.2 The interview

In our first meeting the informant had told me that she adheres to Christian religion. So, I started off the interview by asking her to tell me about the church denomination she belongs to. This is her response to that request: "I am a member of the African Gospel Church in Edendale". My immediate response to this was: "Wow, this is interesting. I am

glad I met you. This is the first time I hear about the existence of the African Gospel Church". I then made this request: Can you please tell me what attracted you to this particular church?" The informant replied:

I was drawn to this church by the fact that our African way of life, that is, African customs and African religious beliefs and practices are not looked down upon and they are embraced instead of being mocked. We are encouraged to embrace them based on the understanding that each one of us cannot completely detach himself or herself from his, or her own cultural roots and especially when it comes to issues related to our own ancestors. In this church, it is emphasized that to do that would mean that I am isolating myself from my own past. Whether we like it or not, each one of us is connected with our ancestors – parents, grandparents and great-grand-parents through whom we came into this world. There is therefore a spiritual bond between us and our relatives who have passed on which needs not to be broken no matter what.

After this I asked the interviewee this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing on a daily basis as a commuter? The informant replied:

It has to be worry and the fear of losing my life unnecessarily. It is really difficult not to worry when kombi taxis slide past each other on a daily basis with only a few centimeters to spare. We as passengers are faced with the possibility of an unnecessary road accident happening almost all the time. Moreover, the thought of what would happen to me and my family in case a road accident does actually happen is unbearable.

I made a follow up on this response by asking question: Bearing in mind what you have just shared with me, how does your faith assists you as a road user? The informant responded in this way:

My faith offers me release from anxiety and fear. I find in it reassurance that I am not alone during my road travel trips, that I am accompanied and guarded by the love and power of God, and also by the unseen caring spirits of my own ancestors who are looking after me because they know that I am an important part of them.

I continued and asked the informant this further question: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road, could you please answer the following questions: What are these rituals? And, where are they performed? This is how the informant responded to these questions:

I burn incense at home and call upon my ancestors by reciting family praise names (*izithakazelo zakithi*), and present to them in a dignified manner my supplications, asking them to protect me on the road and at work. I also pray to God, asking him to protect me in all the things that threaten my life. I pray at home, on my way to work and I also pray at work.

After this response I asked this next question: What benefit do you think these rituals will achieve? The informant replied in this way:

Prayer revives my faith and my trust in God's mercy, his love and his power to protect me from danger associated with road accidents. Living in close association with my ancestors by communicating with them regularly and not neglecting them is very important. It prevents them from venting their anger against me because they know that I respect them, especially by involving them in everything that is happening in my own life.

I then asked the informant the following question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The interviewee replied: "Yes and the text that is most meaningful to me in this regard is Psalm 23: 1-5" – 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want....' The following was a follow up question to the latter one: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from African Traditional Religion as well? If so why? The informant replied in this manner:

Yes, I do. There is a saying in our isiZulu culture which says: *iDlozi liyabhekelwa* (it is always wise to remain in close association with your ancestors through ritual). My ancestors are the people whom God used in his wisdom to bring me into this world and they helped me to become the person I am today. I therefore, see nothing wrong with doing everything I can to maintain the goodwill of my ancestors.

Moving further with my enquiry, I asked the informant this question: It appears as if you do believe that both God and your ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if that is the case, what is the basis of this belief? The informant replied:

Yes, I do. God is the creator of all things. It was God who chose that I be born of parents whose way of life is isiZulu culture. I was brought up in this culture. It taught to the importance of respecting my ancestors by remaining in close association with them through rituals associated with itself, - the very same culture. The way I understand this is that God uses my ancestors – people who brought me into this world and nurtured me when I was helpless and therefore, people who know me better than any other created human being. It therefore makes sense for me to believe that my ancestors are the best people God can work with to protect me from the dangers of life, including road travel life.

I then indicated to the informant that the interview was drawing to a close and that I still have three more final questions to ask her. This was one of those questions: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

One of the unfortunate state of affairs in as far as understanding road accidents from a faith perspective is that we all (road users and society as a whole) know what is wrong on our roads, but

we are sadly, unable to put it right. In other words, we are powerless in spite of having knowledge which is supposed to be helping us to solve problems associated with road travel. The question that we need to answer is this: what is it that we are not doing right today, that is making it difficult for us to deal effectively with problems associated with road travel.

My last but one question to the informant was this one: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith. The interviewee replied:

First and foremost, we need to allow God's spirit to take charge of our ordinary everyday management of life – our own life. This means allowing our lives to be God centered so that our behaviour on the road demonstrates that we are all pro-life than anti-life. Secondly, we need take seriously (without prejudice) all the knowledge we can get from all corners of our country which others believe has something to contribute in dealing with problems associated with road travel.

My final question to the informant in this section was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? This is how the informant replied:

I have no doubt that using this road helps my faith very much because firstly, it has made me realize how vulnerable I am to dangers associated with road travel. At the same time, the awareness of my vulnerability has increased a desire within me to seek to connect with divine powers made available to me by being an adherent to a kind of religion that does not discriminate against marginalized religious persuasions including African traditional religious beliefs and practices.

3. An encounter with a member of Christ for All Nations Church

3.1 Background information

The interviewee in this section is a thirty seven (37) year old kombi taxi driver. His place of residence is at Kwacaluza. The interview took place at one of the taxi ranks in town. I was attracted to him by a remark he made while driving a kombi taxi in which I was a passenger. At the Edendale Mall crossing a middle age man was giving out flyers to people passing by but no one showed any interest and people did not take the flyers offered to them. Most of the people simply ignored the person offering them flyers and they went past without even looking at him. After noticing what was going on a few meters from where vehicles going to town were waiting for the robot to turn green, the driver made this remark:

That man will easily loose his job when he goes back with those flyers to his employer. He has been employed to distribute them and our black brothers and sisters are refusing to take those flyers. They just need to take them as a sign of support for another black person who has probably

taken that job in order to survive. I do not know what is the matter with us black people. I have no doubt that if it was a white person who has been distributing flyers, black people would have been pushing and shoving each other to get them – shame on us.

The above words convinced me that I have just found an open minded person who was more likely going to agree to discuss with me religious beliefs and practices connected with his use of the Edendale Road. I was right, the driver agree to have an interview with me at a later date.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the informant to tell me about the religious faith he adheres to, and this is how he responded:

Well, I can say that I adhere to the Christian religious faith, but I have also not broken ties with African Traditional Religion. There is still that part of me which embraces certain African traditional religious beliefs and practices even though I adhere to the Christian faith.

I then made a follow up with this question: Is there any special reason for you to adhere to two religious faiths at the same time? The informant replied:

The reason for this is simple. I am a Black person born and bred under the influence of African cultural beliefs and practices and beliefs in magic. Some forms of magic are used for harmful purposes. The most effective way to deal with problems associated with that kind of harmful magic is by using preventative or curative remedies from African traditional religious practitioners. I hope that answers your question.

I nodded in agreement before I asked this next question: Are you a member of a church, or other religious community? If so can you specify? The informant replied: “Yes, I am a member of the Christ for All Nations Church in Edendale”. My next question was this one: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The informant replied:

There are two challenges which I think put passengers at risk and these are contention and envy among us kombi taxi drivers. There is usually quarrelling over passengers in a way that is unrestrained and unhealthy for us as drivers, as well as for our passengers. Some of us are not satisfied with the number of passengers they have at any given moment even when they have a full load of passengers – they still want more. It is therefore, because of these things that the use of dangerous herbal medicines (*amakhambi ayingozi*) is rife in our line of work.

I proceeded enquiring: Now, given what you have just told me, how does your faith assists you as a road user? The informant replied: “My faith has helped me to understand myself, the people I work with and the conditions under which we all work. It has also helped me to learn to be patient and to respond with respect even in difficult situations”

I then asked this question: Do you perform any rituals connected with your use of this road? If so could you answer the following questions: what are these rituals? And, where are these rituals performed? And, what benefit do you think these rituals will achieve? The informant answered:

Before I answer your question, I would like to draw your attention to the following facts. In any competitive environment there are people who hate being surpassed. It is the same with us in the taxi industry as we compete for passengers. So, when I am lucky enough to have a full load of passengers at certain times, there will be people who would attribute this to some mysterious powerful charm. If on the other hand, I am unfortunate enough to have breakdowns and even a road accident; the conclusion would be that someone is using a bad spell to prevent me from succeeding in my work – an enemy. The question then is: what do I do in a situation like that one. That is where the question of performing rituals connected with the use the road becomes relevant. I, as an African also believe that bad spells and everything else associated with evil intensions is real, and that these things need to be dealt with by African traditional means. One of these is a ritual known as *ukuqiniswa* (to be strengthened through ritual). It is a treatment by herbal medicines and other substances to prevent the effects of harmful medicines deployed by anyone who wishes to do me harm. I also pray to God because I am a Christian. The African traditional religious ritual is performed at home. I pray at home, on the road and at any place when the need arises. Prayer provides me with spiritual strength and the *ukuqiniswa* provides protection against any harm that might come my way as a result of sorcery (*ubuthakathi*).

Proceeding with my enquiry, I asked this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of the use of this road? The informant replied: “I use Psalm 138:7 and it reads thus: ‘though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me’”. Again, I asked the informant this question: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The informant answered:

Yes I do believe that both God and my ancestors protect me on this road at the same time and I base this belief on this understanding – Both my ancestors and I came into this world because of God’s will. God is my ultimate protector and my own ancestors are my guardian angels used by God to protect me because I came into this world through them (my ancestors).

Moving towards the end of the interview, I asked the informant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The interviewee replied:

Road accidents happen because of a combination of many factors. For instance, there is the use of vehicles which are not road worthy, reckless and negligent driving, evil intentions of other people, and neglecting to take care (through rituals) of spirits of relatives who died on the roads, that is, failure to bury people in accordance with African traditional customary rites.

I continued and asked this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? This is the response the informant gave me:

I think that the starting point ought to be that all the causes of road accidents that I have mentioned above need to be taken seriously by being given equal attention. After all, road accidents affect all of us in many ways. This would mean that there will be no point of view, religious or otherwise, that will be treated as weird and / or inferior.

My final question to the informant was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

I can say that using the Edendale Road helps me to have faith in myself and my ability to do the right thing on the road (to always obey the rules of the road), to have faith in God and my own ancestors, and to have faith in those people who have the gift of circumventing sorcery (*ubuthakathi*) including their evil intentions.

4. An encounter with a member of the Faith Mission Church

4.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is a forty one (41) year old male nurse who is employed at the Edendale Hospital. His place of residence is at Imbali Township unit 18. He uses a bus as a means of transport seven days a week. The bus service is the most convenient, affordable, and direct means of transport for this informant, due to the geographical locations of both his place of residence and place of work. There are however, three other alternatives. A first alternative would be to use a kombi taxi to travel to the city first to the Imbali crossing and then take another taxi to the Edendale Hospital taxi rank. A second alternative would be to find a group of people from around his place of residence - enough to constitute a full load in a kombi taxi that will take them to the hospital and back seven days a week. A third alternative would be to buy his-own motor vehicle. Our first meeting was in a bus trip from the hospital to imbali. The interview took place during our second meeting at the informant's place of residence.

4.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the informant to tell me about the religious faith he adheres to and this was his response: “Of course I adhere to the Christian faith”. I then asked this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? And his response was: “Oh no! I adhere to the Christian faith only”. My next question was: Are you a member of a church, or any other religious community? If so, can you please specify? His reply was: “Yes, I am a member of the Faith Mission Church in Imbali Township unit 13”. I then asked this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The following explanation was his response:

If you look at the geographical locations of both the hospital and the place where I live and the way public transport is organized with regard to these two settlements, you will understand why the bus is the most convenient means of transport for people like me. The bus compared to kombi taxis, travels directly between the two settlements. Of course, a kombi taxi that can travel directly can also be available. The problem is that there are not enough people who work at the hospital seven days a week in our area so that a kombi taxi can have a full load of passengers. If I do not use the bus to get to work, I will have to be prepared to travel on at least four kombi taxis for a return trip to and from work each and every day. This will mean paying more money for transport and the possibility of arriving late at work in some of the days. Now, if you look at the bus we are using, you can see that its road worthiness is questionable – some of its tyres have no threads, they are clearly worn out. We are very fortunate that we have so far not experienced a road accident, given this condition.

Moving on with my enquiry, I asked this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user, given the challenges you have just mentioned? The informant replied:

My faith has assisted me to understand that the time we are living in is tough. It has also helped me to understand the kinds of people we are dealing with, especially those responsible for providing public transport and those that are responsible for ensuring that the rules and regulations of the road are adhered to. This understanding has made it easy for me to pray for all those involved in the road public transport sector – owners of buses and kombi taxis, drivers, passengers and the government officials responsible for road traffic management and control in terms of law enforcement.

I then asked the informant this question: If you perform rituals connected with your use of the road could you please answer the following questions: What are these rituals? Where are they performed? And, what benefit do you think they will achieve? The interviewee replied:

The only ritual I perform is prayer. I pray at home, on the road while I am travelling, at work and during our Sunday worship services. I believe that prayer can empower all those involved in public transport to act appropriately for the benefit of all road users. Each and every one of us needs to do what God is calling us to do each day. Owners of public transport need to provide the public with reliable vehicles, drivers to do their job with great care and consideration, traffic police to do their job without favour or prejudice, and passengers and other road users to make it easy for drivers to do their job properly without any disturbance. In other words, we must all make meaningful contribution for the safety of us all in our own small ways.

My next question was this one: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? This is how the informant responded:

Yes. My favourite religious text is: Romans 13: 11-14: 'Further, there is this; realize what time it is, that it is now high time to be awakened from sleep; for now your salvation is nearer than when you believed. The night is far gone; the day is near. So, then, let us put away the works of darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the weapons of light. Let us walk in loveliness of life, as those who walk in the day, and let us not walk in revelry or drunkenness, in immorality and in shamelessness, in contention and in strife. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a man puts on a garment and stop living a life in which your first thought is to gratify the desires of Christ-less human nature.

I then asked the informant this question: Do you believe that only God protects you on this road, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The informant replied: "Well, only God has the love and mercy, the authority and the power to protect and save us from the perils of the road – he inspires people using the road to do right in many ways".

As I was about to bring the interview to a close, I asked this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

Road accidents are the result of the sins of revelry, drunkenness, envy, contention and disobedience of the road traffic rules and regulations. Vehicles which are not road worthy are sometimes deliberately put on the road to transport human beings and thus, putting their lives in danger.

I continued with my enquiry: What then do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

If we really want to put an end to problems associated with road accidents, we then need to recommit ourselves to the teachings contained in the word of God and then stop engaging in sinful behaviour.

My final question was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

I have no doubt that using the Edendale Road does indeed help my faith in the sense that both my mind and my heart are focused on God most of the time - given the challenges I face on the road on a daily basis.

5. An encounter with a faith healer

5.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is a sixty (60) year old male from KwaPata, one of the sections of the Edendale Township. He is a former high school principal who had retired two years after he had received a calling to become a faith healer. I came to know about this person from a neighbour who had been working under the informant as an educator for about ten years. Even though, the informant is now working full-time as a faith healer, he is also involved in transporting school children from Edendale to schools in town and in Northdale five days a week. The interview was conducted at the informant's place of residence.

5.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the informant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Do you adhere to the Christian faith or to African Traditional Religion or to both? The informant replied: "I adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion". I followed this up with this question: Are you a member of a church or other religious community? If so, can you please specify? The informant replied: "Yes, I am a member of the Zionist Church at KwaDambuza".

I then asked the informant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? This is how he responded to this question:

There is too much congestion of cars during peak hours and this leads to a lack of patience and tolerance among drivers which sometimes result in unnecessary road accidents, that is, accidents which could easily be avoided. Such situations also cause unnecessary delays for all of us road users.

I then enquired further: How does your faith assist you as a road user, given the challenges you have just mentioned? The informant replied:

My faith has helped me to understand that the most important reason we are all using the road is that we are all trying to survive. My faith has also taught me that when we become impatient with each other on the road and allow intolerance to overcome us, we are actually allowing ourselves to work against our own desire to survive. It has therefore, taught me about the need to become one of those road users who are prepared to lead the way by showing tolerance all the time on the road, so that even those who are stubbornly intolerant might learn from us.

I continued with my enquiry: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road could you answer the following questions: What are these rituals? Where are they performed? And, what benefit do you think they will achieve? The informant responded:

The rituals I usually perform in connection with my use of the road are prayer and the sprinkling of my motor vehicle with holy water and also I sometimes sprinkle it with herbal medicines (*izintelezi*), prepared from a group of succulent plants. I pray at home and on the road while driving. The ritual of sprinkling the vehicle is done at home before I embark upon road travel. Prayer gives me peace of mind so that I am able to drive responsibly and cautiously. The sprinkling of the vehicle with holy water and herbal medicines chases away evil spirits and prevents bad spells which might confuse me on the road so that I end up being involved in a road accident. You must understand that it is easy for jealousy to creep in within a highly competitive working environment like ours, where we compete for passengers. If it happens that I am able to get more clients than some of the people who are involved in the same business I am, someone might be tempted to use harmful mysterious forces and powers to destroy me.

After this explanation, I asked the informant the following question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The informant replied: "Of course yes, there are words in the Book of Daniel 3: 95, 96 which have become a great inspiration for me as a road user. These are the words I am talking about:

...Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel to deliver the servants that trusted in him...there is no other God who can rescue like this.

After quoting the above text, the informant added:

The road is meant to help us improve our social and economic life. This text is meant to remind us that when God is in charge of our lives, nothing can stop us from making our lives better.

I also added this question for the informant: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The informant responded:

Yes, proverbs in *isiZulu* culture provide me with important religious insights about African traditional religious beliefs and practices. One of those proverbs says: 'iDlozi liyabhekela' (it is necessary to maintain a close relationship with ancestors). Such a relationship is sustained through rituals.

I then asked the informant another question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

I know that there generally accepted modern and scientifically proven explanations about what causes road accidents. At the same time, in African traditional religious cultures we have the following very strong beliefs: 1) that a person's own ancestors can cause road accidents when they are provoked or when they treated with respect. 2) Belief that some people among us cause road accidents by deploying certain mysterious forces and powers through the practice of magic or witchcraft. My faith adopts the view that says that both perspectives are equally correct about the causation of road accidents, and that is the explanation that I also embrace.

My final question to the informant was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the Edendale Road Help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

I can say that using this road does help my faith in the sense that although there are stumbling blocks, I personally have become more understanding and tolerant of other road users. This is because I have come to realize that there is more than meets the eye when it comes to causes of road accidents. Some of them are not as obvious as those that are openly talked about every day.

6. Conclusion

In this field report, just like in some of the previous reports, there appears to be an emphasis once again, on the point that when it comes to situations of real danger on the road, people simply resort to African traditional religious beliefs and practices. It also does not seem to matter whether people adhere to the Christian faith, or that they embrace humanist tendencies as well as Christian religious tendencies and African traditional religious tendencies. The most important thing appears to be getting protection from the perils of the road and not where does that protection come from.

Field Report Number 15

1. Introduction

In this field report I present interview responses from three informants. These are the people I interviewed about their religious beliefs and practices in relation to their use of the Edendale Road network. All the three informants were subjected to the same kinds of questions, just like all the other interviewees in the previous reports. This has been done in order to accumulate a variety of responses about religious beliefs and practices with regard to travel on the Edendale Road and its access roads. In the next section I begin by presenting interview responses from a believer who is a member of the Salvation Army. This is followed by responses from a believer who is a member of the Welcome Church. The final interview responses in this report come from a believer who is a member of the Church of the Twelve Apostles.

2. An encounter with a member of the Salvation Army

2.1 Background information

The informant in this section is a thirty seven (37) year old male security guard. He is an employee in one of the security companies within the Pietermaritzburg CBD. Although his family resides at eMafakatini (a semi-rural settlement within the Zwartkop area), he himself has been living in Edendale (KwaMachibisa, another section of Edendale) as a tenant for the past five years. He uses kombi taxis to travel from Edendale to his place of work seven days a week. The interview took place at the informant's place of residence in Edendale.

2.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the informant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian religious faith, or African Traditional Religion, or any other faith? The interviewee gave this reply: "I adhere to the Christian faith". My next question was this one: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this?

The informant waited for a while and then gave this response:

Yes it is possible. It is a long story, but I will try as much as I can to keep it short. There was a time in my life when things were not going right for me. I lost my job. I got separated from a woman I was planning to marry. The room I was renting was broken into and many of my belongings were stolen. I had never experienced something like this before in my life. Suddenly and within a short space of time, my life was a mess. One of my former work colleagues suggested that I go and see a faith healer (*umThandazi*). This colleague told me that the faith healer he was recommending had helped a lot of people before, people who had experienced misfortune more or less similar to mine. I visited the faith healer. She performed a divination ritual. Then she told me that the cause of my misfortune was one of my ancestors. The ancestor was not happy about me because I had never bothered to involve my ancestors in my entire adult life. The faith healer then warned me that if I do not do something about this very soon to appease my ancestors, something more terrible will happen to me. She then advised me to go to my family home – where I was born and bred. She asked me to bring the following things to her: *uMulo* (ash which accumulates in a chimney), *iZibi*²⁷⁵ (domestic waste which comes from sweeping floors at home), together with a red cock, as well as two red candles. The faith healer told me that she will perform a ritual on my behalf to appease my angry ancestor. I was also told that after the performance of the ritual I will be freed from the misfortune because a harmonious bond will be created between us. I delayed about a week before I went home as instructed. When I had decided on the day I was to leave for home, I went to town to withdraw money from my savings account. On the way to town, the kombi taxi I was traveling in had a tyre burst and it overturned three times before it stopped. Most of the passengers received severe injuries. I do not know how it happened that I and a couple of other passengers got minor injuries. Now, that is the reason why I adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. Later on the faith healer told me that I was lucky to escape the road accident without serious injuries. She further reiterated that any further delay would cause me more suffering and that I might not be so lucky then.

My next question to the informant was this one: Are you a member of a church or any other religious community? If so can you please specify? The informant replied: “Yes, I am a member of the Salvation Army Church in Pietermaritzburg”. Again, I asked the informant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The informant replied:

Worry, anxiety and sometimes fear are my major challenges as a road user. When a kombi taxi I am travelling in is speeding and the driver is not showing any sign of slowing down, I am sometimes reminded of the accident experience I have just told you about. When that happens, a lot of questions come into my mind – what if a tyre bursts? What if I experience another road accident again? What if I do not survive this time? A kombi taxi trip can sometimes become a painful experience for me, especially if a driver shows signs of reckless, negligent, and / or inconsiderate driving.

²⁷⁵ The informant told me that the faith healer gave this explanation about the significance of *uMulo* and *iZibi* with regard to relationship between the living relatives and their ancestors: “these things constitutes *insila yasekhaya* (family “dirt” in a positive sense) in the sense that they and all the other family belongings including clothing and every household item are a part of *insila yasekhaya* because they have been permeated by the aura of family spirits.

I then posed this question to the informant: How does your faith assist you as a road user?

The informant replied:

My faith assists me by reminding me of the endless love God has for me and the love he has for whole of the human race. It also helps me to remember that God has a plan for me and that he saved me before for a reason. This leads me to come to this conclusion – that as long as God’s plan is not yet accomplished in my life, there is no way that he cannot save me from the perils of the road. All I need to do is to live in hope and trust in his love, mercy and power.

I then enquired further: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road, could you please answer the following questions: What are these rituals? Where are they performed? And, what benefits do you think they will achieve? The informant replied:

I pray about my own safety and the safety of all other road users. I also perform an incense burning ritual when I need to communicate my concerns and fears to my ancestors and to ask them to accompany me on my road travel trips. I usually pray in my room where I stay. I also pray on the road while travelling, at work and during a church service. I only perform the incense burning ritual where I stay. This is a very private ritual. There is no better benefit than knowing that I am not alone in my daily struggles. The burdens of life become lighter when I have performed these rituals. I get spiritually and emotionally stronger. The worries and fears go away.

I continued probing once again: Who are these rituals performed to? The informant replied:

I pray to God the Father, I pray to Jesus and I pray to the Holy Spirit. Because of the experience I have told you about, I have learned the it is very important for me to as an African not to forget where I come from, that I come from a long line of ancestral family spirits. I have also learned that culture related problems need cultural solutions and that it can be very dangerous for me to deny the reality of my connection with my own ancestors.

I then said to the informant: Is it possible that you can share with me what happened once you have brought the things you were asked to bring to the faith healer? The informant explained:

The ritual was performed at the faith healer’s place. I was provided with a large bathing basin and a bucket full of bathing water. I was also given a liter of holy water and all the things I had been asked to collect from home. I was sent to a secluded place in a nearby bush and asked to mix all those things with bathing water together with some herbal medicines. I had been instructed to bath my whole body to cleanse me from all misfortune (*isinyama*). After that, I had to dig a hole on the ground where I had taken a bath. The red cock’s head was cut with a knife and its stomach was also cut to reveal its entrails. Then the cock was placed into the “grave” without removing any part of it including feathers. The two red candles were placed on either parts of the “grave” and they were lighted. I was advised that I must allow the candles to burn until they were no more. I should then bury the cock by replacing the soil. I had also been advised that while the candles were

burning, I should talk to my ancestors and ask them to remove all misfortune in my life and also ask them to help me live a harmonious life. It was the first time in my life that I had to undergo an experience like that one. My life was upside down and I had to do something in order to have my life return to normality again. I am happy that I listened when someone advised me to go and see a faith healer. I have never had any major problems in my life ever since.

My next question to the informant was this one: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The informant replied: “One of the most important religious for me is 2 Timothy 2:19” – ‘The Lord knows those who are his own’. Then the informant continued: “This text reminds me that even when I am embarking upon road travel and faced with all kinds of troubles, I still belong to God and I am one of God’s people”. I then asked the informant this question: Do you believe that both God and your ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, if so, what is the basis of this belief? This is how the informant responded to this question:

Yes, I do believe that both God and my ancestors protect me on the Edendale Road at the same time. God created me and brought me into this world through my ancestors. It was God himself who chose for me who my ancestors should be. God loves me and my ancestors also love me and therefore, both of them are bound to protect me at the same time when I am faced with danger or any harm. If my ancestors are happy with me then, nothing can harm me. At the same time, God is always merciful to those who belong to him.

I then followed this up with this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

Road accidents fall under the category of things that cannot be correctly dealt with unless the atmosphere is right and unless the attitudes in our society are also right. In more than three quarters of the Edendale Road the road traffic police are invisible – that is was I mean by a wrong atmosphere. There is also the tendency of talking about the road as if the road is the most cursed place on earth. For instance, when parents are upset with their own children, it is not unusual to hear a parent threatening his or her disobedient child with these words: “I will throw you onto the road”. Now, why are we surprised when some people are intolerant, rude, reckless and inconsiderate on the road, when children are taught from an early age that the road is the place where a person can do whatever he, or she want. Again, some of our drivers stop obeying the road traffic rules and regulations immediately after getting their driving licenses. And from that time on, they do as they please. I believe that religion can help a lot in this regard.

My final question to this informant was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

I am of the opinion that using the Edendale Road helps my faith to grow each and every day because it is not unusual to be confronted with different and sometimes very scary challenges which put one’s faith to the sternest of tests.

3. An encounter with a member of the Welcome Church

3.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is a forty one (41) year old male who is employed in the construction industry within the city of Pietermaritzburg. His place of residence is at eMadakaneni (the place of mud). This part of the Edendale Township was given this name by local people because every house in it was a mud house. The participant uses kombi taxis as a means of transport six days a week to get to work. At the time of the interview, we were meeting for the second time. The interview took place at the informant's place of residence.

3.2 The interview

I began the interview by asking the informant this question: *Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith? Is it the Muslim faith, or is it African Traditional Religion?* The informant replied: "Well, I adhere to the Christian faith". I then followed this up by asking this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The informant replied:

If I understand your question correctly, I do not mix, for example, Christian religion and African Traditional Religion. However, I do mix certain religious beliefs and practices from different denominations within Christian religion.

The above response took me by surprise and I asked the informant to explain more about this. This is how he responded:

Let me start by saying that I am a full member of a revival church group referred to as the Welcome Church in Edendale. At the same time, I am carrying a rosary around my neck given to me by a former girl friend who is a member of the Roman Catholic Church. It has become part of me because everywhere I go I wear it. I was told that it was going to help me whenever I am confronted by troubles in my life. I may not understand much about the rosary but I am satisfied that wearing it day and night has brought great relief in my life.

Just out of curiosity because I adhere to the Roman Catholic Faith myself, I asked the informant this question: Is it possible that other members of your church have seen you wearing a rosary, if so, how have they reacted? The informant replied:

Yes, they have seen me wearing it several times and they have said nothing, probably because they understand that it is an accepted Christian symbol which does not contradict Christian teachings from any Christian church or denomination. But more importantly, the name of our church is Welcome – it suggests that it is a church that accepts any person and any teaching and any Christian symbol associated with the good news of Jesus Christ.

I then asked the informant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The informant replied:

Fear and anxiety are the main things that trouble me. This is due to the fact that I survived a road accident a couple of years ago. Sometimes, when I am travelling in a kombi taxi, I find myself thinking about that experience. I was travelling to work early one morning and I remember hearing the conductor telling the driver to rush and be the first to reach passengers who were about fifty meters away in one of the feeder roads before another kombi reaches them first. The driver of our kombi then just turned as quickly as he could. Unfortunately, it collided with another vehicle traveling on the other part of the dual Edendale Road. The next thing I remember is that I woke up in Hospital with a slightly fractured leg. I realized that I as one of the lucky passengers when I learned afterwards that two other passengers in the same kombi taxi had died. I was in hospital for about three weeks before I was discharged. It is difficult to erase completely the memory of this experience in my life.

I continued with the enquiry and asked the informant this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The informant replied:

My faith helps me to trust in the love and mercy of God, and to understand that anything that happens in my life happens for a reason. I have no doubt that without faith in God, any person who has had a similar experience as mine might be tempted never to embark upon travel again.

I then asked the informant this question: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of this road could you please answer the following questions? What are these rituals? Where are they performed? And, what benefit do you think they will achieve? The informant replied:

I pray and of course, I wear the rosary. I normally pray at home before I leave for work and after I have arrived back from work. I also pray at our church during open prayer sessions. I carry the rosary everywhere I go. Prayer helps me to remain strong in faith and it reminds me of the love God has for me and that God really cares for me. I believe that the rosary helps to prevent misfortune from visiting me.

I continued and asked this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of the use of this road? The informant answered: “Yes, and the text that speaks to me with regard to my understanding of road use is Psalm 14: 1, 2”.

Fools say in their hearts, there is no God. Their deeds are loathsome and corrupt; not one does what is right. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the human race, to see if even one is wise, if even one seeks God.

I then asked the informant this question: In what way do you believe that God protects you on the Edendale Road? The informant replied:

I believe that God protects me by choosing for me a kombi taxi that is road worthy, each and every time I embark upon road travel on this road, a kombi taxi that is also driven by a driver who respects himself and his passengers and also one who is not reckless when driving.

As I was on the verge of closing the interview, I asked the informant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

Trsvelling is one of those areas of life where we usually think about God when something Bad has happened – when a road accident has happened. When things are going right, we usually forget about God. Travelling without God in our minds and hearts then leads to recklessness, greed and many other bad habits which then lead to road accidents. God needs us to make sure that he always becomes an important part of our road travelling life – in good times and in bad times.

I then asked the informant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The Informant replied:

Adopting Christian values which promote a right relationship between all classes of road users among themselves, a right relationship between all classes of road users and the road traffic officials and, a right relationship between God and each and every road user is the answer. We as road users need to understand that unless we take it upon ourselves to make an effort to make this a reality and a part of our life, road accidents will continue to haunt us.

My final question to the informant was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road helps or hinder your faith? The informant answered:

Yes, using the Edendale Road has helped my faith to grow stronger because I have realized that there are times and situations where and when I am powerless to do anything, except to trust in the love and the mercy and the power of God.

4. An encounter with a member of the Church of the Twelve Apostles

4.1 Background Information

The informant in this section is a thirty nine (39) year old female from Imbali Unit J. The informant was recommended to me by my former neighbour who is a member of the same church as the informant. The latter is employed as a prison warder at the New Pietermaritzburg Prison. The interview took place at the informant's place of residence as agreed in our first meeting.

4.2 The interview

I began the interview by asking the informant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? The informant replied: "I adhere to the Christian religious faith". The second question I asked the informant was this one: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The informant answered: "No, I have no reason to adhere to any other faith other than the Christian faith". I continued to ask the informant this question: Are you a member of a church, or other religious community? If so can you please specify? The informant answered: "of course, I am a member of the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Edendale" (*Ngiyilunga lebandla labaPostoli abayishumi nambili elase Edendale*).

I then asked the informant again this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The informant replied:

I can say that there appears to be a lack of concern for us passengers. This usually shows itself in that drivers and conductors appear to show concern when they want you to get into their kombi taxi. However, as soon you are inside a kombi taxi, the respect is thrown out of the window. Sometimes a passenger is taken to task for paying with a hundred rand note for example, and the conductor says: "where do you think I will get change for such a large amount of money?" This is what happened to me once and the result was that I arrived late at work because was dropped three or four taxi stops away from the one closest to my work place. Of course, not all of them behave in this way, but when it happens, it becomes very embarrassing and frustrating. The most frightening part about this is, the realization that when a driver becomes upset, the thought that he might cause a road accident become rooted in my mind.

I then asked the informant this question: Given what you have just told me, how does your faith assist you as a road user? The informant replied:

I can say that it is in facing trials and challenges and also to have the ability to withstand their negativity that I can be able to determine whether or not my faith is of help to me as a road user. My faith reminds me about the value of forgiveness and also it gives me strength to bear whatever

trouble comes my way in the course of road travel. It helps me to remain calm whenever I am faced with a difficult situation.

Continuing with my enquiry, I asked the informant this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of this road could you please answer these questions: What are these rituals? Where do you perform them? Who are these rituals performed to? And, what benefit do you think they will achieve? The informant answered:

It is usually prayer and the use of holy water. I pray at home, I pray during my road travel trips, I pray at work and I also pray during open prayer sessions in our church. I use holy water at home only. I pray to God the father, to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit. The use of holy water has the benefit of preventing evil spirits from bringing misfortune in my life. As far as prayer is concerned, I do not just pray for myself only. I also pray for every road user, that there might be understanding and respect on the road, that there might be patience, tolerance and consideration in all of us road users.

Moving on with my enquiry, I asked the informant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The informant replied: “Yes I do. The text which speaks to me in a profound way is 2 Chronicles 20: 3, 5, 6, 9, 12”:

Jehoshaphat was frightened and he hastened to consult the Lord.... He stood in the house of the Lord and said: ‘Lord, God of our fathers.... In your hand is, power and might, and no one can withstand you. When evil come upon us, the sword of judgement...we will stand before you, and, we will cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save! O our God...we are powerless...we are at a loss what to do, hence our eyes are turned towards you’.

After this, I asked the informant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

Road accidents in the form of bad or horrible death, serious or severe injuries are evil, because they are against life and human wellness. After a horrible accident, people, especially those involved in it, get confused. That is why in most cases drivers who have survived such a road accident usually run away from the scene of the accident. Evil confuses people. That is how I can explain road accidents from the point of view of my faith.

I continued and asked the informant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The informant replied:

It will always be necessary to warn drivers not to drink and drive, not to speed, in short – not to break the rules of the road. However, we also need to make our drivers aware how much they are valued and needed by society and by the communities they are serving. They need to know that we all love them and we appreciate their social contribution. After this we can present to them our expectations – what we expect from them as an important component of our society.

My final question to the informant was this one: In balance and from a general perspective, does using this road help or hinder your faith? The informant replied:

Travelling is one of the most risky businesses undertaken by human beings today. Sadly, we all cannot do without road travel. It is the uncertainty and the vulnerability that are inherent in using this road or any other road that helps my faith to grow strong each and every day. It is because of the above difficult conditions that I usually find myself seeking God's protection and care.

5. Conclusion

In this field report I have presented responses from three informants. Each one of them presented to me what he or she thinks, believes, and understands about the experience of road travel from their own faith perspective. This is helpful because the purpose of conducting these interviews is to have a variety of views and perspectives about road travel experience from a faith perspective.

Field Report Number 16

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present interview conversations I had with three adherents. One of the participants adheres in a very strict sense to the Christian faith. The other two participants adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. Although one of the other two participants puts more emphasis on African Traditional Religion, the use of the Bible by his church suggests that the Christian religious faith or some parts of it are used and valued by the participant's church. Although the interviews were conducted in isiZulu language, I have tried my best to translate the conversations into English in a way that reflects the expressions of the participants as much as possible. The field report ends with my personal reflection on some of the key points which struck me from the responses of the participants.

2. An encounter with a member of the African Christian Church

2.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a female Educator at a primary school in eMafakatini – which is part of the Swaartkop area. This area is located beyond the Western side of the Edendale Township and beyond the Henley Dam. The participant resides in Edendale and she uses both buses and kombi taxis as means of transport to travel work and back for five days a week. In the morning, she uses a bus to travel from Eddendale to the school where she is working. After school, she again travels on a bus which at this time, go via Howic to the city of Pietermaritzburg. The participant then uses a kombi taxi to travel to her place of residence. This travelling routine has been going on for almost ten year now. The interview was conducted at the participant's place of residence.

2.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it Christian; or Muslim; or African Traditional Religion; or any other? The participant replied: "I adhere to the Christian faith". My next question was this: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant answered: "Yes, I do adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion".

I again asked the participant: Is there any special reason for this? The participant responded:

I was brought up in a family which valued African Traditional Religion and especially, those parts of this religion, which contribute in the enhancement of my life and the life of my relatives.

I further asked the participant: Are you a member of a church / or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant replied: “Yes, I am a member of the African Christian Church - one of the oldest churches in Edendale”.

Continuing with my enquiry, I then asked the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

My being on the road for almost more than an hour during peak hours in the morning and again, in the afternoon every week day is more than enough to drive any person crazy. Moreover, the persistent thoughts of what if a road accident happens and the anxiety which accompany those thoughts especially; when the weather is really bad.

I then said to the participant: Given the challenges you have just mentioned, how does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded:

My faith helps to keep me calm each and every day I am on the road and it makes it possible for me to focus on the most important reason for my travelling – teaching children in one of the places where many in my profession would not go to if given a choice. At other times, I am also reminded of the fact that I have been on this same journey for a number of years now, simply because I have chosen to stay on in spite of the difficulties associated with travelling to get to my place of work.

Moving on with my enquiry, I asked the participant this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant answered:

The rituals I perform in connection with my use of the road are prayer and the burning incense which is accompanied by a verbal communication and an appeal from my ancestors to accompany me on a trip to my place of work and back. Once the incense is burning, I mention all our family clan names – izithakazelo and then say: here I am your daughter – so and so, I am going to work now. I am again asking you – mentioning one or two family clan names again, to accompany me on my journey to work so that I could be safe from all possible dangers on the road.

My next question was: Where are these rituals performed? The participant replied: “Both of them are performed at home. However, I also pray on the road while travelling and sometimes, I also pray at work”.

I continued asking the participant: What benefit do you think they will achieve? The participant responded:

Performing the rituals give me the assurance that I am not facing problems of life all by myself – there is God and family members whom God chose for me and both are taking care of me in their different ways.

I then asked the participant this further question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Yes, I do. The text I like most with regard to road use is from the prophet **Isaiah 26:3** – “Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusts in thee”. Now, I understand the road as a place where peace is very scarce, where our minds and hearts are ruled by fear and anxiety.

I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The participant responded: “Oh no. I only use texts from the Christian Bible. It has everything that I need to assist me in understanding life experiences and more”.

My next question was this: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The participant replied:

Yes I do, but my understanding is that my ancestors intercede for me to God because in actual fact, God is the one who has the ultimate power to protect me. It was God who chose that I come into this world through my own ancestors. So it is important for me to connect with them consistently because they are my own and neglecting them would mean that I have no one beyond this life to intercede for me.

Now, moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

Road accidents are caused by a number of different factors; some of the road accidents are caused by human negligence, recklessness and greed; yet others by mechanical failure and road conditions and others still, by natural circumstances like bad weather. The first three have human beings as a common denominator. For instance; it is us who are reckless on the road, it is us who use vehicles which are more likely to fail mechanically and it is also us who create bad conditions on our roads –human beings are the main contributors of road accidents.

I then said to the participant: Now, given your explanation about the causes of road accidents; what do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

What is needed is a new kind of a road user, one who is enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit of God. A number of road accidents happen because many road users want to do what they like, without being considerate of the effect this would have on the other road users. Different religious faiths can contribute immensely in this regard, by making efforts at changing attitudes and behaviours on the road.

My last question to the participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered:

My faith has given me the strength and courage to persevere and wake up every week day to go to work, even though there are problems associated with travelling to my work place and back. So, I can say without hesitation that as a result of using the road, my faith has grown and I in turn, am becoming a responsible and an understanding road user and a better person.

3. An encounter with an adherent to African Traditional Religion

3.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a male kombi taxi driver. The kombi taxi he drives transports passengers, from the Edendale Township to the city of Pietermaritzburg every week. I was motivated to ask this driver to allow me to interview him, for the purposes of our study project, because of the words written on the back of the kombi taxi he drives. These are the words which attracted me to make an interview request: *Nkosi mayingenzeki intando yabafisela mina nomdeni wami okubi* – Lord may the will of those who wish evil for me and my family not be done. I also noticed that in addition to these words, there was a picture of Isaiah Shembe (the founder of aManazaretha Church), pasted just above the words. The picture of Isaiah Shembe who is popularly referred to as: *'iNkosi yasekuphakameni'* – the Lord or the King of eKuphakameni by adherents; completed the resolve on my part, to try to secure an interview with the driver. The interview took place at the eMgodini taxi terminal under the building now known as Sibusiso Nyembezi Centre in Pietermaritzburg.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it Christian; or Muslim; or African Traditional Religion; or any other? The participant replied: “I adhere to African Traditional Religion”. I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this? The participant answered:

No. I believe in following African Traditional Religion because it is rooted in our culture. Moreover, this religion promotes and respects beliefs, traditions and values handed down to us by our forebears.

My next question to the participant was this: Are you a member of a church, temple, or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant responded: Yes, I am a member of the Nazareth Church in Edendale. I continued with the inquiry by asking the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

The taxi industry is a very competitive industry. Many people in this industry accept competitiveness as a normal way of doing business. There are however; a few who will do anything to be the only ones who are successful – they will want to take passengers who do not belong to them (we normally work on a first come first served basis), they will swear and curse because they do not want to be surpassed, they will even use black magic and cast bad spells on those they regard as being more successful than them. Such bad spells can make someone targeted to cause a road accident. For instance, I can suddenly see a goat or a cow in front of me from out of nowhere, while I am driving. When I try to avoid hitting the animal in front of me, I can crash on another car or a pole or something else.

I followed this weird explanation up by asking this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user to deal with the challenges you have just mentioned? The participant answered:

My faith has taught me that as long as I am committed to the teachings of the Nazareth Church and Isaiah Shembe, nothing can ever harm me. In our church, we are encouraged to embrace African traditional ways of dealing with anything which is a threat to our life.

I went further and asked the participant: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals?

The participant replied:

I cannot give you the details of the rituals I use with regard to the rituals I use in connection with my use of the road. The reason for this is that it might happen that the information comes to the attention of people whose intention is to destroy other people, like me for instance. That can surely empower them at our own expense. The only thing I can tell you about this matter of rituals is that one of the important rituals I perform has to do with *ukuqiniswa kwami* – to be made strong, in such a way that whatever magical spell is directed at me goes back to its owner and harm him or her and not me. This is what is called in our isiZulu language – *sibashaya ngezabo* (to beat a person at his or her own game or to return the ‘favour’ by striking or harming an enemy with his or her own weapons). There is no better way of dealing with evil actions of others than this.

My next question to the participant was: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant responded:

Yes I do. My favourite text is: **Psalm 20:7** – ‘Some rely on chariots, others on horses, but we on the name of the Lord our God’. This text helps me to understand that the road environment is sometimes a battleground, where the forces of evil and good are at odds with each other.

I then said to the participant: Is this the reason why the kombi taxi you are driving has those words of prayer written on its back? The participant replied:

Yes. I believe that the will of God’s will is that all of us working in the taxi industry, ought to work in harmony for the benefit of ourselves, our loved ones, our passengers and the economy of our country. There are other people however; whose will is contrary to this will of God.

I continued with my enquiry: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religion? If so why? The participant answered:

African Traditional Religion has a wealth of texts in the form of proverbs from our language in isiZulu. Those proverbs were created by our forebears out of life experiences. One of these says: *isiKhuni sibuya noMkhwezeli* – a dangerously burning log is more likely to burn a fire minder.

I went further and asked the participant: Do you believe that God / or the ancestors / Spirits /Divinities / other spiritual powers and forces help to protect you on the Edendale Road? The participant responded:

I believe that my ancestors will always protect me; as long as the relationship between me and my family members on the one hand and our ancestors on the other hand, is not broken. This relationship can be broken, when some family members become Christians for example, and then decide to adopt Christian burial rituals, to the total exclusion of African traditional rituals. If one of our family members dies on the road by a car accident or any other cause and, our rituals are

not done, the result is – angry ancestors and a roaming family spirit causing havoc on the road. If on the other hand, the burial is done according to our traditional cultural practices, then there will have harmony between our family and those who have passed on. This is how I understand that my ancestors and other family spirits help to protect me on the road – when there is harmony or when a broken relationship has been mended through appeasement. The king of ekuPhakameni – Isaiah Shembe is always looking out for me and all those who are faithful adherents, to help protect us from any danger which might befall us. The fact that I have an unbroken relationship with my ancestors means that, they communicate with God on my behalf so that God can protect me in case of a lurking danger.

With the intention of bringing this interview to a close, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

There are different causes of road accidents; some are due to sheer negligence, other are as a result of mechanical failure, bad weather, disobeying the rules of the road. Yet still, many others are as a result supernatural powers (neglected family spirits) as well as, other human beings employing magical or evil powers.

I enquired further: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

African people in particular, ought to respect their own cultural ways of doing things. Those who have adopted Christianity and other religions ought to understand that to neglect to perform African traditional religious rituals in certain circumstances, can cause more pain and misery for the families concerned. Africans are generally people who believe in a consistent harmonious relationship with those of their own who have passed on. Keeping this relationship at a sustainable level through customary rituals can help prevent many unnecessary deaths and injuries on the roads.

My last question to the participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

I have no doubt that using the road does help my faith to grow. It always drives me to seek understand and to find answers, to the most important questions in my life, like – who am I, where do I come from and how is my relationship with those around me and those who brought me into this world and so on.

4. An encounter with an adherent to the Christian faith

4.1 Background information

I first met the participant in this section at the iMbali kombi taxi rank in Pietermaritzburg. I had just joined one of the passenger queues, and I was wondering whether or not I will be lucky enough, to find a passenger who will be willing to participate fully in our study project interview. So, I decided to say something that was more likely to draw the attention of the two people in front and behind me in the queue. I then said: “I am not

sure whether or not I have joined the right queue”. The woman in front of me responded first by asking: “Where are you going?” I replied: iMbali Unit J. She smiled and said: “Do not worry you are not lost...” and, she continued as an after thought: “if you have not forgotten the number of the house you are visiting, we can help you get off the kombi at the right place”. I mentioned the house number of someone I had interviewed before and she immediately responded by saying: “Our house is about five houses away from the house you are visiting”. This was how I got the opportunity to introduce our research project, once we had gotten off the kombi taxi we were travelling in. The interview took place at the participant’s house the following week.

4.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it Christian; or Muslim; or African Traditional Religion; or any other? The participant replied: “I adhere to the Christian faith”. I then followed this up by asking this second question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant answered:

No, it is not possible; the Christian faith is enough for me. I have nothing against other religions; the thing is that I was brought up by parents who were passionately committed to the Christian faith.

Moving further on, I again asked the participant: Are you a member of a church, or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant responded:

Yes, I am a member of Saint Martins Anglican Church in Edendale. I have been a member of this church since I was a baby. I can therefore safely say that, I grew up in it.

I continued with my enquiry: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

My biggest worry as a road user is the possibility of dying suddenly. This possibility of this happening is scary enough but, the thought of experiencing such a death, together with the idea that I might not even be well prepared to meet my maker at that moment is even scarier.

After this, I asked the participant: How then does your faith assist you as a road user, given your response to my previous question? The participant answered:

My faith has made me aware of the need to thank God every day I arrive home safely, without having experienced a road accident. I have learned to appreciate my life more, as well as, all those road users who contribute in making road usage safe by behaving well on the road.

Moving on to another level of my enquiry, I asked the participant: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant replied: "I only perform a prayer ritual in connection with my use of this road". Then: "Where do you perform this ritual?" The answer:

Mostly, I pray here at home before I go to work and after work. At other times, I pray at our church and sometimes I pray while travelling to work or while travelling from work.

Further: What benefit do you think your prayer ritual will achieve? The response:

It is not so much the question of achieving a benefit but rather; the desire to involve God in my life as a road user, just like I do with all the other aspects of my life. I believe that this is an important way of trying to constantly improve my relationship with God.

Then the last question on ritual performance: Who are they – the prayer rituals, performed to? The reply: "I offer my prayers to God, to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit?"

Moving on, I asked this question to the participant: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant answered:

Oh yes! The words which give me a better understanding of road usage come from **Psalm 127:1** – 'O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways'!

I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The participant replied:

No, it is not possible; in actual fact I do not think that I can find a text from other religions which can give me a better understanding of road usage than the words from the psalm I have just mentioned. People do wrong things on the road because they do not fear even God these days. Then the next thing they do is to do as they please on the road, without any regard of the danger their actions pose on other road users.

Before I asked my next question, I said to the participant: Your responses up to this far suggest that you do believe that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit help to protect on this

road. If that is so, could you tell me; in what ways do you believe this help happen? The participant answered:

That is correct; I believe that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit do inspire some of the drivers for example, to do their job of driving in a manner that respects passengers, other road users and the laws of the road. In this way I and many others get protected from danger.

I then continued with my enquiry: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

Road accidents happen because there some of us – road users, want to behave like masters of the road environment, who are not only above the laws of the road, but they are convinced that they are even above Christian values. As long as there are road users who insist on following their own ways on the road, road accidents will persist. The laws of the road alone are failing to help make our roads safe.

I followed this up with this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

The Christian faith together with its message ought no longer, be taken lightly any more; it can make a very important contribution to safe road usage. We need to seriously and honestly reflect on how we can follow God's ways as road users who want to make our roads safe.

In closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

Each time I use the road, my faith is challenged to become more than it was before. This is made possible by the fact that my being on the road forces to think about injuries, death, God's saving grace and power and moreover, to think about the kind of the relationship I have with God at a given moment. I can therefore say that using the road does help my faith a great deal.

5. Reflection

5.1 Introduction

In this section, I have selected the following issues to reflect upon: 1) Struggles, trials, temptations or challenges faced by the participants in this field report. 2) Faith based responses of the participants with regard to struggles and so on. 3) Ritual performance connected to the use of the road. 4) Religious texts chosen by the three participants. One of the reasons I adopted this approach was to determine whether or not there were any similarities, contradictions and perhaps; even controversial insights which can come out

of the four selected issues for reflection. This reflection exercise is done on each participant individually and with reference to the four selected issues as indicated above.

5.1 The first participant (ACC member)

The participant, who is a member of the African Christian Church (ACC), perceives travelling as a burdensome and dangerous undertaking. This sentiment is expressed in these words: “long peak hours on the road travelling to and from work. The result is worry, anxiety and fear of the possibility of danger – a road accident”. The participant’s faith assists in bringing calm and the ability to focus on the fact of the importance of her job – teaching no matter the circumstances. Perseverance is the key in spite of facing danger on the road each and every work day. Rituals performed by the participant includes: prayer to God for protection on the road and also, calling upon the assistance of the ancestors.

Communication with the ancestors is facilitated by the burning of incense and ‘talking’ to the ancestors – by stating all the concerns. It is important to note here that this idea of ‘talking’ to the ancestors and the manner it is done, appears to be the same as talking to God in prayer, or talking to a living person – who is alive and not dead. This for me; raises what I think, are two important questions which need to be reconsidered: Firstly; what does it really mean to say that the ancestors are the living – dead? Secondly; what is the real difference between saying the living Christ and saying the ancestors are the living – dead. If there is a difference, then, why does the way of communicating sounds the same?

The religious text chosen by the participant from the (ACC), points to the agency of the agency of a focused mind – a mind focussed on God. This focusing on God is a result of trust in God. The mind of this road user is driven to focus on and to trust in God because: peace is scarce on the road and the mind is threatened by fear and anxiety. God in turn protects this road user by replacing those threats with perfect peace. It seems to me that the religious text used by the (ACC) participant, gives us an indication as to why God is referred to as the living – God and also why Jesus is called the Living – Christ - there is

order in the way they deal with road users and all those who trust in them because their minds are focussed on them.

5.2 The second participant (ATR – Nazareth Church member)

In the case of this participant, again travelling is perceived as a burdensome undertaking. This sentiment is expressed by this claim; other road users (kombi taxi drivers / or operators), have evil intentions, they use magic powers which force perceived successful competitors to be involved in road accidents. However, although both the ACC and the ATR adherents perceive travelling as burdensome, the ATR inclined participant did not express concern. Instead, his first response was: We are encouraged to embrace African traditional ways of dealing with anything which is a threat in our life. And the second response was this revelation: *sibashaya ngezabo*. This latter response appears to me to be what I can call *protection by subtle vengeance*. This is because the participant protects himself from harm by becoming a malefactor – an evil – doer himself. If the intention of the first attacker was to make the targeted person to cause a road accident and the suffer the consequences, then, the protection ritual used, kind of *returns the 'favour'* to the one who started it. This however does not solve the problem of road accidents – instead of being reduced road accidents are made to persist.

When this participant was asked about whether he does use any religious text in his understanding of road use, he quoted **Psalm 20:7** - Some trusts in chariots and others in horses but we in the name of the Lord our God. Judging by the challenges this participant put forward, it appears as if, this his understanding of road use according to this text; is that the road is to him a battleground between the forces of evil and the forces of good. This understanding in turn, leads him to trust in God. The participant's practical response to the forces of evil directed at him – *sibashaya ngezabo*, however; suggests otherwise – that he in fact trusts in black magic more than he claims to trust in the name of God.

5.3 The third participant (adherent to Christian religion)

In the case of this participant, I get the sense that for her, being a Christian means that the goal of life is to prepare to go to heaven and to avoid going to hell. This according to this participant; ought to be done by having a good relationship with God. That is why the participant worries too much about the possibility of her experiencing sudden death on

the road, which may be caused by a road accident. I am of the opinion that her faith response to the challenges on the road suggest that this participant displays a benevolent spirit or attitude in dealing such challenges. The participant does not only pray for her own safety, she also prays for the safety of the other road users too. Lastly, the text used by this participant – **Psalm 127:1**, suggests that the participant understands the road as a place where God is not only just present, but where God is also involved in the lives of road users who invites Him by Walking in God's ways.

Field Report Number 17

1. Introduction

In this field report, I start by presenting views, opinions, religious beliefs and practices of four Edendale Road users from four different churches within the Christian faith. Each of the participants; has his or her own story related to our research project to share. One of the lessons for me associated with these four encounters is that a researcher is never 'off duty' and that he or she must always be ready to canvass participants or conduct interviews. The report ends with a reflection on the issues which have struck me, arising from the interviews themselves.

2. An encounter with an 'inactive' adherent to the Christian faith

2.1 Background information

I met the participant in this section by chance. I had just completed conducting an interview with another participant when one of her friends, arrived at that participant's house as visitor. Since the purpose of my own visit had already been accomplished and I had already excused myself and was ready to leave, the hosting participant suddenly suggested that I ask her friend to grant me an interview some other time. I did this and we agreed to meet after a week. This happened after I had explained about the research project I am involved in, as well as, about its aims and objectives and the kind of participants I was eager to interview. The participant in this section is a widow who lost her husband in a road accident while the latter was coming home from work. She is employed by an insurance company in Pietermaritzburg as a cleaner. The participant uses kombi taxis to travel from her place of residence (KwaDambuza), to work six days a week. The interview took place at the participant's house.

2.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or Muslim; or African Traditional Religion or any other faith? The participant responded:

I adhere to the Christian faith but I have not been very much active as a Christian since my husband was killed in a road accident about four years ago. What I am trying to say is this; I do

go to church now and then but I no longer attend church services as regularly as I used to do before my husband died.

I then continued with the inquiry: I cannot pretend to understand fully what you have been going through up now. If you will allow me to continue with the interview, I would like to ask you this next question: is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this? The participant replied:

If by this question you mean the performance of rituals associated with death and other life circumstances by us as an African family, which also adhere to the Christian faith, then yes I do adhere to two religious faiths at the same time. The main reason for this is that the performance of such rituals is something which has been done and passed on from generation to generations. Neglecting to do these things can make me or anyone concerned a laughing stock in the communities we live in. For instance; if I or my family experience any trouble or misfortune, people within my community will begin to gossip and say 'it serves her right that is what happens to people who do not respect our culture as Africans.' Some within the community can even call me a witch who is hiding behind the Christianity faith. It can be very difficult, living my life knowing that people are saying all these things behind my back.

I asked the participant again: Are you a member of a church or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered: "Yes, I am a member of the Assembly of God in Edendale". Moving on with the inquiry, I asked further: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant responded:

It has to be anxiety and fear. I suppose the death of my husband as a result of being knocked down by a car one fateful afternoon has got to do with these challenges. Sometimes while I am on the road either walking or travelling in a kombi taxi, I simply cannot avoid wondering if I also could be involved in a tragic road accident.

I then followed this up with this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? Given the challenges you have just mentioned. The participant replied:

When something tragic happens to a loved one, someone who had been one of the main pillars in a family setting and moreover; that person was also still at the prime of his life, then one's faith is tested beyond compare. I am slowly still recovering from the effects of a greatly shaken faith. It is a difficult struggle but I know that one day fear and anxiety will go away. My faith has helped me to learn to accept what has happened and it is also helping me to try to carry on with my life.

Moving on again, I asked the participant this question: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? Firstly; what are these rituals? The participant answered:

Payer is the main ritual which I have made it my duty not to miss to perform before and after travelling. I sometimes also burn incense and call upon my ancestors including my husband and make them aware about a travelling trip I am about to take by reciting family praises – iziThakazelo. I ask my ancestors to accompany me during a road travelling trip.

I continued: Secondly; where are these rituals performed? The participant responded:

They are both always performed at home and I also sometimes pray while travelling or at work and at our church during a church service. Praying outside of my home largely depends on frightening and dangerous experiences I encounter on the road in any particular day.

Then: What benefit do you think they will achieve? The participant replied:

I think that serenity through these rituals, especially for my mind and my soul, is what I am looking for. Anxiety and fear can be very much disempowering. Serenity on the other hand is capable of empowering me so much so that I do not feel hopeless and miserable each and every time I am travelling.

Moving on from asking about ritual performance, I enquired further: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant answered:

Yes, I do and it is **Psalm 23** which gives me a better understanding of road use – there is the possibility of the road becoming the shadow of death, sometimes there is fear and God is always needed to guide strengthen and protect each and every road user.

I then asked the participant this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from a different religion? If so why? The participant responded: “No, I only use texts drawn from the Bible”.

I followed up this response by asking this question: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors help to protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The participant answered:

Yes, I do believe that both God and my ancestors do protect me on this road. When I am talking about my ancestors, I am specifically referring to my late parents and grand parents. Those are my closest relatives whom God used to bring me into this world. They are the ones who brought me up and socialised me into the African way of life, as well as, the Christian faith. This belief is based on the understanding that my ancestors are closer to God now that they have passed on. This closeness to God makes it possible for them to plead with God on my behalf whenever I am faced with a dangerous situation. They loved me when they were still on this world and they wished that I ought to have a life free of hassles. I therefore believe that even in their afterlife, they are still taking care of me.

Now, moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

I can say that my faith tells me that road accidents are caused by four things. Firstly, there is a lack of self respect amongst some of the road users. I think that you will agree with me when I say that, a self respecting road user cannot drink and drive or drink and walk on the road. Secondly, there is a lack of respect for our own country, our families and our faiths and or our churches into which we belong. I mean, a road user who puts himself or others in danger by any reckless or inconsiderate means is actually disrespecting or betraying his or her own family's or country's values and so on. Thirdly, there is a lack of respect for those whom we love and those who love us. If a road user does really care about his or her loved ones, he or she might not be willing to do something wrong on the road that would affect not only himself or herself. Lastly, for me as a Christian, I believe that the presence of Jesus in our travel trips on the road is un-escapable – Jesus Christ is continually present on our road trips. This means that a road user who misbehaves on the road is actually disrespecting the protector of all life.

I then said to the participant: Given what you have just said, what do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

We ought to make our life within the road traffic environment witness to the fact that we respect ourselves, we respect our country and so on, we respect those whom we love and those who love us and to the fact that we respect our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

My last question to this participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered:

Using this road on a daily basis does help my faith to grow in the sense that it makes reflect on what is happening around me. It is a pity that religious views on road safety are not really taken as seriously as they ought to be by our society.

3. An encounter with a 'saved' (osindisiwe) adherent to the Christian faith

3.1 Background information

I met the participant in this section in one of the major retail stores in Pietermaritzburg. I had gone into the store to buy airtime for my cell phone. While I was still awaiting my turn to be served, I overheard the cashier inviting her colleague to accompany her to *enkonzweni* - a worship service in the coming weekend. I then used this information to introduce myself and my study as briefly as I could, as soon as I was in the front of the queue. The participant agreed to give me ten minutes of her lunch break time, in order to allow me to explain fully to her about my research project. After that short meeting, she also agreed to take part in a full interview in the following day. The participant uses

kombi taxis as a mode of transport six days a week. The interview took place at the Natal Society Library's public garden.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or Muslim; or African Traditional Religion or any other faith? The participant responded: "I adhere to the Christian faith – *ngisindisiwe*" (I am a saved Christian). My next question to the participant was this: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this? The participant answered:

To say that I am a saved Christian; means amongst other things that when I chose Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour I also renounced all other beliefs and practices which are not based on the Christian faith. So my answer to your question is no, I cannot be a true Christian and yet combine it with any other faith.

I then went on and enquired further: Are you a member of a church, or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant replied: "Yes, I am a member of The Will of God Ministries; in Edendale. Sikhonzela etendeni – our worship services take place in a tent". I proceeded with my inquiry: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant responded:

The other day I was in a kombi taxi travelling back home after work. There were three or so cars in front of our kombi when we the robot turned red. The driver of our kombi suddenly decided to move past the cars in front and drove through the red robot. That kind of behaviour is not good for us passengers. But what can we do because even shouts of asking the driver to slow down and 'we are not in a hurry' in this case; fell on deaf ears. We were really lucky not to have experienced a road accident that day. Of course not all the kombi taxi drivers are like this, but having an inconsiderate driver even once in a while, sometimes makes travelling on the road very much unbearable.

After this, I then asked the participant this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user, given what you have just told me? The participant replied:

The power of faith in the living God and our Saviour is one of the greatest and most precious gifts in our lives. I know that I am able to bear with experiences like the one I have just mentioned because of the faith I have in God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Moving on, I asked the participant this question: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant replied:

The only ritual connected with my use of the road I perform is prayer. I do not deny that I am an African born under African culture. The fact of the matter is that, by choosing Jesus Christ, as my Lord and saviour, means that African Religious beliefs and practices have no place in my life.

I continued along this line of enquiring about rituals: Where do you perform this prayer ritual? The participant answered: “I pray at home, while travelling, at work and at our place of worship”. Then: What benefit do you think prayer will achieve? The participant replied:

The Bible tells us that prayer can move mountains. So, with regard to road safety, I believe that even the most stubborn and inconsiderate road user can be assisted to change his or her behaviour through prayer. As for ordinary road users like my-self, prayer can help us to travel in confidence and without fear.

Further: To whom is your prayer performed? The participant responded: “I pray to God the father and to Jesus the Lord and Saviour of the world and I ask them to accompany all road users on their travel trips with the power of the Holy Spirit”. My next question to this participant was: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road user? The participant answered:

My favourite text in this regard is **Matthew 7: 7, 8** -‘Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened.’ The situation on our road environment demands that we hear these words of Jesus and do what they tell us to do – to persist and never be discouraged in praying for a safe road usage.

I continued with my enquiry: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The participant replied: “No, it is not possible. I only use texts drawn from the Bible. There is no need for me or anyone who is saved, to mix the words of God with other things”. In what ways..., I enquired further; do you believe that God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit protect you on this road? The participant responded:

One of the ways in which we are protected on the road is by being given drivers who are considerate and have respect for both their work and other road users. Although there are not many but, they are there. I also believe that the occasional visible presence of the road traffic

police is also one of Gods ways of forcing reckless and inconsiderate road users to behave appropriately.

Now moving towards closing this interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

First and foremost, road accidents are caused by the fact that some of the road users' behaviours are not guided by Christian values. Some people always think about themselves and what is best for them. They find it very difficult to put others first before themselves. It is therefore, this selfish spirit amongst road users that is the cause of road accidents. There are also evil spirits on the roads, which now and then appear for the purposes of destroying God's people.

I then asked this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

Society and every road user must go back to the ways of God. Both we and our behaviours must be God-centred, if we want to see an end to the problems associated with road safety. The word of God as found in the Bible can help us in this regard. Again, the problem of evil spirits on the road can be eliminated by consistent individual and communal prayers. We must not just pray only when some horrible accident has happened, we must pray also even when no accident has happened on our roads.

My last question was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered:

Using the road helps my faith very much. The road environment is one of those places where we are usually vulnerable, exposed to danger and not in control especially, as passengers. This vulnerability and exposure in turn put our faith to the test, because the road is for most of us not a comfort zone.

4. An encounter with an adherent converted from ART to the Christian faith

4.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a kombi taxi driver of between 45 and 50 years of age. I was waiting for a kombi taxi for the purpose of travelling to town, when I met this driver for the first time. A kombi taxi then stops and two passengers get out because they have reached their destination. Before I entered the passenger section of the kombi taxi the driver politely invited me to use the empty seat next to him. I obliged and as soon as I was seated, the driver greeted me and added: *sekuphinde kwasa futhi – it is a new day again*. This is generally understood as an indication that a casual conversation will be appreciated by the person who has used these words to another, regardless of the fact that

you are strangers. The politeness of his approach coupled with the advice the driver gave to his conductor who was having an unhealthy argument with one of the passengers, who was insulting the conductor, convinced me that the kombi taxi driver seated next to me is more likely to agree to participate in our study interview. As soon as the passenger in question had alighted from the kombi taxi, the driver said to the conductor, who was still upset: “Just forgive and forget about him, he appears to be possessed by an evil spirit, which makes him enjoy insulting others”. My guess later on turned out to be correct. The driver did agree to participate in the study. The interview took place at a parking lot next to Rhino Cash and Carry store in Pietermaritz Street, three days later.

4.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or Muslim; or African Traditional faith; or any other faith? The participant responded: “I adhere to the Christian faith”. I then asked the participant again: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this? The participant replied:

No, it is not possible especially, since I was converted to the Christian faith about six years ago. Before my conversion moment, I used to adhere to African Traditional Religion and I believed that because it is linked to African culture, it was the right thing for me to embrace a faith that belongs to us as African people. But what disappointed me was the fact that African Traditional Religion has in actual fact been corrupted by ukuthakatha – use of magical powers to harm others. I then decided to become a Christian because I realised that true Christianity is meant to give life rather than harm.

I followed this up with this question: Are you a member of a church or a religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered: “Yes, I am a member of the Faith Mission Church in Imbali Township”. I continued with the enquiry: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant responded:

A sometime, deliberate and calculated lack of patience and considerateness amongst all classes of road users is a major challenge for me as a road user. When I experience this on the road, I am sometimes tempted to ‘return the favour’ – by being rude to those who are rude to me.

After this, I then asked the participant this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant replied: “In those moments of temptations, my faith assists me by reminding me that it is not wise to fight fire with fire and that fire is always conquered by the use of water”.

I followed this up by asking this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant answered: “Prayer is the only ritual which I always perform in connection with my use of this road”. Then: where do you pray? The response: “I pray at home, on the road and in our church during church services”. Further: What benefit do you think prayer will achieve? Again the response:

One of the important things I have learnt about life as a regular road user is that it is better for me to monitor my own reactions to especially destructive experiences on the road. Prayer then helps me to focus on my own behaviour rather than on the behaviours of other road user. I believe that it is possible to influence others to do good by making sure that my own behaviour on the road is admired by many other road users. I believe that it is only through prayer that I can be able to achieve this.

Lastly: Who are your prayers performed to? The response: “I pray to God our father in heaven and I pray to our Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit”. Moving on with my enquiry, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Oh yes. I usually use **1 Peter 5: 8-9** –‘Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him, strong in faith.’ There are many road users who act like roaring lions on the road for various reasons. The only way to defeat them is the way of faith in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love and the power of God.

I continued to ask the participant: In what ways do you believe that God / Jesus through the Holy spirit protect you on this road? The participant responded:

I believe that protection comes in the form awareness of what impatience and inconsiderateness does to us all as road users – These attitudes destroy life unnecessarily and they have also contributed in making the kombi taxi industry in particular, to be perceived as a generally bad industry, in the eyes of society.

I then asked the participant: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

Looking at road accidents from the point of view of faith, I can say that one of the words which explain the problem of road accidents is selfishness. Some of us road users are so selfish that we either do not think about the consequences of our unbecoming actions or we simply do not care, as long as we get what we want – money in particular.

After this, I asked the participant again: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

All of us road users need to learn or at least make an effort to behave like human beings as opposed to behaving like animals. We need to learn to behave in a way that God and not us, wants us to behave in relation to each other and the road environment.

My last question to this participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied: “Using the road does help my faith in the sense that I am constantly challenged to conduct myself in a manner that is befitting of a Christian person”.

5. An encounter with an adherent to the Christian faith

5.1 Background information

I was walking along Commercial Road on my way home from the University Of KwaZulu-Natal where I am a student, when I met the participant in this section for the first time. I always enjoy walking along this road before I catch a kombi taxi which will take me to my place of residence in Edendale. As I was approaching half way to the city centre, it began to rain and I decided to find shelter in one of the garages along this road. One of the garage male employees struck a conversation with me about the weather. We talked for about forty five minutes or so until the rain stopped. Our conversation started off with comments about the weather and then we ended up discussing how to deal with troublesome and impossible relatives, neighbours and colleagues. When I realised that a healthy bond of trust was developing between us, I introduced our research project to him and I asked him if it was possible for him to allow me to interview him at a later date, seeing that he is a kombi taxi passenger on the Edendale Road six or seven days a week when he travels to work and back to his place of residence at the Caluza section of the

Edendale Township. He agreed and the interview took place four days later at his place residence as that was his day off from duty.

5.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or Muslim; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant replied: “I adhere to the Christian faith”. I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? If so, is there any special reason for this? The participant answered: “No. I only adhere to the Christian faith”. I continued with the inquiry: Are you a member of a church or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant responded:

Yes, I am a member of uMkhumbi – The Church of Prophecy kwaMnyandu. As you know that uMkhumbi is a ship, the name of our church symbolises Noah’s Ark.

I responded by saying: That is very interesting; this is the first time I hear about a church called uMkhumbi, I would like to accompany you to your church one day if it is o’ k with you. He nodded his head, as a sign of approval and then I continued: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

One of the major challenges I am experiencing as a road user is that some of our drivers do not listen to us as passengers. If a driver for instance, is driving in a manner that appears to be life threatening to us passengers and one passenger says ‘ungagijimi kakhulu mfowethu asijahile’ – do not speed our brother, we are not in a hurry, the driver does not listen and he also does not respond accordingly. When I get into a kombi taxi, I am not just travelling to work, on top of this, I am actually entrusting my life to the driver. Really, not being taken seriously is one of the major challenges for us passengers. We do not talk like that because we want to undermine our drivers. Instead, we do so simply because we desire that both the driver and we as passengers should have a safe journey.

I followed this up with this question: How then does your faith assist you as a road user?

The participant responded:

My faith has helped me realise that in situations, where we interact with one another on a daily basis and others refuse to listen, it is always better to turn my attention to God for the strength to bear any challenge facing me.

I then continued with my enquiry: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant answered: “There is no other ritual I perform in connection with my use of the road, except prayer”. I asked Further: Where do you perform the prayer ritual? The response: “I pray at home, I sometimes also pray during my travel trips and at other times I pray during our worship services in our church”. I continued: What benefit do you think prayer will achieve? The answer: Well, as a Christian, I really believe that prayer can help people change their crooked ways of relating to others and the road environment. I continued again: Who do you pray to? The reply: “I pray to God the creator of heaven and earth and I also pray to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit of God”. Moving on, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

I do and the text that is meaningful to me is this one: **Genesis 6:5-6** – ‘The Lord God saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that his heart contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long. The Lord God regretted having made human beings on earth and was grieved at heart.’ Now; there is a lot of wicked behaviours on the road and God is not happy at all at what he sees.

After this, I then asked the participant this question: In what ways do you believe that God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit help to protect you on the Edendale Road? The participant answered:

Every day I travel to work and back to my home without having been involved in a road accident, is a sign of mysterious ways which God use to protect those who walk in his ways. I believe that God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit protect me by listening to my concerns in prayer and then get involved in my daily travelling trips.

I went on and asked the participant: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

Road accidents happen because we human beings have decided to make sure that God does not ‘interfere’ with our ordinary and everyday management of our life including, our life as travellers on the road. This includes everybody – passengers, drivers, owners of vehicles and all the other agencies involved in matters connected with road transport.

I enquired further: What then do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied: “People in general need to be reminded all the time that our life as society without God is futile and that such a life, eventually leads to destruction”.

My last question was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered: “Using the road does help my faith because it reminds me that I am just a creature whose continued existence is depended on the mercy and the love of God”.

6. Reflection and conclusion

6.1 On the first participant

One of the things which have stood out for me, in the interview connected with the first participant in this report, is the idea of the fear of societal pressure put on those who will not conform to society’s demand of the performance of African traditional rituals because they adhere to the Christian faith. The seriousness of this pressure is articulated by the first participant by mentioning that such societal disapproval manifest itself through slander or character assassination and being treated as what we can perhaps call a ‘cultural outcast.’ Perhaps that is the reason why this participant says: “I no longer attend church services as regularly as I used to.” It seems to me that what is happening here is a case of socially created attitudes about African traditional religious beliefs and the performance of associated religious rituals regardless of the conflict these may pose in the case of a person who adheres only to the Christian faith.

Another issue which struck me with regard to the first participant, is the suggestion that road accidents can be prevented by self-respect (road users respecting themselves), by tradition in the sense that each one of us belong to a family, a church, a country and some other social organisation. The implication here is that respect for tradition ought to prevent us from misbehaving on the road. Respect for the people we love and those who love us and lastly, respect for the God who has loved us in his son Jesus Christ. What we have here is a suggestion that respect for all these categories of persons can result in the saving of many lives on the roads.

6.2 On the second participant

One of the issues which struck me with regard to this participant is the idea that to be ‘saved’ also means to recant – to withdraw and renounce former beliefs and practices. The second participant attests to this by stating that: ‘African traditional religious beliefs and practices no longer have a place in my life’ and again: ‘I cannot be a true Christian and yet combine it with any other faith.’ This participant appears to believe in a God who is very much active because this God intervenes in the ordinary events of life by even ‘using the presence of road traffic officers to protect road users.’ A safe road travel tip is perceived as God’s saving miracle. There is for me however; a danger here of perceiving God as a magician – as a wonder worker and no more. Perhaps the assertion that: ‘There are evil spirits on the road;’ has got nothing to do with the idea of a God who is a magician. One of the significant things which I got from this particular interview is the idea of God-centeredness supported by the idea of ‘praying all the time in good times and in bad times.’

6.3 On the third participant

Again the idea of renouncing former religious beliefs and practices (associated with ATR) is also alluded to by this participant. The renouncing here appears to be based on meditation and reflection (by the participant concerned), about the good and the bad in African Traditional Religion. This participant also highlights the significance of the Lord’s-prayer (as a useful agency) especially; the words: ‘...lead us not into temptation;’ as an assist for him: ‘not to fight fire with fire.’ Another very significant thing coming out of this participant’s interview is the idea of awareness of what others do to others. This for; me is very important because most of us usually remain at that level of awareness where the emphasis is on what others do to us – a selfish level of awareness.

6.4 On the fourth participant

One of the significant things suggested in this section is the idea of what I can call a cry for obedience which is articulated in these words: do not speed we are not in a hurry. The important thing is that this *cry* comes from the passengers - ordinary people, and not from the authorities. It suggests that ordinary people understand that obedience saves lives on the road. Further, they also understand that disobedience to the road traffic rules

oppresses them with fear of danger and even death. Again, the *cry*, suggests that passengers understand the kombi taxi industry as a trust and owners and drivers as trustees – entrusted with their lives. This is articulated in this manner: When I get into a kombi taxi, I entrust my life to the driver. And then, when a driver ignores a passenger's *cry*. Then: I turn my attention to God for the strength to bear these challenges. God in this sense is understood as the mediator or the highest judge appeal who is capable of making things right, in this sour relationship.

Lastly, there is also a sense that God is perceived by some road users as an absent or distant and or an interfering and unwanted God. This is expressed in this way: Some have decided to make sure that there is no interference from God. This suggests that for those road users who want to do as they please on the road, it is convenient for them to banish God far away from the road environment.

Field Report Number 18

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present views and opinions of four passengers about religious beliefs and practices, connected with the use of the Edendale Road. One of the important features in this field report, for me, is the issue of the fear of the perceived consequences of talking about road safety issues, involving the kombi taxi industry. This is not the first time that I have had the impression that the fear of perhaps, a possible reprisal (real or imagined), which could be meted out by ‘the kombi taxi people’ - *abantu bamatekisi*, against anyone who publicly talks badly about the way they conduct their business, is really taken seriously by a number of road users. One of the lesson’s I have learned with regard to this issue is that; it takes a lot of patience and calm determination to convince road users, that our study has got nothing to do with exposing the faults of the kombi taxi industry or to scandalise this industry. Rather; all we are interested in is to investigate the kinds of theologies which exist amongst Edendale Road users; by learning from the road users themselves about their religious beliefs and practices connected with travelling on this road. This explanation helped me to secure interviews with two of the participants in this report.

2. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger / Anglican Church member

2.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a male employee in one of the government department offices in Pietermaritzburg. His place of residence is that part of the Edendale Township, commonly known as Georgetown. The participant uses kombi taxis five days every week to travel from his place of residence to his work place and back. I met the participant at the eMgodini taxi rank in Pietermaritzburg. What made it easy for me to introduce our research project to the participant is the fact that after boarding the taxi, we ended up sitting next to each other on one of the passenger seats. The interview took place at the participant’s place of residence three days later.

2.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant replied: “I adhere to the Christian faith”. I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant answered: “No, it is not possible. I am a Christian and I am satisfied with that”.

My next question was this: Are you a member of a church or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant responded: “Yes, I am a member of the Saint Martin’s Anglican Church in Edendale”. Moving on, I asked the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

Selfish and unreasonable demands on drivers by some of the passengers – when a person is late for work he or she wants the driver to speed, when other people are late, the same person says to the driver: ‘please do not speed, we do not want to die and leave our children as orphans.’ This is generally the case for passengers who usually travel on the same kombi taxi most of the time. Some of the passengers insist on getting into a kombi taxi even when the taxi is already full. Those passengers do this without realising that travelling on an overloaded kombi taxi exposes everyone involved to the danger of a road accident.

This led me to ask the participant this question: Given what you have just told me, how does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant answered:

My faith assists me by helping me to remain calm, especially because in situations like these I can end up quarrelling with people who are convinced that they are doing the right thing - ‘fighting for their rights.’ I on the other hand, have learned that as Christian, this idea of insisting on one’s rights is sometimes driven by a selfish motive because other people’s rights are usually not taken into account. My faith then has taught me that it is not good for me and for those around me if I allow anger to overcome me at a wrong time and place.

I then followed this up with this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant replied: “The only ritual I perform connected with my use of this road is the ritual of prayer”.

Then: “Where do you pray?” The answer: “I pray everywhere; at home, during some of my travel trips, at our church and sometimes at work?” Further: “What benefit do you think your prayers will achieve?” The reply:

When I pray, I do so not only for my own protection and safety. I pray for all road users; that we may all be considerate and responsible in our use of the road, that God may grant each and every road user the wisdom to accept that sometimes our behaviour on the road are not conducive to safe road usage and that we may accept the need to change our unbecoming behaviour on the road.

Further again: Who are your prayers performed to? The response: “I pray to God the father, to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour and to the Holy Spirit of God”. Moving on, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant answered:

Yes I do. The scripture text I normally use in this regard is: **Matthew 5: 21, 22** – ‘You have heard how it was said to our ancestors. You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it in a court; anyone who calls a brother “Fool” will answer for it in hell fire.’ The most important lesson for me in this text with regard to my understanding of road use is that Jesus’ way is the only way to safety on the road – he has set before us a good example of how to behave in all areas of life.

I followed this up with this question: In what ways do you believe that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit protect you on the road? The participant replied: “Some of the road users are inspired to choose to behave in a manner that will not put other people in danger – that is how I and other road users are protected on the road”. After this, I asked the participant further: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

Road accidents which happen as a result of the human factor are mostly, the result of the attitude in human beings, to embrace the desire for anything that is forbidden. We are all usually attracted to bad and to dangerous things.

I then asked this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

Road users need to listen to learn to listen to the voice of God forbidding them to desire forbidden things and to make a concerted effort to be considerate of other road users. Respect for life, property and for other people would be crucial in all this.

My last question to this participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied: “Using the road helps my faith a lot in the sense that it has made me aware of what is happening around me whenever I am on a travelling trip”.

3. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger – Christian Faith / ATR adherent

3.1 Background information

The participant in this section is an ATM security guard in one of the banks in Pietermaritzburg. After withdrawing money on one occasion, I had a casual talk with him about how we as bank customers, appreciate the presence of a security guard around the vicinity of an ATM machine because it scares away criminals. We continued chatting for a while and then I decided to introduce our research project to him. It became clear to me that he was fascinated by our topic and what we are trying to discover when he agreed to participate fully in an interview at a later date. The interview took place at the participant’s place of residence (at Ashdown – a section of the Edendale Township), five days later.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion or any other faith? The participant replied: “I adhere to the Christian faith?” I continued with my enquiry: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant answered:

Although I said I adhere to the Christian faith, I have however, not abandoned some of the African traditional cultural/ religious beliefs and practices. So, to answer your question, yes it is true that I adhere to two religions at the same time.

I enquired further: Is there any special reason for this? The participant responded:

I have attended almost all the different churches on offer in Edendale searching for the one that will best serve my spiritual needs. In my search, I discovered that the Church of the Twelve Apostles of Christ is the only one that attends to the needs of its adherents more than it pursues its own financial gain. This is a church which encourages us to stay connected with our ancestors through our cultural religious practices. So the reason why I adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion at the same time is that the church that I belong to is not hostile to African Traditional Religion and our culture.

My next question was this: Are you a member of a church or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant replied: “Yes, I am a member of the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Eddendale”. Moving on with my enquiry, I asked the participant this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant answered:

My major challenges as a road user are worry and fear. It is really hard not to worry during a road travel trip. It is common knowledge that during peak hours, kombi taxis usually slid past each other and other vehicles with only a few centimetres to spare. This means that I and other road users are usually exposed to danger most of the time during peak hours.

I enquired further: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded:

My faith assists me by restoring my hope and trust in the love and mercy of God. When I am faced with frightening challenges, my faith reminds me that God is not like human beings – he will never disappoint me or withdraw his love for me.

Moving on, I asked the participant this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant replied: “They are the rituals of prayer and that of maintaining the goodwill of my ancestors by living in a close association with them as they are family spirits”. Further: Where are these rituals performed? The answer:

I pray at home, during certain travel trips, at work and in our place of worship. I perform the ritual associated with my ancestors at home – emsamo – one of the far ends of my late parents’ bedroom which is reserved as the special dwelling place for our family spirits. It is the place where all the rituals associated with my ancestors are performed. With regard to my use of the road, I normally burn incense emsamo and speak to my ancestors seeking their aid for protection against dangers and any trouble when I am about to go on a road travel trip.

Further again: What benefit do you think they will achieve? The response:

Prayer connects me with God and this helps me to travel with confidence, knowing that God is watching over me during a road travel trip. Living in the closest association with my ancestors means that they act as a support structure on my travel trips.

Then the last question connected ritual performance: Who are they performed to? The reply:

I pray to God - our father in heaven, to Jesus our Saviour and to his Holy Spirit. The ritual associated with ancestors is performed specifically to my late parents and grandparents – those who know me personally as their child and grandchild. I however, also ask my immediate ancestors to call upon my remote ancestors – those know to them, to invite those remote ancestors on my behalf so that they too can make their contribution.

Moving on again with my enquiry, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant responded: Yes and the text I normally use is: **Romans 15: 13** – ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may overflow with hope.’ I then asked the participant this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religion? If so why? The participant replied: “No, I only use Christian religious texts from the Christian Bible”. I continued and asked the participant this question: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The participant answered:

Yes, I do. The ancestors are closer to God now that they have passed on. God protects me through them and therefore, they are the ones who intercede for me before God because they are my own – God brought me into this world through them. In fact I believe that God himself chose that they should be my kindred and then after death, my ancestors. So, I learnt most of the religious beliefs and practices that I know and follow today from them.

I enquired further: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

There are many reasons why road accidents happen. One of the strange things in our life is the fact that most of us are fascinated by whatever is forbidden. This is at the core of the causes of road accidents. Road users are for instance, reminded everyday that drinking and driving and speeding are more likely to cause road accidents but still, they do these things again and again.

I followed this up with this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

I believe that for us road users, to know what is right and what is wrong is not enough. We need to deepen our knowledge of Jesus Christ in order to be able to do what we know we ought to do. If we do not do this, we will always be engaged in an endless battle, in as far as attempts at eradicating road accidents is concerned.

This was my last question to the participant: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered:

Using the road does in fact help my faith in the sense that it helps me reflect about my life, about who am I and about everything that happens around me within the road environment.

4. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger – Revival / Christian faith adherent

4.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a female employee of the National Laboratory Services at Greys Hospital. She lives at the unit J section of IMbali Township. She uses kombi taxis to travel from her place of residence to her place of work every week. I met the participant for the first time at the iMbali taxi rank in Pietermaritzburg. After I had briefly introduced myself and our research project to her, the participant agreed to participate in a full interview in four days time. The interview took place at the participant's place of residence.

4.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant replied: "I adhere to the Christian faith". I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant responded:

Oh no, I do not mix the Christian faith with any other religious faith. I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I do not think that I need anything or anyone else in my spiritual life.

I continued with my enquiry: Are you a member of a church or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered: "Yes, I am a member of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Pietermaritzburg". I went further and enquired: What struggles, trials temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

There are many struggles facing road users like me – a passenger. One that stands out for me is the unhealthy competition amongst kombi taxi drivers. You can see that when these people are competing for passengers, they essentially place themselves in the foreground and in the process, completely forget about us passengers who are already inside a kombi. They forget that we also have expectations from the relationship we have with them – to be transported in such a way that

we arrive safe and on time at our places of work. They are very respectful when they want you to get into a taxi but once you are inside and the kombi taxi is not yet full, some of them are very rude when you indicate to them that it is important that you arrive early at work. They have this tendency of canvassing passengers even from people who show by the way they walk that they are going nowhere. Some of the kombi taxis would spend five or more minutes in each and every stopping zone and by the time I arrive at work, I discover that I am fifteen or more minutes late. It is a tricky situation because I am one of those people who believe that it is unwise to upset a driver – someone I have entrusted my life to – he might end up causing a road accident.

I then followed this up by asking this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded:

My faith usually reminds me of the need for me to judge others with tolerance instead of judging them with sternness. In that way, I am able to forgive, in spite of the fact that I am the one who has been treated unfairly.

Moving on, I turned to this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant answered: “The only ritual I perform in connection with my use of the road is prayer”. Then: Where do you perform your prayer ritual? The response: “I pray at home, on my way to work, at work and at our church during a church service”. Further: What benefit do you think prayer will achieve? The answer:

Prayer has the potential of creating miracles where everything else has failed. I have seen the most stubborn of people change their bad behaviour because someone or some people have consistently prayed for them.

Then the last question about ritual performance: Who are you prayers performed to? The reply: “I pray to God the creator of the universe, to Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world and to the Holy Spirit”. I then continued with my enquiry: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant responded:

Yes, I do and it is this text – **1Peter 5:8-9** – ‘Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him, strong in faith.’ Most of us road users are not aware of the fact that roads are a fertile ground for any person to be deceived by sin. Drivers in particular, are the most vulnerable to this kind of deception than the other classes of road users because many people – passengers, entrust their lives to them. It is especially those drivers who live a Christ-less / or a faithless life who are the most vulnerable.

After this, I asked the participant this question: In what ways do you believe that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit protect you on this road? The participant answered:

I believe that my protection as a passenger; comes about in the form drivers, who respect themselves and their work and who also respect other road users including passengers. Now, respect is an act of love and as such, it saves lives on the road. As an act of love, respect comes

from God and enters into the mind and heart of any person who is God centred. That is how, I believe, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit protects me from the dangers of the road.

I went further and asked the participant: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

We all know that bad weather, hazardous roads, mechanical failure and reckless and inconsiderate driving are presented as the only causes of road accidents which need to be taken seriously. Even the training of drivers; centres around these issues. The expectation is that armed with such training, a driver would be in total control. We also know that this has not been the case. We again know that the spiritual life of a driver / road user is not taken into account. Now, as long as this is the case, the problem of road safety is still going to remain with us for a long time.

Moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered: “What is needed is an inclusive strategy, one which includes and takes seriously the spiritual life of each and every road users, especially drivers”. In closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant responded: “I have no doubt that using the road helps my faith very much. Road use is that area of life which puts my faith to the test all the time”.

5. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger – Lutheran /Christian faith adherent

5.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a female who is employed at the Edendale Hospital as an administration clerk. Her place of residence is at Smero – a section of the Edendale Township. The participant uses kombi taxis every week to travel from her place of residence to her place of work and back. I met the participant at the Edendale Hospital kombi taxi rank. What made it possible for me to approach this participant for the purposes of canvassing her to take part in a full interview; was the fact that I had seen her during one of my visits to the eye clinic. Usually she and other hospital staff members conduct prayers with the patients at the admitting office before the patients are sent to be attended by doctors. After I had introduced myself and our research project, she agreed to participate in a full interview. The interview took place at the participant’s place of residence three days later.

5.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant replied: “I adhere to the Christian faith”. I continued with the inquiry: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant responded: “Oh no. How can I call myself a Christian when I mix it with other things? I adhere only to the Christian faith”.

I followed this up with this question: Are you a member of a church or other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered: “I am a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Edendale – KwaMachibisa”. I moved on and asked the participant: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

The fact that each day I travel on a kombi taxi, I entrust my life on people who seem not to be interested in anything except, the money they get from us as passengers. I sometimes get the impression that for some kombi taxi drivers, the amount of money they want to make each day appears to be more important to them than the safety of passengers and other road users. Evidence of this is usually seen in the way kombi taxis slid past each other and other vehicles with only a few centimetres to spare. It is a pity that such a big business run mostly by Africans, does not have a customer care service.

I then asked the participant this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded: “I think that without faith, I could end up a nervous wreck. Faith makes me strong, so that I am able to face challenges associated with road use at least, without severe fear”. After this, I asked the participant this question: If you perform rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions: What are these rituals? The participant answered: “It is prayer and nothing else”. Then: Where do you perform your prayer ritual? The answer: “I pray at home, on the road while travelling, at work and at our church”. Further: What benefit do you think prayer will achieve? The reply: “I believe that prayer can bring about sanity within the road environment which sometimes appears to be fraught with confusion. If sanity can prevail on the road then we can all be safe”. Lastly: Who do you pray to? The response: “I pray to God our father, to Jesus our redeemer and to the Holy Spirit the giver of life”.

Moving on I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

The most meaningful text for me in this regard is **Romans 13:12-14** - ...let us clothe our-selves with the weapons of light. Let us walk in loveliness of life, as those who walk in the day, and let us not walk in revelry or drunkenness, in immorality and in shamelessness, in contention and in strife. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop living a life in which your first thought is to gratify the desires of Christ-less human nature.

I then asked the participant this question: In what ways do you believe that God / Jesus and the Holy Spirit protect you on this road? The participant answered:

Not every driver is a nuisance to other road users; not every driver approves of drinking and driving; and, not every driver places self in the foreground and then denies other road users respect. I believe that it is through those few drivers that I and other road users are protected by God, by Jesus and by the Holy Spirit.

Moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

The problem of road accidents cannot be solved by human strategies alone. It is us human beings who contribute to the bulk of the causes of road accidents. It is us who drink and drive and who are reckless and inconsiderate on the roads.

After this I asked the participant this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

What is needed is to combine human strategies with divine strategies. In other words, divine insights must also be sought and used in formulating strategies to reduce or end road accidents. A God centred approach can help in the creation of new road users who would put others first instead of placing self before everyone else on the roads.

My last question was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered:

Use of the road does help my faith a lot because there are many challenges on the road. Difficulties put all road users in a state of uncertainty and vulnerability. This in turn challenges the strength and the extent of my faith and trust in God.

6. Reflection and conclusion

6.1 Reflection on Participant 1

One of the important points raised by the first participant in this field report is the fact that, it is not unusual for some of the kombi taxi passengers to behave in a manner that may cause a road accident. According to this participant, this is manifested by a selfish and unreasonable request or demand, usually made by a passenger who has become acquainted to the driver, whereby the driver is asked to speed or not to speed, depending on whether or not the passenger concerned is late or not late for work. It is important to note here, that this happens without taking into consideration the feelings and the expectations of the other passengers travelling in the same kombi taxi – to be transported in a way that will not put their lives in danger - or in a way that will help them arrive on time at their own places of work. This suggests that there is a social dimension at work in all interactions between drivers on the one hand and passengers on the other hand.

Sociologists explain what is happening in this case, by one of the major theoretical frameworks in sociology known as exchange theory. The major concepts operating in the exchange theory are – opportunities, rewards, approval, balance and credit. Key assumptions of the exchange theory are:

Human interactions are similar to economic transactions. People give and receive resources (symbolic, social approval, or material) and try to maximise their rewards while avoiding pain, expense, and embarrassment. Exchange relations tend to be balanced. If they are unbalanced, people with credit can dominate others (Neuman, W. L. 1997:57).

When a passenger asks a driver to speed because the passenger is late for work, he or she is actually asking the driver to reward him or her for being a ‘loyal’ customer, who in turn rewards the driver most of the time by travelling in the kombi taxi driven by that particular driver. The mentioning of this interaction as a challenge faced by the first participant as a road user suggests that exchange relations between drivers and passengers are not always balanced and that therefore, those passengers with credit do in fact dominate other road passengers. Now, religion has been identified by sociologists as one of the five key social institutions together with; family; education; power, politics and government; and, the economy and work (Popenoe et al. 1997). The significance of this identification in the context of the exchange theory and the challenges faced by road

users in general and the first participant in this report in particular is that – religion provides support and consolation that help road users to overcome fear, anxiety and domination. Such support is provided to the first participant by the ritual of prayer and belief in the God of wisdom understood as the primary agent of protection and change in human behaviour.

6.2 Reflection on Participant 2

One of the interesting things for me with regard to the second participant is the assertion that: *I have not abandoned some of the African cultural / religious beliefs and practices; and that: I adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion.* According to M. Scott Peck, in his book: *In Search of Stones: a pilgrimage of faith, reason and discovery* (1996:369); we are living in an age in which – we think we should know the reason for everything and that there is only one reason – [this is a] time when the concept of over-determination is foreign to our minds – we are cursed by Either / or thinking. This, in the context of religion means that, one must either adhere to the Christian faith or African Traditional religion and so on.

Now, Scott Peck makes this suggestion for us to overcome the curse of either or thinking. Thinking which involves what he calls – The Holy Conjunction. This is how Scott Peck explains this kind of thinking:

The Holy conjunction is the word AND. Instead of an either / or style of mentation – push for both / and thinking. Do not try to get rid of reason but Reason Plus - reason and mystery, reason and emotion, reason and intuition, reason and revelation, reason and wisdom and, reason and love.... [This] is a vision of integration which does not mean squashing two or more things together in a colourless... blob. Integrating [two or more faiths] does not mean returning to the age of primitive faith, where [Christian faith] is discounted; nor does it mean maintaining the status quo where other religions are [totally rejected] and Christian faith is idolised (M. Scott Peck (1996:369).

Merhtens, S. E. (2000:5) also says: In the Western culture, we tend toward “either / or” rather than “both / and” thinking. She also says that Hayakawa S. I (1964: 239) called this: two value orientation and, that Said E. (1978, 1994: 46, 327) called this type of thinking: binary opposition and gave these examples: East / West, North / South, have / have not, White / Coloured and so on.

The second participant in this field report; has clearly adopted the way of thinking which involves the operation of the Holy Conjunction, in dealing with challenges associated with road use, in the same way that a number of other road users from what is generally known as marginalised churches have done. This is not surprising because as Popenoe et al. (1997:323) in their book on sociology of religion say: “...no other institution, except family, is as effective as religion in helping people deal with problems about the meaning and value of life, and none is as successful in creating a strong allegiance and participation”. One of the major challenges I foresee in this case of integrating religious beliefs and practices from different faiths especially with regards to us Africans, is the extent to which those of us who adhere to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion are committed to discarding the combination of helpful or ‘pure’ religious beliefs and practices which does not harm others and beliefs in black magic or witchcraft or sorcery which destroy other peoples lives.

6.3 Reflection on participant 3

There are two issues mentioned by this participant during the interview which I like to reflect upon – the issue of putting self first instead of putting others first; - and, the issue of what I consider as a secularised approach to road safety. With regard to the first issue, the participant stated that: “When kombi taxi drivers are competing for more passengers, they completely forget about us who are already inside a kombi taxi. They forget that we also have expectations....” What this participant is suggesting in this case is that there is generally a lack of respect for passengers and dishonesty in the sense that once a passenger is inside a kombi taxi, passengers are unambiguously given the impression that it is the money they pay which is important not them. In other words, there are some people within the taxi industry, who want to make a profit without being ethical about making such profit – they do not consider the needs of the passengers – to be treated with respect, compassion and understanding that they are using kombi taxis as a means of transport, to get to work on time because they have an obligation to do so. Employers expect their employees to arrive at work on time. The transport money passengers pay comes from the same employers. The employment market and the taxi industry ought to complement and support each other in a balanced and an ethical way.

The second issue is that which the participant emphasises by this phrase: One that takes seriously the spiritual life of each and every road user especially drivers, who we can regard as being in the forefront of road safety because of their important role of being entrusted with the lives of passengers. This is another example of an either or way of thinking – that there is only one reason or answer to modern problems – road safety campaigns and policies cannot have both religious and secular aspect. This is because transport is basically a field of civil engineers – natural scientists, and science is perceived as value free while religion is value laden. But religion or the spiritual dimension of life can contribute to the course of road safety, amongst other things, an understanding which says; in the words of Scott peck on peace, that:

Peace; [in our context, Road safety] is not just one thing with one single cause. Road safety is many things; among them a spirit, a gift, a condition, a process, a decision, a victory over evil, an ongoing task and the predictable result of a great deal of highly disciplined hard work.... There is much about road safety that is mysterious (Peck (1996:247)).

The third participant is convinced just like me that a secularised approach in dealing with the causes and prevention of road accidents is not likely to help us experience safe road usage in the foreseeable future.

6.4 Reflection on participant 4

The fourth participant made a couple of statements which point to some interesting issues for me within the public transport sector and the road environment. This participant says: The kombi taxi industry does not have a customer care service – where passengers could voice their concerns and fears. The participant mentions also that: The road environment sometimes appears to be fraught with confusion. The two statements, though presented as responses to two different questions, are nevertheless related to each other. The first response is a cry for a caring service based on ethical considerations. It is a cry for a service public transport industry which can make a profit and be ethical at the same time. In other words, the interests of both the operators and their employees as well as the interests of the customers are equally taken care of.

The second statement which has in it the word confusion is a cry for sanity – a cry for the preservation of life. Confusion can sometimes be associated with evil, in the sense that evil is against life. If we look at the word evil and then spell it backwards, we discover

that it becomes the word live. One of the dictionary explanations of the word live as an adjective is: have life. This means that in the context of the road environment, road users have a right to life – to have life – to a safe road usage. Now evil in whatever form is against life. Now, religion through its resources in this case – faith, prayer beliefs and rituals becomes an antidote against confusion, against evil and by implication, against the fear of the destruction of life on the part of road users.

I conclude this reflection and the report by pointing out that even the religious text used by the fourth participant: **Romans 13:12-14** is itself consistent with this cry for life. The text counsels that believers need ‘weapons of light’; so that they could ‘walk in loveliness of life – as those who walk in the day’; and this can happen if Jesus Christ is allowed to be the armour of the believers. This is contrasted with confusion and evil with their associates – walking in revelry and drunkenness; shamelessness; in contention and in strife and Christ-less human nature bent on self gratification. The participant sees road users who walk in loveliness of life through the example of better behaving drivers who are used by God to protect the life of many road users herself.

Field Report Number 19

1. Introduction

In this field report, I present interview responses from four participants. The responses presented here are associated with religious beliefs and practices, connected with the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. One of the participants sees value in adhering to both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. The other three participants are convinced that the Christian religious faith is enough for them. The report ends with a reflection on some of the issues I picked up from each of the four interviews.

2. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger / Christian faith

2.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a young woman – twenty nine years old. She is employed as a cashier in one of the fast food chain stores in Pietermaritzburg. Her place of residence is at Smero – one of the sections forming part of the Edendale Township. This participant uses kombi taxis to travel from her place of residence to her place of work and back at least six days a week. I met the participant at the eMgodini kombi taxi rank in Pietermaritzburg and after a long discussion about our research project; she agreed to participate in a full interview. The interview took place at the participant's place of residence four days later.

2.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant replied: "I adhere to the Christian faith". I followed this up by asking this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant answered: "No. The Christian faith is the only faith I adhere to?" I continued enquiring: Are you a member of a church, or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant responded: "Yes, I am a member of the Universal Kingdom of God Church in Pietermaritzburg".

I then turned on to this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

My main concern is the uncertainty about our safety as people who use the road on a daily basis. There are sometimes, situations which are beyond human control on the roads, which put every road user in danger. I will give you an example of a personal experience. One evening I was on a kombi taxi from work going back home. I happened to be sited next to a woman who was carrying a baby child - approximately not more than two years old. When the kombi taxi started to move out of the taxi rank, the child started to cry profusely, in a mad like way. Suddenly, there was a frightening silence inside the kombi taxi, especially because even the driver had switched off the music that had been playing on the kombi stereo.

Then the driver stopped the kombi and said: *'ingane iyakhala ngoba kukhona umthaka phakathi kwethu, ngicela ahlike asishiye ngokuthula* – the baby is crying because we have a witch –an evil person amongst us, I want that person to get off right now and leave us in peace.' A woman of about thirty or so years stood up from the back seat and began to walk out of the kombi. When she was outside the kombi taxi she said before disappearing; 'You must all thank that child because you were all going to die today.' To say that I was frightened that day is an understatement, I have never been overcome by fear the way it did at that moment. The only thing I remember well is that one of the passengers said after her; *'Hamba lento esebenzela usathane* – go away you agent of Satanism.' I am always therefore, troubled by a fearful suspicion whenever I get into a kombi taxi – that perhaps there is another Satanist travelling with us.

I then followed this up with this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user?

The participant answered:

If it was not for my faith in the love and mercy of God, I do not think that I would still be travelling to work every week, after that experience. My faith helps me understand that God has more power than the devil. My faith assists me by helping me to remain focused on the positive things God has blessed me with in my life and to leave the rest in the hands of Jesus my Lord and Saviour.

After this, I asked the participant this question: If you perform any rituals connected to your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant responded: The only ritual connected with my use of the road I perform is prayer. I continued: Where do you perform your prayer ritual? The response: "I pray at here at home, I sometimes pray also during travel trips, at work and during a church service". I enquired further: What benefit do you think your prayers will achieve?

The reply:

Prayer makes me aware of the presence of God in my life; the working of his grace, his love, mercy and power. In this way, I feel safe and protected on my travel trips because I know that I am not alone.

I enquired further still: Who are your prayers performed to? The answer: “My prayers are directed to God the creator of heaven and earth, to Jesus our Saviour and to his Holy Spirit”. I then followed this up with this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Yes, I do. The scripture text which is more meaningful to me in this regard is: **Matthew 11:28-30** – ‘Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.’

I continued with my enquiry: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religion? If so why? The participant responded: “No, I only use texts from the Christian Bible and nothing else”. I then went further: In what ways do you believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit protect you on this road? The participant answered:

The example of my encounter with an agent of Satanism shows clearly, that at that moment, God used the child travelling with his or her mother and the driver. If those two had kept quiet, no one knows what would have happened to us. So, I believe that there are many ways and one of them is the use of those around us.

After this, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

Whether we are talking about reckless and inconsiderate driving or evil forces on the loose on the roads; road accidents form part of the struggle between the forces of good and evil forces.

I enquired further: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

There ought to be more people who are willing and committed to work on the side of the forces of good. In this way the problem of road accidents can be reduced and even eradicated all together.

In closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant answered:

I have no doubt that using this road on a daily basis, helps my faith in a very special way. This is because the reality of being vulnerable puts my faith to the test all the time. So, whenever I have had a frightening experience on the road and I had afterwards, been driven to reflect on such an experience, I always feel strong in faith in such a way that I feel ready to take my next travelling trip without chronic fear.

3. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger / Christian / A T R

3.1 Background information

I met the participant in this section in one of the shops in Edendale. I had gone to the shop to buy a couple of household necessities. The participant was already inside the shop when I came in talking to another person. Their conversation was about how most African people - not only in urban areas but even in rural areas, have abandoned African customs and then adopted the modern way of life. After I had been served, I went outside the shop and waited for a while. When the participant and his companion came out of the shop, I and commented that their conversation was interesting and informative. I then introduced myself and told them about our research project. I then suggested that it would be wonderful if one of them could contribute to the project by participating in a full interview, seeing that the two of them appear to be well versed in the understanding of issues about an African way of life. The participant is employed as a baker in one of the major chain stores in Pietermaritzburg. He uses kombi taxis every week to travel from his place of residence to work and back. The interview took place at the participant's place of residence at the area know as Seven Oaks in Edendale.

3.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other religion? The participant answered: "I adhere to the Christian faith". I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religions at the same time? The participant replied: "Yes it is true, as an African I do not see any reason why I should totally abandon all African customs and traditions". I continued: Is there any special reason for this? The participant responded:

Ngesintu kuthiwa idlozi liyabhekelwa – ancestors are looked after by being remembered, so that they themselves should look after us. The reason therefore, why I adhere to Christianity and African Traditional Religion at the same time is that, my ancestors connects me with uMvelinqangi - God. In other words, they are in a better position to intercede on my behalf in all situations.

I then asked this question: Are you a member of a church or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered:

Yes, I am a member of the African Christian Church here in Edendale. This is one of those churches which are not hostile to our African culture. Proof of this is that at the front building of our church, we have *ihawu* - a shield, *umkhonto* - a spear and *iwisa* - a knobkerrie or an African traditional club, made out of iron – these are African symbols of protection against attack – and in the context of Christianity - attack against evil forces.

I followed this up with this question: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

I usually travel to work very early in the morning. During this time, there are not enough passengers to fill up all the kombi taxis available. So the competition for passengers is very high. Thus the possibilities of being involved in a road accident are also plenty. The most unfortunate part of this is that we as passengers can do nothing about the fact that our lives are consistently put in danger.

I enquired further: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded:

My faith has taught me that I ought not to seek only for my own protection on the road. Instead, as a Christian and an African who understands and embraces the value of my relatedness to others; I must pray also for other road users especially, the drivers who in a way, carry the burden of having to make sure that our lives are safe on the road.

After this, I drew the attention of the participant to the following questions about rituals: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the Edendale Road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant answered: “The rituals I perform are prayer and the burning of incense which includes the reciting of the praises (*izithakazelo*), of my ancestors”. Then: Where are these rituals performed? The reply:

As far as prayer is concerned, I pray everywhere; at home, on the road, sometimes at work and at our church during church services. With regard to the burning of incense, there is only one place where according to tradition, this ritual is performed – *emsamo wami* – my own sacred place in a specially chosen place at home. Now, to elaborate a little about *umsamo*; according to tradition, there are three types of *umsamo* – there is one for a traditional healer – this is the one which serves as a source of power for the healer concerned, there is also a family one used to communicate family needs and concerns to the ancestors; and lastly, there is *umsamo* for an individual like me as the head of my family. I use this one to communicate my personal concerns with my ancestors. Another thing, family praises are an important part of this ritual because they are linked with our surname, which forms a religious tie between us who are its living bearers and our ancestors.

Further: What benefit do you think the rituals will achieve? The response:

Prayer makes it possible for me to receive the grace (izibusiso) of God in the form of protection from danger or guidance or anything that will help to preserve my life. Now, before I go on a travel trip, I need the aid of family ancestors and so the burning of incense and the recitation of family praises is in fact an appeal for help submitted to God through my ancestors who are an important link in this regard.

Further still: Who are these rituals performed to? The answer: “Prayer is performed to God – the creator of heaven and earth. The African ritual is performed to my family spirits or family ancestors”. Lastly: Why are they drawn from different religions? The reply:

Both religions are important to my life. Beside, when I am faced with the difficulties of life, there is no harm in using resources from both religions which have been part of my family for a long time.

To continue with the enquiry, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant answered: The most important text for me with regard to what we are talking about is: **Psalm 23** – “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...” I enquired further: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The participant replied:

Yes, I do sometimes use proverbs from isiZulu culture such as: *iDlozi liyabhekelwa* –if I am careless enough not to remember my ancestors and communicate with them occasionally and in an appropriate way, then, I need not be surprised when bad things like being involved in a road accident happen to me. I can say that I use texts from both religions because there is wisdom in both religions, which is relevant for life.

My next question was this: Do you believe that God / or the ancestors / spirits /divinities/ other spiritual powers and forces help to protect you on this road? The participant responded: “Yes I do”. I followed this up with this question: In what ways do you believe these spiritual beings and forces protect you on this road? The participant answered:

God is the God of love, the God of mercy and compassion; and so, he uses his power to protect me. My ancestors accompany me all the time because I am in touch with them. They are the ones who bring my concerns before God and intercede on my behalf.

After this, I asked the participant this question: Do you believe that both God and the ancestors protect you on this road at the same time, and if so, what is the basis of this belief? The participant replied:

Yes, I do believe that because they are working together to preserve my life. Although God is the one who has the power to protect me, he cannot do it without the cooperation of my ancestors whose function is to plead my case before God.

I then asked the participant: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

Road accidents are caused by the fact that many road users do not want to listen and then do as they are told. Most of us want to do as we please. This means that we as road users, do not have respect for each other, we have also no respect for human authority (with regard to road safety rules and regulations), and ultimately, some of us do not even have respect for God, because if a person has no respect for other human beings and human life, there is no way that such a person can have genuine respect for God.

I followed this up with this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

Road users need to rediscover the value of respect, to embrace and practice it. In other words, there is an urgent need for the revival of the practice of ubuntu. Knowing what ubuntu means and talking about it now and then, will get us nowhere. The practice of ubuntu can help save many lives on the roads.

My last question to this participant was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied: “I have no doubt that using the road helps my faith very much because it forces me to be aware of what is happening around me all the time during travel trips”.

4. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger / Christian faith

4.1 Background information

The participant in this section is a male educator in one of the schools in Edendale. The participant is 34 years old and has been teaching at the same school for the past eleven years. His place of residence is at that section of the Edendale Township known as Ashdown. He uses kombi taxis to travel from his place of residence to his place of work five days every week. This has been the participant’s mode of transport since he started teaching. One of the participant’s I interviewed at the beginning of our project put me

into contact with this participant. After I explained to the participant about our research project – its aims and objectives and so on, he agreed to participate fully in the study. The interview took place at the participant’s place of residence a week later.

4.2 The interview

As usual, I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant answered: “I adhere to the Christian faith”. I followed this up with this second question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant responded:

Oh no. I am satisfied with the Christian faith. I personally believe that mixing different faiths can lead to confusion in my life – I was introduced into the Christian faith very early in my life and so far there is nothing in it to complain about.

I continued with my enquiry: Are you a member of church or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant replied: “Yes, I am a member of the Saint Albert Roman Catholic Church community at esiGodini”. My next question was this: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant answered:

The main challenge for me is to remain strong in faith, with an unwavering trust in God. This is especially true, because our faith as passengers is always tested by those kombi taxi drivers, whose kombi taxis usually slide past other vehicles with only a few centimetres to spare. It is hard not to be overcome by doubt and fear when I am faced with the same dangerous situation almost every week.

I then asked the participant this question: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded:

Being exposed to danger on a regular basis, make me aware of how much I need God in my life. My faith then gives me an assurance that God loves me, that he sees everything that takes place around me and that God cares, regardless of the fact that I often doubt his free and caring love.

I followed this up with this question: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant replied: “Prayer is the only ritual I perform connected with my use of the road”.

I then went further: Where do you perform your prayer ritual? The answer: “I perform it at home, on the road while travelling, at work and during worship services at our church”.

I went further again: What benefit do you think your prayer ritual will achieve? The response:

I need to be strong in faith so that my doubts about God’s grace, love and mercy may not overcome me. I believe that entertaining doubts can make it difficult for God to protect me on the road.

Lastly, on ritual performance: Who do you direct your prayer to? The reply:

I pray to God – our father and the creator of the world and everything in it, I pray to Jesus – our Saviour, I pray to the Holy Spirit of God and I pray to Mary – the mother of our Lord.

I then continued with the enquiry and asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant answered:

Yes I do, my favourite text in this regard is: **John 3:16, 17** – For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The participant replied: “No, it is not possible. I use religious texts from only the Christian Bible”. I went further and asked the participant this question: Do you believe that God / Jesus / Holy Spirit / other spiritual powers and forces help to protect you on the road? The participant answered: “Yes, I do believe that. God is still the God of miracles even today”. I continued enquiring: In what ways do you believe that such help manifests itself? The participant responded:

The best way to respond to that is that God uses his miraculous power to protect me on the road. The way I understand how this is working, is that I travel on kombi taxis to work and back at least five days a week, without being involved in a road accident. That for me is an amazing miraculous way used by God through his angels and saints to protect road users like me who ask for help every day.

Moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant replied:

Road accidents are continuing to happen because of a lack of understanding of true change. If we continue to believe that the change of road user behaviour is, the only most important solution to the problem of road accidents, then we are in trouble. This is because the true and effective change on the road; can only happen when the hearts and the minds of each and every road user have changed for the better. Reckless and inconsiderate driving are the results of crooked minds and hearts.

I followed this up with this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

There is a beautiful English Christian hymn which has this chorus line – ‘the answer is in the hearts of men [/ women].’ This is in relation to God and human waywardness. So then, attempts at purifying the minds and hearts of as many road users as possible ought to be at the forefront of every road safety strategy.

My last question to this participant was: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant responded:

I can say that using the road does help my faith because it makes me aware not only what a road accident can do to me, my life and my family’s life; using the road makes we aware also of how other people are affected by road accidents. This awareness in turn confirms the necessity of religion in our lives.

5. An encounter with a kombi taxi passenger / Christian faith

5.1 Background information

I met the participant in this section at the iMbali taxi rank in Pietermaritzburg. After I had introduced myself and our research project to her, she asked me this question: “Where are you going to send the information collected from us?” I was not surprised by this question because I have heard it before. It is one of those questions which confirm the fact that ordinary road users are afraid, of talking about issues associated with travelling on kombi taxis. I then calmly explained to her that the information collected to participants is meant for academic purposes only. I further assured her of how much we value confidentiality in our pursuit of knowledge. The participant then agreed to participate in a full interview. The interview took place at the participant’s place of residence four days later.

5.2 The interview

I started off the interview by asking the participant this question: Which religious faith do you adhere to? Is it the Christian faith; or the Muslim faith; or African Traditional Religion; or any other faith? The participant replied: I adhere to the Christian faith. I followed this up with this question: Is it possible that you adhere to two or more religious faiths at the same time? The participant responded:

No it is not possible - the Christian faith is enough for me. I do not believe in worshipping statues or people who have died. My faith does not allow such things to be part of who we are as Christians.

I then asked this question: Are you a member of a church, or any other religious community? If so can you specify? The participant answered: “Yes, I am a member of the Faith Mission Church here in iMbali”. Moving on, I enquired further: What struggles, trials, temptations or challenges are you facing as a road user? The participant replied:

I can say that my main challenge; has to do with dealing with the fear of being involved in an unnecessary road accident – a road accident which can be avoided if someone is careful or considerate enough.

I enquired further still: How does your faith assist you as a road user? The participant responded: “My faith comforts me by helping me to remember that our Saviour Jesus Christ is always ready to save me from anything and even more so, from someone else’s mistake”. I then focused my enquiry on ritual performance and so I asked the participant: If you perform any rituals connected with your use of the road could you answer the following questions? What are these rituals? The participant answered: “The only ritual I perform connected with my use of the road is prayer”. Then: Where do you perform your prayer ritual? The reply: “I pray at home, on the road while travelling to work, I pray at work and at our church during worship services”. Further: What benefit do you think your prayer ritual will achieve? The response: “Peace of mind and heart, based on the understanding that my Lord Jesus Christ listens to my pleas and that he will act on them”. Further still: To whom are your prayer rituals performed to? The answer: “They are performed to God the father, to Jesus the Saviour and to the Holy Spirit the comforter”.

Moving on with my enquiry, I asked the participant this question: Do you use any religious text in any way in your understanding of road use? The participant replied:

Yes, I do. My favourite text in this regard is **1 Peter 5:8-9** – Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him, strong in faith.

I went further and asked this question: Is it possible that you sometimes use religious texts drawn from different religions? If so why? The participant responded:

I use religious texts drawn from the Christian religion only – they have all I need to help me understand what is happening on the road. If you look at the text I have just mentioned to you, it tells me that there are road users who endanger our lives on the road by acting as if they are the kings of the road; they behave as if they have the right to crush any one who ‘stand’ in their way to do as they please. Now, it is only faith which helps road users like me to continue using the road without fear; otherwise, some of us can even be tempted to stop travelling to work. So religious texts give me the best understanding of what goes on the road. Understanding in turn, makes it possible for me to forgive and thus, to be able carry on with my life.

I continued with my enquiry: Do you believe that God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit help to protect you on this road? The participant answered: “Yes I do”. I went further still: In what ways do you believe that God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit protect you on this road? The participant replied:

My belief is based on the love and the mercy and the power of God and of Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit. Sometimes I see road users acting in a way that suggests that the spirit of God is working on them – acting with respect and consideration of other road users – that is how God protects me and other road users – by inspiring certain drivers to do the right thing on the road.

Moving towards closing the interview, I asked the participant this question: How do you explain road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant responded:

My faith tells me that there are always lost road users – those who have allowed themselves to be overcome by a sense of wrong – who are perhaps, not even aware that the thrill they get from doing wrong endangers other people’s lives as well as their own lives. Those are the people who are mostly responsible for causing road accidents.

I followed this up with this question: What do you think can be done about road accidents from the point of view of your faith? The participant answered:

We all need to pray for people who are not aware that a selfish use of the road is a danger to other people and to property. We need to pray that they receive God's light which will make them understand that respect and considerate driving can save lives and property and scarce financial resources.

My last question was this: In balance and from a general perspective, does using the road help or hinder your faith? The participant replied:

To use the road does help my faith because it makes aware of the extent to which my life is exposed to danger. Beyond this, it makes me understand how much I need God in my life.

6. Reflection and conclusion

6.1 Reflection on participant 1

The point of reflection here has to do with the assertion that passengers were saved from a possible road accident because a child amongst the passengers alerted them (by crying), of the presence of an agent of Satanism. If this is true, then what we have here is a testimony or witness to a miracle – in the context of Christianity – it is what William Barclay says about the miracles of Jesus, that: "...they are the demonstrations of the always and forever operative power of Jesus Christ." (1975:102). As far as how we ought to understand such miracles, Barclay says: "We must never be content to regard them as something which happened, we must always regard them as something which happens, [because], they are not isolated events in history".

Barclay in the same book goes on and refers to George Macdonald and says he once said that- he (Macdonald), "placed no value on the alleged Christianity of a man at whose door, or at whose garden gate, the children cannot play." What we see here is that children can be a measuring rod of whether or not a person is a true Christian. Barclay puts this idea this way: "If a child thinks a person is good, the likelihood is that he is good. If a child shrinks away, a person may be great but certainly he or she is not Christ-like." (250) It is clear from the interview response of the first participant that the goodness or the lack of goodness of the woman referred to as an agent of Satanism, could not meet the presence of the child inside the kombi taxi; and that she could not stand the test of the child's feelings towards her evil intentions. The omnipotence of God in this story is shown through the crying action of a child; in other words, this story teaches us that God has more power than the devil and all his agents.

6.2 Reflection on participant 2

The use of Psalm 23 as a way of understanding road use for this participant, suggests that the road environment is itself understood, as a valley of tears and death. However, in spite of this fearful portrayal, the presence of the saving power of God within the same road environment is not doubted. The ancestors are understood (rightly or wrongly), as God's agents in his saving mission on the road. This suggests that the ancestors, at least those of this participant; have the right of direct access to the presence of God. This means that they are understood by this participant to be God's agents in the same way that the angels and the saints are. There is a common understanding amongst adherents to African Traditional Religion that not all the ancestors are in fact good ancestors. In some of the previous reports, other participants have alluded to the idea that bad ancestral spirits cause havoc on the roads. I am of the opinion that such ancestors cannot be said to have direct access to the presence of God.

6.3 Reflection on participant 3

One of the things which struck me with regard to this participant is the choice of the religious text (**John 3:16, 17**), for understanding road use. What strikes me in this text is that it presents the road environment as part of the world. The coming of Jesus into the world was meant amongst other things, that the world is not condemned to suffer road accidents. This means that here we are given a broader picture of the operation of the saving power of God. This is not like in **Psalm 23** - where God's saving power is directed to an individual. In John's text, God's saving power is directed at the world including the roads and all road users. Lastly, this participant suggests that travelling on the road each and every day and not being involved in a road accident is a miracle. This is an injunction against those who see miracles only in drama filled events. We all miss the point of the presence of God and his power in our lives if we do not see an accident free road trip each day as a miracle.

6.4 Reflection on participant 4

There are two things which I reflect upon as far as this participant is concerned. Firstly it is the unselfish use of prayer as alluded to by the participant – praying for others especially those who do not understand that respect and a considerate behaviour on the road can save lives. This participant is not concerned only with personal safety. The

participant is concerned with the safety of all road users – including those whom society may have ‘washed’ their hands on them. This is an attitude which says – God can still do something about those people’s behaviours if we present them to God in prayer. It is an extraordinary show of trust in God the powerful creator of all living beings.

Secondly, the participant started by mentioning the fear of unnecessary road accidents. Then, this fear is followed by an understanding of the kind of God whom the participant believes in – The God who comforts the fearful road users; the Lord Jesus who is always ready to save; The God who listens to the please of road users and then act (a picture of God in the book of exodus – God the liberator); the God who can inspire even the most stubborn of hearts to contribute to a safe road usage; and the God who can make even such stubborn road users understand that to be considerate on the road and to have respect for other road users can save many lives.