

**A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF AVENGING SPIRITS (NGOZI)  
AMONG THE SHONA PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE: A PASTORAL  
RESPONSE**

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**A mini-dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for M.A  
Theology Degree  
(Pastoral Studies)**

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## **Abstract**

This study is a biblical evaluation of avenging spirits (*ngozi*) among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. It investigates the Shona understanding of *ngozi*, the biblical teaching on the spirits that manifest as those of the dead and how the church in Zimbabwe can effectively respond to the *ngozi* crisis with a pastoral care that is biblically informed and in a practically effective way.

The study commences with an evaluation of the biblical teaching on the communication of the living with the dead. This is followed by other related questions to the subject such as the biblical teaching on vengeance for murder and the identity of the spirits that manifest as those of the dead. The Shona traditional understanding of *ngozi* is examined, giving attention to its types and the way the traditional Shona and the church in Zimbabwe currently address the *ngozi* crisis. Additionally, the interaction between the belief in *ngozi* among the Shona and the biblical teaching of spirits that manifest as those of the dead is examined. The outcome of this interaction leads to a proposal on practical guidelines for helping those affected by *ngozi* crisis and preventing a continuation of the crisis in the present and future Shona generations.

[Key words: Biblical Evaluation; avenging Spirits, Zimbabwe Shona people]

[Sleutel begrippe: Bybelse evaluasie, wraak geeste, Zimbabwese Shona mense]

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Background and problem statement**

##### **1.1.1 Background**

The avenging spirit (*ngozi*) is one of the most formidable and rather mysterious spiritual manifestations among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. The Shona, like some other African peoples, hold that the dead still have a part to play for better or for worse in the lives of the living (cf. Gelfand 1964:32; Idowu 1973:173). If one committed murder whether secretly or publicly, or mistreated one's deceased parents, it is believed that the spirit of the offended would seek revenge on the guilty individual or his or her family until full compensation is made for the misdeed (Gelfand 1962:69). In a traditional Shona family, if any misfortune happens, the probable cause is easily attributed to *ngozi* (Gelfand 1973:61). The belief is that if the spirit is neglected, it can cause calamities (Nyirongo 1997:80). For this reason, much fear is generated whenever *ngozi* is suspected to be operating in a family. It is held that only a witchdoctor is able to cure *ngozi* (Thorpe 1991:57).

In the event that *ngozi* strikes, each member of the affected family is expected to participate in appeasing the angered spirit in order to avoid further attack. The process of addressing the *ngozi* problem entails the payment of compensation to the spirit, and the exorcism of the vengeful spirit, which is performed by a *n'anga* (witchdoctor). Moreover, preventative measures are taken to protect all the blood relatives of the afflicted persons against future attacks (Nakah 2006:31). In this situation, Christians experience a tension when they refuse to participate in these traditional ways of appeasing the *ngozi* spirit. Their family members may accuse them of being directly or indirectly responsible for the misfortunes happening in the family, which in this case, is associated with the angered *ngozi* spirit.

When missionaries introduced Christianity in the late 19th century, they did not understand the Shona people's spiritual worldview since they came from a different culture. Hence, this issue was not addressed much. Whenever missionaries taught on the relationship between the living and the dead, the teaching was treated with much suspicion (Gelfand 1973:56). Gehman (1999:140) pointed out that when a stranger to African culture suggests that it is impossible to communicate with the ancestors, the person is treated as one who does not know or understand their belief. His opinion may therefore be dismissed as untrue and uninformed.

In the aftermath of independence however, the leadership in most churches in Zimbabwe became indigenous. Like the European missionaries, these indigenous leaders have not fully engaged with the *ngozi* issue in a biblically sound, culturally effective and responsive manner. The upbringing of the Shona people in African Traditional Religion (ATR) challenges the church leaders to instruct believers on depending upon the Lord Jesus and detaching themselves from the practices of the African traditions, which are incompatible with biblical teaching. The Shona people believe that sicknesses, which cannot be treated easily at the hospital, are due to the active intervention of an agent, which may be a witch, a ghost, an ancestor or an evil spirit (Magezi 2005:35). The cause of these sicknesses may be attributed to the breaking of taboos and offences against God or ancestral spirits (Mwaura 2000:79). Whenever death occurs, people seek to know its cause (Mbiti 1969:155). Hence, it is common for the Shona people to say, "*Izvi zvoda zvechivanhu,*" (this particular illness now requires an African way of dealing with it). This suggests that Christianity and western medicine are incapable of addressing the spiritual issues.

Churches in Zimbabwe need to come up with a response to this situation. If they fail to do so, then their members will inevitably look for help from the African traditionalists whose methods of intervention involve speaking to the spirits of the

dead, which is incompatible with biblical teaching (Magezi 2006). Hence, there is need for a meaningful Christian response to the problem.

### **1.1.2 Problem statement**

In the light of the research problem identified above, the following research question arises:

In the context where Christians are gripped by fear of the spiritual forces of *ngozi*, such as in Zimbabwe, how can *ngozi* be understood from a biblical perspective in a way that would enable pastoral ministry address the issue appropriately?

From the main question, the following related questions are developed:

- What is the biblical teaching on spirits that manifest as those of the dead (*ngozi*)?
- How do traditional Shona people understand *ngozi*?
- What pastoral and strategic guidelines can the church in Zimbabwe follow to help those affected by *ngozi*?

## **1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

In a context where Christians are gripped by fear of the spiritual forces of *ngozi* such as in Zimbabwe, the aim of this study is to determine how *ngozi* should be understood from a biblical perspective in a way that would enable pastoral ministry address the issue appropriately.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives are crucial:

- To investigate the biblical teaching about spirits that manifest as those of the dead;
- To investigate the Shona understanding of *ngozi* (avenging spirits);
- To develop guidelines for pastoral intervention in the *ngozi* crisis.

### **1.3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT**

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the spiritual manifestations of *ngozi* are not the spirits of the dead but they are demons. Consequently, a biblically based pastoral ministry needs to be appropriately informed to effectively address the fears that believers have about *ngozi*.

### **1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH**

For Darragh (2007) and Louw (1998:90), practical theology is an established way of doing contemporary theology that follows some form of hermeneutic circle. It claims to connect the world of human action with Christian traditions resulting in a transformative practice. De Wet (2006) suggests that an example of a model that may be fruitfully used for wording a practical-theoretical study is Zeffass's model. In this study, the Zeffass's model will be adapted for the interaction of basis theory, meta-theory and empirical study, and practice theory.

#### **1.4.1 Basis theory**

Concerning basis theory, an exegetical study will be done on passages that are relevant to the subject according to systematic and historical-grammatical methods of interpretation. In this way, commentaries on relevant passages will be consulted to draw paradigms and insights from Scriptures on passages, which are related to *ngozi* and then effectively respond to the crisis. Hays (1996) suggests that in dealing with issues that are not directly addressed in the Bible, one should adopt a paradigmatic approach. This approach entails that one studies passages that are related to the issue and then draw a paradigm and conclusion.

#### **1.4.2 Meta-theory**

In order to understand *ngozi* among the Shona, a descriptive analysis of the people's perception and beliefs of avenging spirits will be done to gain clarity on

their fears about *ngozi*. To achieve this, Shona literature on *ngozi* in journals and books will be reviewed. In this regard, an overview of the extensive works on the Shona by Michael Gelfand will be carried out (cf. Gelfand 1962; 1964; 1956; 1973).

### **1.4.3 Empirical study**

A qualitative research will be conducted using selected in-depth interviews with strategic Shona people, such as the Chiefs in rural Zimbabwe (particularly in Rusitu area of Chimanimani), who preside over community courts where *ngozi* cases are discussed, pastors who have dealt with *ngozi* crisis in their churches, and affected church members or those who have witnessed *ngozi*. To some extent, legal practitioners will also be interviewed for information on *ngozi* cases, particularly on how it is addressed within the judiciary. Since the interviews are in-depth, only a maximum sample of five will be conducted with representative persons in each category. Citing Spradley (1979), Babbie & Mouton (2003) rightly point out that in choosing interviewees; three criteria are used, that is, enculturation, current involvement and adequate time. These criteria are also used in choosing interviewees in this research.

Additionally, the researcher's personal experiences from growing up with and pastoring people affected by *ngozi* will be employed. Naturally, this will be done from a subjective mindset and it will therefore provide a subjective 'emic' perspective.

### **1.4.4 Practice theory**

To develop guidelines for pastoral intervention of the *ngozi* crisis, a hermeneutical interaction will take place between the basis and meta-theory. This means that information from the Bible, from existing literature as well as from the interviews will be considered together to arrive at relevant guidelines that would be used in the ministry to deal or counteract the *ngozi* fear.

## **1.5 CHAPTER DIVISIONS**

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 - Basis Theory on biblical teaching on the communication of the living with the dead and their vengeance on the living

- 2.1 The Old Testament teaching on the communication of the living and the dead
- 2.2 The Old Testament teaching on vengeance
- 2.3 The New Testament teaching regarding the communication of the living with the dead
- 2.4 The New Testament teaching on vengeance

Chapter 3 - Meta-theory on the Shona understanding of *Ngozi*

- 3.1 A literature study on avenging spirits among the Shona people of Zimbabwe
- 3.2 An empirical study on the Shona perception of *ngozi*

Chapter 4 - Practice Theory on how biblically informed pastoral ministry can help those affected by *ngozi* threats

- 4.1 A hermeneutical interaction between the basis and the meta-theories
- 4.2 Practical guidelines for pastoral care and counselling of victims of *ngozi* crisis

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

## CHAPTER 2

### BASIS THEORY: A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF WHETHER SPIRITS OF THE DEAD RETURN TO THE LIVING FOR VENGEANCE

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The main objective of this chapter is to determine from a biblical perspective whether the spirits of the dead can take vengeance on the living. If they do not, this chapter will examine the identity of the spirits that appear as those of the dead. It will present the biblical view of the communication between the living and the dead, and of vengeance for murder. To accomplish this task, an exegetical study will be carried out on passages from both the Old and New Testaments, which allude to the possibility of communication between the living and the dead and of the vengeance of the dead on the living. The outcome of the study will lead us to a biblical evaluation of who the avenging spirits are.

The exegetical study will be done on relevant passages to the subject according to systematic and historical-grammatical methods of interpretation. Commentaries on relevant passages will be consulted in order to draw paradigms and insights from Scriptures concerning *ngozi*. As highlighted in the first chapter on methodology, attention shall be paid to Hays' (1996) suggestion that in dealing with issues that are not directly addressed in the Bible, one should adopt a paradigmatic approach. No passages in the Bible directly speak of avenging spirits. However, the belief in avenging spirits is that they are spirits of offended dead people that come to take vengeance on the living (Thorpe 1991:57). For this reason, it is necessary for us to consider whether the Bible teaches that the dead come back to the living. In line with this, passages on necromancy will be studied.

## **2.2 Biblical teaching on communication with the dead**

We shall begin this section by examining Old Testament teachings on communication between the living and the dead.

### **2.2.1 Old Testament teaching on necromancy**

The problems of necromancy and of religious practices relating to the dead in Israel were widespread in ancient Canaan (Evans 2004:152). The belief in the consultation of the dead remained a problem for the Israelites throughout the centuries (2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; Is 8:19; Jer 27:9; cf. Evans 2004:152). Later in Israelite history, necromancy flourished under Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) but was suppressed by Josiah (2 Kings 23:24; cf. Gordon 1986:194). Foreseeing this problem in Israel, Yahweh gave the nation of Israel the law, which warned them against participating in the manner of the nations whose land they would possess. In the Pentateuch, two passages stand out on the prohibition of necromancy. These are Lev. 19:31 and Deut 18:11. In the prophetic books, Isaiah, 8:19 is also clear on the prohibition of necromancy. Below, an exegetical analysis of these passages will be done.

#### **2.2.1.1 Exegetical analysis of Leviticus 19:31**

Lindsey (1985) explains that, "Leviticus is a literary expression of God's desire that His holiness be reflected in the life of His covenant people Israel". This desire was supposed to be reflected in the manner Israelites worshipped God and in their daily lives. In general, Leviticus 1-16 describes how Israelites were to approach God in offering sacrifices while chapters 17-27 show how they were to conduct themselves in a God-fearing manner. Read in context therefore, Leviticus 19:31 addresses the conduct of the Israelites in relationship to God and to one another. The whole of chapter 19 addresses the entire assembly of Israel (19:- 2; cf. Lindsey 1985). The motivation for godly conduct is the holy character of God marked by the words; "Be holy because I the Lord your God, am holy" (19:1).

Moreover, among the various regulations on holy living is the prohibition of necromancy. Israelites were forbidden from turning to mediums for they would be defiled by them. In Hebrew, the word used for medium in this verse is *'ōbōt*. It is translated as “a pit”, thus, referring to a place from which the spirit is called (Rooker 2000:263). In ancient times, it was believed that spirits of the departed were in an underworld (Gordon 1986:195). Consulting these spirits was like calling them up from a pit. However, for Israelites to contact mediums and spiritists, it represented an appeal to other spiritual forces than Yahweh and therefore, a departure from wholehearted trust (Cairns 1992:17). For this reason, there was no tolerance of those who resorted to mediums and wizards as Yahweh would set his face against anyone who engaged in such practices.

By seeking mediums and spirits, Israel would imitate a pagan lifestyle, which is described as prostituting oneself (Lev 20:5-6). The root meaning of *zānâ*, “commit fornication”, which is used in sexual contexts for marital infidelity is used here as a metaphor for infidelity that results from the worship of other gods (Rooker 2000:269). Israel’s relationship with God was to be that of faithfulness. It is compared to a marriage, in which both partners are to be loyal to each other (Jer 3:14; Mal 2:11). Engaging in other forms of worship is therefore, compared to prostitution. It undermined loyalty of the people of Israel to their God. Consequently, Leviticus 19:31 is a passage that calls Israelites to a life of holiness towards God by abstaining from the defilement caused by consulting mediums and spiritists.

#### **2.2.1.1.1 Principles from Leviticus**

The book of Leviticus contains a number of principles concerning necromancy. These are highlighted below:

- God’s people had to approach him with fearing when worshipping him.
- They were to live holy lives and were prohibited from practising necromancy.

- The Lord would set his face against anyone who practised necromancy.
- Those who practised necromancy were regarded as adulterers.

### **2.2.1.2 Exegetical analysis of Deuteronomy 18:9 – 11**

The purpose of the book of Deuteronomy was to get the Israelites to renew the covenant made at Sinai and to make a fresh commitment to the Lord. The unreserved commitment to the Lord was a prerequisite for entering the Promised Land, conquering its inhabitants and living in it in prosperity and peace (Deere 1985). Deuteronomy highlights the practices, which God abhorred (Deut. 18:9). Israelites were not to participate in those detestable practices, which were done by the nations whose land they would possess. Necromancy is mentioned among the practices.

McConville (2002:300) notes that the need to hear a word from the deity was universally felt in the ancient world, and a whole array of esoteric arts and practices grew around it, together with various kinds of experts on these arts. Stories of the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex 7:11), the wise men of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:2), and even the Magi from the East (Matt 2:1) are some examples, which show that the people of the ancient times wanted to hear from deities (2002:300).

Spiritists and mediums were perceived as those who conversed with deities. Spiritists attempted to communicate with the dead in order to gain advice, information on the future, or help in manipulation (Deere 1985). They claimed supernatural knowledge and so asserted dominance over others (Harman 2001:186). The practice of necromancy, like any of the mentioned practices in Deuteronomy 18:9-10, is detestable to the Lord and is one of the reasons Canaanites were being dispossessed of the land (Deut 18:12). Therefore, the Israelites were not to act like them.

### **2.2.1.2.1 Principles from Deuteronomy**

The following are some of the relevant principles concerning necromancy in the book of Deuteronomy:

- Necromancy is a detestable practice before the Lord.
- Necromancy was one of the reasons the Canaanites were being dispossessed of the land.
- As God's people, Israelites were not to practise necromancy.

### **2.2.1.3 Exegetical analysis of Isaiah 8:19**

The purpose of Isaiah's prophecy was to remind his readers of the special relationship they had with God as members of the nation of Israel, His special covenant community (Martin 1985a). Israel had a covenant with God, which promised the enjoyment of a special relationship with Him, possession of the land of Canaan and the opportunity to be a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:18-21; 17:3-8, 19; cf. Martin 1985a).

However, Israel had strayed from the ways of the Lord. In Isaiah, Israel is described as rebellious children and as a sinful nation, which has no understanding of her God (1:2-4). Yahweh calls her to repentance and promises her forgiveness (1:18). According to Martin (1985a), in the book, Isaiah calls the people of Judah back to a proper covenantal relationship with God. Israel is reminded of her sinful condition and its consequences. If she would not repent, she would end up in Babylonian captivity. Isaiah 8 has a message of judgment (8:1-10), hope (11-17) and advice for the people to follow the Lord and not mediums and spiritists (18-22). If Israelites would not heed the word of the Lord, consultation of mediums would be an option for them. Spiritism had flourished in the ancient Near East; the people believed in receiving oracles from spirits of the dead. Thus, some other nations viewed Israel's prophets in the same way as those who evoked spirits in fortune-telling (Watts 1985:126).

Isaiah probed Israel to think of seeking God's ways in his rhetoric; "When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isaiah 8:19). The first question suggests that consulting mediums should not be mistaken for seeking God. The second question shows the irrationality of consulting the dead on behalf of the living. Consulting the dead could not bring life to the living; the people of Israel needed to turn to the Lord for their future rather than seeking after the dead. Goldingay (2001:70) rightly notes that the testimony of Isaiah was supposed to be the people's recourse when they wanted to know about the future. Instead, Israel in her anxiety had turned to other forms of traditional religions and her last state was going to be worse than the first. As members of the chosen family, Israelites were reminded to seek the Lord. Seeking after mediums and spiritists was not an alternative avenue for seeking the Lord (Isaiah 8:19).

#### **2.2.1.3.1 Principles from Isaiah**

In the book of Isaiah, the following principles on necromancy are also found:

- God's people were to seek God and not spirit mediums.
- God's people were not to consult the dead on behalf of the living.
- God's people should know that consulting the dead was not a way to God.

From the study of the three passages above, it is clear that necromancy was a common practice in the ancient Near Eastern world. The passages uniformly condemn necromancy. Some may argue that the prohibition of consultation with the dead implies that it was possible to consult them through mediums; but God forbade them to do so for the practice changed their focus from worshiping God to seeking mediums (Gehman 2005:277). The passage that is commonly used to argue for the possibility of the communication of the living with the dead is 1 Samuel 28:1-20. Therefore, what follows is an exegetical analysis of this

passage to determine whether it teaches that the dead can communicate with the living.

#### **2.2.1.4 Exegetical analysis of 1 Samuel 28: 1 – 20**

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel centre on the lives of three figures, namely, Samuel, Saul and David (Merril 1983 [1985]). The first book of Samuel shows a shift in Israel's national administration from the last judge to the first two kings. The first king, Saul, emerged in response to a request and the choice of men against the will of God (1 Samuel 8:5-20). His life was characterized by disobedience to God's word. In contrast, David came as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Despite David's struggle with sin, he showed a repentant heart (1 Samuel 15:24). 1 Samuel 28-31 describes the exit of Saul from the kingship of Israel and the entrance of David to the throne.

The chronology of events in 1 Samuel 28 in which Saul consults with a medium actually follows that of chapter 29. What is described in chapter 29 is the cause of Saul's worry. The sequence of events given in these passages however serves the writer's purpose to record Saul's position first, and then David's dilemma before the battle (Evans 2004:152). Chapter 28:3-30:31 provides an elaborate description of the background to the decisive battle with the Philistines. It describes how Saul and David were placed at this critical phase in the Israelite history (Mauchline 1971:182).

Two issues are highlighted in verse 3; first, Samuel was dead and second, Saul had expelled the mediums and the spiritists from the land of Israel (28:3). The verse reiterates the account of Samuel's death, which has already been mentioned in 25:1. The purpose of this reiteration is not clear. Perhaps it was to indicate that Samuel used to provide spiritual guidance for Saul in times of war as was the case in 1 Samuel 15:3-4; but by this time, Samuel had died. If this is the case, then the reiteration of the death of Samuel could be to clarify Saul's dilemma in facing the Philistine in the coming battle.

When Saul saw the Philistine army assembling at Shunem in preparation for war, he became frightened and “terror filled his heart” (28:4; Gordon 1986:194). He enquired of the Lord for the strategy that would assure his success in the battle but the Lord did not answer him, not even by dreams, Urim or prophets (v. 6). Earlier in the narrative, it was mentioned that the Spirit had departed from Saul (1 Sam 16:14) and that God was now with David (1 Samuel 18:12). Saul’s earlier use of Urim and Thummim is recorded in 14:36 -42 but since the prophet Gad had already defected to David (22:5), it is likely that there was no accredited prophet of Yahweh in Saul’s court. The available prophets could not provide satisfactory answers from God (Gordon 1986:195). Moreover, Saul had slaughtered the priests of Nob (22:11-19) and this minimized his chances of getting help from any of the sacred lot (Mauchline 1971:182). In desperation and fear, Saul decided to seek guidance from a medium. He sent his attendants to find a woman who was a medium (v. 7).

A medium or necromancer (*'ōbôṭ*) appears in verses 7, 8 and 9 and this refers to the spirit of the dead person in general rather than the spirit of the ancestor. (Tsumira 2007:617). The medium (*'ōbôṭ*) is the possessor of a “ghost spirit” (*ba<sup>a</sup>al'ôb*) and is used in verse 7. Gordon (1986:194) explains that the word *'ôb*, which means ghost or spirit, has variously been connected with an Arabic verb, which means to return from dust (*'ôb*), as in Isaiah 29:4, for example. When used with a Hittite word (*a-a-bi*), it means pit from where a ghost emerges.

Mediums were perceived as all knowing. Tsumira (2007:620) explains that “mediums” (*yiddeōnîm*), which may literally be translated as, all knowing, occurs 11 times in the Old Testament, always in parallel with *'ôb* and as a hendiadys. It is used twice in referring to the practice of necromancy (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6); and the other nine times it refers to the practitioner, but never to the 'spirit' itself. Therefore, the concept, “all knowing” refers not to the dead but to the medium. The mediums were understood to act as go betweens, journeying from

the world of the dead to the world of the living and vice versa. In other words, the wizard or witch knew how to make contacts with the underworld. The spirit was the special guide used by the wizard or witch; it was therefore familiar to him or her (Gordon 1986:194).

As already indicated, necromancy was forbidden in both Deuteronomic and priestly law (Deut. 18:9-14; Lev 19:31; 20:27) since they are detestable to the Lord (Gordon 1986:194; Evans 2004:152). Saul might have expelled them from the land in obedience to biblical instruction (Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:11; cf. Klein 1983:270). It is also possible that he intended to eliminate potential confusion, which the mediums could have caused in Israel. However, it is on record that King Sudea of the Sumerian city of Lagash got rid of the sorcerers and witches from his kingdom a thousand years before Saul (Gordon 1986:194). King Sudea obviously did not do so in compliance with biblical teaching for it was not known to him. Without denying that Saul might have expelled the mediums from the land in obedience to God's word, it is also possible that he did so for other reasons. At any rate, it is clear that in the face of impending battle and the fact of Samuel's death, Saul was challenged to reconsider visiting the mediums, more especially when God had remained silent to his prayers.

Even though necromancy was forbidden in Israel, its practitioners were still there (Klein 1983:270). The divination Saul requested was the kind of activity that the Philistines engaged in (1 Samuel 6:2), and that was considered sinful (1 Samuel 15:23; cf. Klein 1983:270). Saul requested for the medium to bring up Samuel (v.8). Gordon (1986:195) explains that Saul's request "reflects the common view of the ancients that the dead dwell in the underworld (*Sheol* or pit in Old Testament terms). The belief in bringing up the dead was common in the ancient Near Eastern world. For instance, the Mesopotamian sun, *Šamaš* is described as *Šūiū*, the one to bring up the spirit of the dead (Tsumira 2007:617).

However, the woman did not immediately respond to Saul's request. Instead, she reminded her client (Saul) that Saul<sup>1</sup> had forbidden the practice. Her reaction shows the strictness of the law, which abolished necromancy. It further highlights the inconsistency of Saul's character. He had forbidden the practice so sternly that the mediums, who still practised it, did so secretly. Saul however, assured the medium of security. Ironically, he swore by the Lord on a practice, which he knew the Lord had forbidden (Evans 2004:154).

There has been much debate on whether or not this was the real spirit of Samuel. There are at least three interpretations of this passage. Firstly, it was a mere deception of Saul by the woman of Endor; secondly, Satan spoke through the woman of Endor and; thirdly, the spirit of Samuel spoke through the medium of Endor.

#### **2.2.1.4.1 The view that it was a mere deception**

It has been argued that the medium of Endor deceived Saul and was in fact a lawbreaker, who had been removed from the land of Israel. Proponents of this view argue that Samuel did not speak through the medium but it was a mere deception. More so, they note that only the medium, and not Saul, claimed to have seen Samuel. It is further argued that what the woman claimed to see could have been any old person and not necessarily Samuel (Gehman 1999:144).

However, Saul was convinced that he was speaking to Samuel. The spirit reiterated the words which Samuel had once spoken to Saul (1 Samuel 15: 17-25). The medium could not have known these words. Also, the accuracy of the prediction of the events of the next day makes it likely that it was Samuel who spoke through the medium. As Archer (1982:181) affirms; "The shade or apparition sounded like authentic message from God, with its announcement of

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<sup>1</sup> She did not yet know that she was speaking to Saul. Hence, she referred to Saul in third person rather than in the second person, as one to whom she was speaking.

doom on the guilty unthankful king.” In a similar vein, Gordon (1986:196) remarks that Samuel spoke as a prophet and not as a ghost. He adds that, “It even sounded like something Samuel might have said had he remained alive after the massacre of Ahimelech and the priests of Nob” (1 Samuel 22:11-19).

Even though the mediums had been expelled from the land, it was not because they were deceivers, even though some of them might have been. They were expelled because necromancy was an abomination to the Lord (Evans 2004:152). Suggesting that they were expelled from Israel because they were liars or deceivers would mean that if they were not liars they could have remained in Israel even though they practised necromancy. Such an argument, however, is from silence. It is not mentioned in the Bible prior to this incident that the mediums should be expelled because they were liars.

Furthermore, it is not convincing to argue that the woman deceived Saul in this incident; if she intended to do so, she would have told him that he would not die in the battle. She could have told him what pleased him especially when she was caught practising what Saul had sternly forbidden. Her boldness in reminding Saul of his disobedience to the Lord, and that he and his son would die the next day could not be a mere deception, an intelligent guess or personal courage. It is more likely that a deceiver would make the deceived feel comfortable by telling him/her a lie. This is not the case in the story of the medium of Endor.

#### **2.2.1.4.2 The view that the spirit was Satan**

The second view argues that the spirit, which appeared to the medium, was Satan. Gehman (1999:144) states that the Reformers as well as the early church fathers held this viewpoint. Tertullian (cited in Gehman 2005:280) called the appearance of the spirits, a rivalry of truth by an unclean spirit. He believed that an evil spirit represented the soul of Samuel and appeared in the likeness of the prophet. Tertullian argued that God could not have allowed the soul of any saint,

much less of a prophet, to be dragged out of (its resting place in Hades) by a demon. He further argued that God does not surrender the soul of a just man to the power of demons; what happened in this incident is that a devil took Samuel's figure and imitated his voice in order to drive Saul to despair.

In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformers and theologians followed the teachings of the church fathers that Satan himself appeared to Saul pretending to be Samuel. Martin Luther (cited in Gehman 1999:144) called the appearance of Samuel, a devil's ghost and Calvin called it a sceptre. This approach avoids basic problems of interpretation on questions such as: if God refused to speak with Saul through Urim and prophets, why should he speak through Samuel in a manner he condemns? Moreover, if the rest of Scriptures teaches that the dead do not communicate with the living, how can it be that God allowed the medium to communicate his message to Saul through the spirit of Samuel?

Even though this position avoids the above questions, however, the problem with Tertullian's argument is that it works from the assumption that the powers of a demon dragged the soul of Samuel out of its resting place. Why could not a *different force make Samuel appear to the medium and give the message to Saul?* Where did Tertullian get the clue from the passage that demons dragged Samuel from his rest? It appears exegetically weak and it cannot be substantiated from the passage that the devil pretended to be Samuel. The passage should have hinted on this. The narrator of the story takes it for granted that Samuel spoke to Saul through the medium. Tertullian's view excludes the possibility that God in his sovereignty might have allowed Samuel's spirit to appear to the medium.

#### **2.2.1.4.3 The view that the spirit was Samuel**

This view has two readings. There are those who argue that what happened in this incident is repeatable. Whenever people consult the dead, they can

communicate with them just as in this incident. There are those who say the spirit, which appeared to the medium was Samuel but that the passage does not set a pattern of what can always happen anytime people consult the dead. The latter explanation interprets 1 Samuel 28 as a unique incident that shows a special working of the power of God in a particular situation (Gehman 1999:145).

This explanation is consistent with the biblical teaching expressed in other passages. Job (7:7-10) states that, life is just a breath and that his eyes would never see life again. Job compares the human life to a cloud, which vanishes and does not return and that is what the remembrance of the dead is like. In a similar vein, Ecclesiastes 9:4-6 states;

Anyone who is among the living has hope - even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.

The teaching in these passages shows that the dead cease to have any function with the living. There is no communication between them and the living. However, if God wants to do anything, he still can. In the case of Balaam, he made a donkey speak (Numbers 22:29) but that did not mean that whenever man goes against the will of God and he is riding on a donkey, it will speak. It happened there and then to communicate a necessary message through a method and means, which were unusual. The case of 1 Samuel 28 could be considered similar to this. It has to be understood as a special case in which God overrode the normal and obvious in order to show Saul that he would get comfort from nowhere if the Lord has denied him (1 Samuel 16:7).

From the discussion above, it is clear that it was not a mere deception that the medium did speak with Samuel neither was it the devil that spoke through the medium. Instead, it was Samuel. As Boettner (1958:149) argues, "It seems clear

that in this instance God actually sent back the prophet Samuel; that he superseded the séance and used this as an occasion to pronounce judgment upon the wilfully disobedient King Saul". The passage cannot be used as a basis for the formulation of a doctrine that the dead can communicate with the living. What ought to direct us in terms of the question of whether the dead can communicate with the living are other passages already mentioned in this discussion such as, Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12 and Isaiah 8:19, which clearly forbid necromancy.

With this view that it was Samuel who appeared to the medium and spoke to Saul, the rest of the exegetical study of this passage (1 Samuel 28:1-20) continues from this position. In 1 Samuel 28:12, when the medium saw Samuel, she cried. Some versions of the LXX however, replaced Samuel with Saul in verse 12 (Evans 2004:154). This makes the passage to read, "When the woman saw Saul, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me?'" Such a translation suggests that the woman perceived that her client was Saul independent of her association of Samuel with Saul. This case is unlikely. If it were so, the rendering could have been; "When the woman realised that it was Saul..." and not, "When the woman saw Saul..." She had already seen Saul but did not realise that it was Saul until she saw Samuel.

Nevertheless, the cause of the woman's cry is not explicit. There are three possible explanations for the cry. First, it may have been the fear of Saul that made her to cry when she realised whom her client was seeing that Samuel evoked an association with Saul in her mind. This could have made her notice the disguised Saul for the first time; hence, she cried. Second, the manner in which Samuel appeared, which was not like that of normal apparitions, could have made her cry. Third, it could have been both the fear of Saul and the manner in which Samuel appeared. Evans explains that what happened in this case was disturbing and unexpected to both Saul and the woman, and Saul

genuinely believed that it was Samuel talking to him through the woman (2004:154).

Despite the cry and the fear of the medium, Saul promptly asked the medium what she saw. She told Saul that it was “a spirit coming out of the ground” (v.13; NIV). The Hebrew name translated spirit is *'elōhîm* (Tsumira 2007:617). It is better translated as gods since the accompanying participle, ‘coming up’ is plural. However, it is not necessarily more than a shade of the spirit that the woman saw (v.14; cf. Gordon 1986:196). Mauchline (1971:182) points out that commonly, the Hebrew rendering is ‘gods’ or ‘God’ but it can also mean ‘a godlike being’ or ‘an angel’. In this context, *'elōhîm* refers to a spirit of Samuel.

Subsequently, Samuel asked Saul why he was disturbing him since the Lord had rejected Saul. Samuel repeated the same words, which he had used in his lifetime, about sin and its consequence and Saul’s replacement by David (1 Samuel 15:17-25; cf. Evans 2004:154). Tsumira (2007:620) notes that even though some terms such as bringing up, and the manner in which Samuel appeared and delivered his last oracle, point to spirit conjuration, it appears that the interview depended on some supernatural powers, which the medium did not possess.

Mauchline (1971:182) however argues that verses 17-19 were inserted by an editor who wanted to establish the connection between Saul’s battle against the Philistines with the judgment passed by Samuel on him on the former occasion (1971:182). If Mauchline is right, then that would mean that the woman did not echo what Samuel said to Saul about his disobedience to the Lord. This would weaken the argument that the utterance of the spirit (Samuel) accurately matched Samuel’s earlier utterance in 1 Samuel 15. However, Mauchline does not give reasons why verses 17-19 could not have been part of the original story. Moreover, he does not provide evidence for his suggestion that this was an insertion by an editor and not an original part of the story.

Samuel's utterance to Saul was too much for him to handle. He fell on the ground full-length, filled with fear. The medium had to persuade him to eat. Though he ate, Saul was even more depressed after he got the message from the medium than before (vv. 21 – 24).

#### **2.2.1.4.4 Summary of the teaching of 1 Samuel 28:1 – 26**

The teaching in this narration centres on the end of the life of the disobedient King Saul. Chapter 28 portrays the desperation of the disobedient king whose decisions had an adverse effect on him. He had killed the priests at Nob (22:6-24) and was hunting after David (19:1-23) in an attempt to counterfeit the words of the Lord that the kingdom had been given to his neighbour who was better than him (15:28).

Saul's disobedience to the word of God brought him to the gruesome death he encountered in chapter 31. The focus of the story is not to teach on whether or not the dead can communicate with the living. As Brueggemann (1990:196) argues, the narrative has no real interest in the summoning of the spirit or in the role and the capacity of the woman. Instead, it has to be understood in the context of the life of Saul. Even though Samuel communicated with Saul through the medium, this is an exceptional case and not a norm. The dead do not communicate with the living. In this case, God exceptionally allowed it in order to drive the message home, that is, the message of judgment to the inconsistent and disobedient king.

#### **2.2.1.4.5 Principles from 1 Samuel 28**

The following principles concerning communication with the dead can be summed up from 1 Sam 28:

- The dead do not speak through mediums.

- The account of 1 Samuel 28: 1 – 26 is a unique incident.
- In this unique incident, the spirit of Samuel spoke through the medium of Endor.

#### **2.2.1.5 A summary of the Old Testament principles**

The following points represent the summary of the Old Testament principles on the communication between the living and the dead:

- God's people are to approach God with reverent fear when worshipping him.
- Necromancy is detestable to God.
- God's people are prohibited from practising necromancy.
- The dead do not speak through mediums.
- The account of 1 Samuel 28: 1-26 is a unique incident.
- In this unique incident, the spirit of Samuel spoke through the medium of Endor.

#### **2.2.2 New Testament teaching on necromancy**

Many passages in the New Testament speak about the dead. However, only Luke 16 seems to suggest communication of the living with the dead. Some passages of the New Testament will be used in this section to explain the place and position of the dead in relationship to the living. In this regard, only Luke 16:19-31 will be studied in detail among other New Testament passages.

##### **2.2.2.1 The story of the rich man and Lazarus**

Various scholars view the story of the rich man and Lazarus as a standard New Testament passage for teaching on what happens after death. Based on the passage, Garret (1995:677) argues that there is no change of destiny after death. John Bunyan (cited in Garret 1995:792) used an exposition of the story of the

rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) as the setting for an extended warning against distresses of eternal punishment. Millard Erickson used this passage as the basis for refuting the Roman Catholic teaching on the second chance of salvation in his statement that, "The Roman Catholic idea of a second chance to accept the gospel message after death seems inconsistent with other teachings of Scriptures" (e.g., Luke 16:19 – 31; Erickson 1998:793).

In Zimbabwe, this researcher has heard preachers use this passage to condemn communication between the living and the dead. The question that arises is, "Does the parable of the rich man and Lazarus teach on the communication of the living with the dead?" This takes us to an exposition of the passage.

#### **2.2.2.2 Exegetical study of Luke 16: 19 – 31**

One of Luke's main purposes in this book was to present Jesus as the Son of Man, who was rejected by Israel. Following the rejection, Jesus turned to the Gentiles to enlighten them about the programme of the kingdom of God and salvation (Martin 1985). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus serves as the background of this rejection by the Samaritans (9:51-56), the worldly man (9:57-62), lawyers (10:25-37) and the Pharisees (11:37-54).

This parable comes after the parable of a shrewd master (16:1-15) and a relationship can be established between the two regarding attitudes towards money. In the parable of the shrewd master, Jesus encouraged his listeners to use their money for spiritual purposes (16:9). His thrust was that undue devotion to money could make a person serve it like a master. Jesus told them that, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (16:13). The Pharisees, who loved money, did not accept this advice. Instead, they sneered at Jesus (16:14). He accused them that they justified themselves in the eyes of men, but God knew their hearts. What is valued among men is detestable in the sight of God (16:15). Jesus' response to the Pharisees

centred on the point that they disobeyed “the Law and the Prophets” by their love of money. In verses 16-18, Jesus stresses that the law of the Lord does not change. He states that, “It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least of a pen to drop out of the law” (16:17). The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows how the Pharisees transgressed the “Law and the Prophets” in their attitude towards money and the poor.

The “Law and the Prophets” command the rich to care for the poor. In Deuteronomy 15, part of the requirements for the blessings of the Lord in the Promised Land was for the people to take care of the poor. Being tight-fisted towards the poor was forbidden. Rather, the Israelites were to be open-handed and lend freely to their poor brothers (Deut. 15:7-9). Moreover, Israelites were solemnly warned to be careful with this command. If they showed ill-will, and their poor brothers and sisters cried to the Lord, they would be guilty of sin. To avoid this, Israelites were to give generously without a grudging heart so that the Lord would bless them (Deut. 15:9-11).

The prophet Isaiah also spoke of the need to care for the poor. Isaiah 58:7 details what was expected from Israelites when fasting. They were to share food with the hungry, provide poor wanderers with shelter, cloth the naked and not to turn away from their “flesh and blood”. Zeal and enthusiasm before the Lord without care and concern for the poor were condemned (Isaiah 58:3-4).

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is meant to show the consequences of the neglect of the “Law and the Prophets”. Seccombe (1982:179) rightly states that, “The parable deals with a flagrant outrage of ‘the Law and the Prophets’”. In the parable, the rich man is depicted in opulent attire. It appeared that prosperity was associated with blessings of obedience to God’s law. The Old Testament teaches that obedience to the law results in prosperity (Deut 28: 1-14, Ps 1:1-3), and disobedience in curses. Lazarus is described as one covered with sores. This paints the picture of the sickness of Job. Lazarus could have been regarded

as cursed and suffering from divine punishment (Green 1997:605). The irony is that the rich man was in fact, disobeying the "Law and the Prophets" (Deut 15:16-19; Is 58:7).

The beggar is mentioned by name. Seccombe (1982:179) suggests that, "The effect of naming him is to make him more than a 'faceless' beggar: it gives him a place in the rich man's life. Nothing much is mentioned about the life of Lazarus besides that he died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side (v.22). Death separated the rich man from Lazarus and they were transported to two different places. Some Jewish writings speak of a permanent separation in the afterlife. Enoch writes of the separation of the spirits of the righteous from those of the wicked (1 Enoch 22:9-14). On the side of the righteous, there is a bright spring of water and grief on the side of the wicked, who will wait in anguish for the final judgment.

The rich man died and he was buried. Lazarus also died and the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. The expression, "Abraham's bosom" is not common. Morris (1984:254) points out that this expression plainly denotes felicity. The bliss of the saved is pictured as a great feast in which the favoured one reclines with his head on the bosom of the great patriarch.

Lazarus was without torment and indeed reclined in the hand of God at the bosom of Abraham. The expression, 'Abraham's bosom' is used here perhaps as a more concrete expression of 'being gathered to his fathers' (Genesis 15:15; Deut 31:16; Judges 2:10). It is otherwise unknown anywhere else in the first century Judaism (Morris 1984:254). However, similar expressions are found in 1 Kings (1:21; 2:10; 11; 21), in which the dying are associated with joining their fathers. These verses however, are not explicit as to where the fathers are. The situation of Lazarus here was more than just being dead and joining father Abraham; he was being comforted (16:24) while the rich man was in agony. This parable shows that the dead are in a conscious state, in which they can

recognize each other. The dead rich man saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side (16:22).

The rich man made two requests to Abraham. The first one was that Lazarus should dip the tip of his finger in water to cool the rich man's tongue (v. 24). The request was not granted. Abraham asked him to remember that in his lifetime he received good things and Lazarus bad things. Lazarus was being comforted and the rich man was in agony. Abraham also told the rich man that there was a chasm fixed between the two places, where Abraham and the rich man were (vv. 25-26). Abraham did not suggest that those who are rich and fortunate in this world will be unfortunate in the afterlife. In this parable, the rich man was a victim of his own choice (1991:606). He should have heeded what the "Law and the Prophets" teach about taking care of the poor (Deut 15:16 – 19; Is 58:7).

The second request of the rich man was that Lazarus be sent to the house of the rich man's father to warn his five brothers so that they would not come to the same place of torment. Abraham's reply to this was that they have Moses (Law) and the Prophets. They should listen to them (vv. 27-29). The rich man suggested that if someone rose from the dead, his brothers might believe him. Abraham assured him that, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they are not going to be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (v.31). Abraham's response shows that the "Law and the Prophets" were enough for the rich man's brothers to know that disobedience to God brings judgment. If the rich man's brother would pay attention to the "Law and the Prophets", they would not end up in the place of torment like their brother.

Green (1995:609) remarks that; "The idea of the dead returning to visit the living was common in the ancient world, with some literary expression of this idea oriented towards the return of the dead for the purpose of revealing his or her fate or the fate of others in the next world". By speaking of one who rises from

the dead, Jesus probably referred to his resurrection and the unbelief of the Jews *after his resurrection*.

The purpose of this parable was to warn the Pharisees of their attitude towards money and the poor. The Pharisees' failure to heed the teachings of the "Law and the Prophets" is the prime cause of their behaviour. They were justifying themselves but not by the "Law and the Prophets." They failed to take heed of the "Law and the Prophets". If they had done so, they would have had a good attitude towards the poor.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus therefore teaches the rich to help the poor. The rich are reminded that the privileges of wealth they have in this world are for a passing moment. Like a shrewd manager, they should think of where they are going after the present life. The present joy derived from riches cannot assure them the same joy in the future. Seccombe's (1982:179) observation that, "The point of the story is that a man's good and evil deeds, not his affluence, determine his position in the after life", can be considered useful.

Even though the parable is meant to rebuke the Pharisees' attitude towards wealth and the poor, there are some parts of the parable, which could be used to teach on the communication between the living and the dead. Like other New Testament passages, which teach that when people die they go before the Lord (Phil 1:23, 2 Cor 5:8), this parable shows that when the rich man and Lazarus died, each went to the place where he deserved. They did not roam around the homestead as African traditional beliefs affirm (Nyirongo 1997:81). Moreover, the fact that the dead have no share with the living of things on earth (Job 7:7-10; Eccl. 9:4-6) is reinforced in this passage. There is no need for Lazarus to come back to the living since the living has enough resources that would enable them to know the Lord's teaching.

In sum, even though the parable of the rich man and Lazarus was meant to correct the pharisaic attitude towards money and the poor, it is also appropriate and relevant to teaching about the communication between the living and the dead. The dead depart from the place of the living and they cannot return to the living for any task or responsibility.

### **2.2.2.3 Principles from Luke**

The principles on communication with dead in the book of Luke can be summed up as follows:

- When people die they go to places they deserve.
- They cannot move from the place of their destiny to another.
- They do not return as spirits to the living.
- There is no communication between the living and the dead.

The study above shows that the dead cannot communicate with the living. The Shona however claim that the mistreated dead return for vengeance on the living (Gelfand 1964:32; Thorpe 1991:57). Is it the dead that come for vengeance or it is God? In an attempt to answer the question, it is helpful to study the passages that speak of vengeance for murder.

The Bible speaks of vengeance for murder in many passages of the Old Testament. In some cases, the Shona description of a person affected by *ngozi* resembles that of a person cursed for murder in the Bible (Genesis 4:11-13). Could it be that even though the dead do not return as spirits to the living, the murdered and offended may be allowed to do so by God to enable them take vengeance? A study of such passages helps to see if the Shona belief in *ngozi* is taught in the Bible.

### **2.2.3 Biblical teaching on the curse of bloodguilt and vengeance for the dead**

In what follows, we shall examine what the Bible teaches on the curse of bloodguilt and on vengeance for the dead.

#### **2.2.3.1 The curse of Cain: an exegetical analysis of Genesis 4:1 – 15**

The first murder incident in the Bible is that committed by Cain against his brother, Abel (Gen 4). When God asked him where Abel his brother was, Cain replied that he was not his brother's keeper. Cain was told that his brother's blood was crying to God from the ground. In the Bible, blood is associated with life as in Leviticus (17:11), in which blood is personified. It is expressed as "crying." Wenham (1987:107) explains that the participle 'crying' מִקְרָא used in Genesis 4:10 has been used of a desperate person who is calling for help. In some passages of the Bible it is used in the context of the desperate cry of a man without food (Gen 41:55), expecting to die (Exodus 14:10), or oppressed by the enemies (Judg 4:3). He adds that it is the scream for help of a woman being raped (Deut 22:24, 27) or a plea to God from victims of injustice (Exodus 22:22-23, 26-27). In this context, the shed blood of Abel was calling for justice to be done concerning the murder.

Cain was cursed. The curse resulted in the soil becoming ineffective to Cain and he became a vagrant or wanderer on the earth (1987:107). Gunkel (cited in Wenham 1987:107) rightly explains that Cain had offered the fruit of the land, and given the land his brother's blood to drink: but from the land, the blood cried against him, the land refused him its fruit, and he was banned from the land.

Three points are highlighted in this passage. Cain was cursed, the curse is for the individual and the effect of the curse was a separation or cutting off an individual from his community (Westermann 1974:308). Cain would be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. The unusual combination of a fugitive and a wanderer occurs only in Genesis 4:12 in the Old Testament. This combination shows that Cain would be a displaced wanderer (Westermann 1974:308).

Westermann explains that the picture of a displaced wanderer does not describe the life of nomads. The ordinary Bedouin could not be described as a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth (1974:308).

Cain complained that his punishment was more than he could bear (v.13). He realized that the curse meant that he had been driven from the face of the ground, God's face would be hidden from him and he would be a vagabond and a wanderer. What Cain expressed here was more of a cry than a request for forgiveness. It was an expression of his emotion for his punishment from the Lord (Westermann 1974:308). If the Lord turned his face from Cain, that means he would face troubles. Westermann explains the meaning of 'being hidden from the face of the Lord' by comparing the statement with Psalms (139:7-12) and Amos (9:3-4). He observes that, to hide oneself, to cover oneself before God (before his face) refers to the anger of God. This can also mean the Lord's displeasure in a life of sin (Lev 17:3; 20:3; 20:6; 26:17; Jer 21:10; 44:11; Ezek 14:8; 15:7).

When Cain complained of the burden of his curse, God mitigated the sentence without altering it substantially. The punishment remained the same but no one would kill him (Westermann 1974:308). Cain was given a mark for his protection. Assohoto and Ngewa (2006:19) note that, "It may have been a sign which Cain could see to give him assurance of God's protection but the message of this sign was not really a comforting one for what it meant is 'this is my man to punish, leave him alone!'".

In this story, the spirit of Abel did not go to Cain for retribution. The blood of Abel cried to God. However, 1 Enoch 22:5-6 suggests that the spirit of Abel attacked Cain and his descendants:

I saw the spirits of the children of the people who were dead, and their voices were reaching out unto heaven until this very moment. I asked Rufael, the angel who was with me, and said to him 'the spirits, the voice which are reaching out

(into heaven) like this is making suit, whose (spirit) is this'? And he answered me saying, 'this is the spirit which had left Abel, who Cain his brother had killed; it continues to sue him until all of (Cain's) seed is exterminated from the face of the earth, and his seed has disintegrated from among the spirits of the people'

This passage of apocrypha fails to represent accurately the narration in Genesis 4:4-15. In Genesis 4:10, the blood of Abel cried to God and not to Cain. Abel's blood is pictured as crying to God for vengeance. Moreover, there is no hint from the story that Cain's children were haunted by the spirit of Abel.

From the study of this passage, it is clear that vengeance for Abel's life was taken by God when he cursed Cain for the murder. After the flood, there was a universal law against shedding human blood.

#### **2.2.3.2 Findings from Genesis**

**Four points sum up our findings from the Genesis passage below:**

- The blood of Abel cried to God.
- God held Cain accountable for the murder of his brother.
- The spirit of Abel did not take vengeance on Cain and his family.
- The judgment was that Cain would be a vagabond and a wanderer.

#### **2.2.3.3 Other passages on the curse of blood guiltiness and vengeance for the dead**

After Noah's flood, the need to value human life was emphasized. Genesis 9:6 states that, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." The basis of this law was the need to respect human life because man was made in the image of God (Gen 9:6). It became one of the laws stipulated by Moses to deter people from murder (Ex 21:12; Nu 35:16, 24). Shedding human blood was an expression for killing a

person (Lev 19:16; Deut 27:25; Prov 1:16; Acts 22:20; Rom 3:15; cf. Scharbert 1970:76). Israel and the neighbouring peoples regarded blood as the bearer of life (Lev 17:11). In the Pentateuch, even the blood of animals was equated with its life (Lev 17:14; Deut 12:23).

Scharbert (1970:76) shows that in some passages of the Bible, a murderer is referred to as a man of blood (2 Sam 16:7; Ps 5:6; 26:19; 55:23). The blood defiles him (Jer 2:34; Lam 4:14) and the defilement is permanent. He cannot thereafter remove the guilt (Is 1:15; 59:3; Ezek 23:37, 45) and that gives him no rest (Gen 4:12-16; Prov 28:17; Lam 4:14; cf. Scharbert 1970:76). In Hebrew, such a person was described as *'is dāmîm* "a man who has burdened himself with blood-guilt on account of having committed a murder" or who is guilty of some other transgression punishable by death (Wenham 1987:107).

The shedding of innocent blood represents a constant threat that came upon the murderer expressed by the phrase, 'upon his head' (Deut 19:10; Josh 2:19; Judg 9:24; 1 Sam 25:26, 33; 2 Sam 2:16; 1 Kings 2: 33; Jer 26:15; Ezek 35:6; Hos 12:14; cf. Scharbert 1970:76). Scharbert (1970:76) explains that the blood of a murdered person cries for vengeance (Gen 4:10; 2 Macc 8:3; Rev 6:10; Hebrews 12:24) especially when not covered up with earth (Is 26:21; Ezek 24:7; Job 16:8).

The cry for vengeance did not go to the murderer but to God. The effect of the shed blood affected the murderer as a judgment from the Lord. On this, Brueggemann (2001:216) notes that the blood of the murdered threatens the murderer, his family (Deut 22:8, 2 Sam 21:1) and even the one who is responsible for the vengeance of the blood if he does not do his duty. "It can pollute a city and a whole land and bring him disaster (2 Sam 21:2; Ps 106:38; Jer 26:15 Ezek 7:23; 22:3; 24:6ff; Mic 3:10; Nah 3:1; Hab 2:12)." There is need to atone for it. In the Old Testament, the crime of shedding blood was expiated only with the blood of the murderer (Gen 9:5; Ex 21:12; Lev 24:17, 21; Num 35:19ff; Deut 19:11ff; cf. Scharbert 1970:76).

In the early Israelite community, the one who avenged the shed blood was called an avenger of blood. "A Hebrew expression for the avenger of blood *gō'ēl haddām* and is found in many Old Testament passages such as Number 35:19, 21, 24; Deuteronomy 19:6, 12; Joshua 20:3, 5, 9; 2 Samuel 14:11" (Scharbert 1970:76). This kinsman redeemer was the *gō'ēl haddām*, the avenger of blood (Stob 1976:422). Motyer (1984:107) explains that, "the avenger of blood was a member of the victim's family who had the responsibility of acting for society in avenging the murder by taking the murderer's life (cf. Gen. 9:5-6; Deut. 19:6, 12)".

If the murderer was not found, it was the duty of the community to exonerate itself of the guilt of murder. In Deuteronomy 21:1-7, a law on atonement for an unresolved murder was given. If a person was found slain and the killer was not known, the elders and judges were to go where the body was and measure the distance from the body to the neighbouring towns. The elders of the town nearest the body would get a heifer that had never been worked or that had never worn a yoke. They would lead it to a valley that had never been ploughed or planted and where there was a flowing stream. They would break its neck and all the elders of the town would wash their hands over the heifer declaring that their hands had not shed the blood neither had they seen the murder. They had to pray to the Lord to remove the guilt of the blood of the innocent man. By performing the atonement rite, Israelites dissociated themselves from the guilt of murder (Brueggemann 2001:216).

If the murderer was found, vengeance for the murder had to be properly executed. Cities of refuge regulated the practice of vengeance for murder. As Motyer (1984:107) remarks, "the avenger of the blood is mentioned only in passages which counter the possibility of an unlimited vendetta by providing cities of refuge (Num 35:9-28; Deut. 19:1-13; Josh. 20:1-9)." A person who committed unintentional murder was to flee to any of these cities. The avenger

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was allowed to exact a life for a life only after public trial and if the accused was found guilty of premeditated murder (Motyer 1984:107).

Even though the kinsman redeemer avenged the murder, the purpose of vengeance was not mere hatred of the murderer but for the purging of the land. Since the soil that received the blood of a murdered person becomes sterile (Gen 4:11), it had to be freed from this condition by the blood of the murderer (Numbers 35:33; Deut 19:13; cf. Herion 1988:968). The avenger acted according to the directive of the Lord. In this sense, it was God who executed vengeance using a kinsman redeemer, for vengeance belongs to the Lord (Deut 32:35; Psa 94:1; Isa 61:2; 63:4; Jer 50:15; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30). The same is true when Israelites took vengeance over their enemies. In times of war, God assured them that He had put the enemies in their hands (Herion 1988:968). Herion rightly comments that, "The final intervention by God on the much anticipated day of vengeance (Isa 34:8; Jer 46:10) is synonymous with the day of the Lord" (1988:968). He explains that there are two aspects to the day of the Lord:

On one hand it is viewed as a gruesome day of punishment for the wicked (Isa 63:4; Lk 21: 20-24); on the other hand, it is celebrated as a time when God's sovereign will triumphs (Isa 61:2) and the righteous will be vindicated (Jer 51:6-10).

From this study, spirits, which appear as those of the dead to seek retribution cannot be identified with the idea that God brings a curse on the murderer and his family. From the first incident of murder, the spirit of the murdered person never sought vengeance. Instead, the blood of the slain cried to the Lord. There was never communication between the dead and the living in atoning for murder. Cain did not complain to his brother when he was cursed. He complained to the Lord and God mitigated the punishment but did not alter it completely. Further, the method for the atonement of guilt of the innocent blood was directed to God

(Deut 21:8) and not to the dead (Gelfand 1977:30). Therefore, spirits, which come to avenge murder could not have been sent by God to man.

#### **2.2.3.4 Principles**

From the discussion above, the following principles can be summarized:

- The curse for murder came from God and not the murdered person.
- The spirit of the murdered does not return to the offender to take vengeance.
- God is the avenger and not the murdered person.
- The blood of a murdered person had to be atoned for.
- Only God can execute vengeance for murder and not the murdered person.

Even though we have observed above that the dead do not communicate with the living, the Shona may ask, “Who then are the spirits that manifest as those of the dead? Are these spirits from the devil or from God?” In order to understand who these spirits are, it is helpful to consider what they do when they manifest among the living. This will help us to compare them with the spirits we read about in the Bible.

#### **2.2.4 The identity of spirits that manifest as those of the dead**

##### **2.2.4.1 The characteristics of the spirits**

Spirits that manifest as those of the dead can appear in different ways, as ancestral, ordinary or avenging spirits. Whichever way they appear, they demand attention and if their demands are not met, they cause trouble (Gehman 1999:33). Most Africans attribute misfortunes to a spiritual cause (Gelfand 1973:61). They believe spirits cause illnesses, disabilities, misfortunes and even death (Mpofu & Harley 2002). The spirits possess people and/or animals and

they can be exorcised from both people and animals. At this point, we need to see which spirits in the Bible have these characteristics.

#### **2.2.4.2 Biblical explanation for spirits that manifest as those of the dead**

The Bible speaks of two types of spirits that operate in the world. One is the Holy Spirit and the other is the evil spirit. The Holy Spirit does not cause death, illness, disability, or misfortunes. Instead, He (the Holy Spirit) gives life (Jn 6:63), heals and gives hope (Rom 15:13). On the other hand, evil spirits cause illness (Matt 9:32; 12:22) disabilities (Lk 13:11-17) and personal injuries (Mk 9:18); they possess people (Matt 17:8), may incite men to commit suicide (Mk 9:22) and can enable those whom they possess to do superhuman acts (Lk 8:29). They are sometimes called unclean spirits or demons. The leader of these evil spirits is Satan. Isaiah 14:12 speaks of how Satan, the once precious angel of God, fell and how he was brought down to the depth of the pit. Satan, whose name means adversary, is also called the devil. The name "devil" means, one prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely (Gehman 1999:162). As a fallen angel he is more intelligent than men but he is not all knowing, more powerful than men but not omniscient since he is not God; he is able to deceive men through his cunning ways (Gen 3:1-6).

Jesus Christ speaks of him as "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11). Paul calls him "the god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4) and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph 2:1-3). The Bible warns believers that Satan himself masquerades as "an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). He deceives people with all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders (2 Thess 2:9) and works with fallen angels, called demons. Satan and demons seek to thwart the purposes of God (Dan 10:10-14; Rev 16:13-16 cf. Ryrie 1978:1945).

In line with this understanding, the second Helvetic confession of 1966 right states that:

Now, that which is recorded of the spirits or souls of the dead sometimes appearing to them that are alive, and craving [wanting] certain duties of them whereby they might be set free. We count these apparitions [appearances] among the delusions, crafts, and deceits of the devil, who, as he can transform [change] himself into an angel of light, so he labours tooth and nail either to overthrow faith or else to call it into doubt (Leith 1963:185)

#### **2.2.4.3 Findings**

The following points sum up the findings on spirits that manifest as those from the dead:

- Spirits that manifest as those of the dead are demons.
- They manifest in apparitions of the deceased.
- They can do wonderful things to mislead people.
- Their leader is Satan.

### ***2.3 Findings on biblical teaching on the communication the dead and vengeance for murder***

The five points below represent the summary of findings on the subject under discussion:

1. God forbids consultation of the living with the dead.
2. The dead cannot communicate with the living.
3. The dead cannot take vengeance on the living.
4. Vengeance is carried out by the Lord.
5. Spirits that manifest as those of the dead are demons.

### ***2.4 Preliminary summary***

From the above study, we have seen that the spirits that manifest as those of the dead are demons. This conclusion is based on the observation that the dead do not communicate with the living and for that reason they cannot take vengeance

for anything that happened in their life time. Scriptures forbid any attempt to communicate with the dead because it can mislead believers into the worship of demonic forces.

CHAPTER 3  
META-THEORY ON SHONA TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF  
*NGOZI*

**3.1 LITERATURE STUDY ON THE SHONA TRADITIONAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF NGOZI**

**3.1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Many writers have dealt with the subject of *ngozi* but Gelfand stands as a key contributor to the discussion. In his works, he describes the different types and causes of *ngozi* and the Shona method of solving the *ngozi* crisis. However, Bucher (1980:70) argues that Gelfand's discussion on different types of avenging spirits is theory based. He argues that when Gelfand refers to a particular type of avenging spirits, he introduces it by saying, "Let us suppose..." This, according to Bucher, suggests that *ngozi* incidents are few and their examples are rare.

Bucher's argument is not convincing. He expects that Gelfand should have referred to particular incidents of *ngozi*, as real examples, if they were many. He fails to note that the informants of Gelfand in Rhodesia from 1959 to 1970s were probably people with little or no formal education. They could not be expected to have documents or archives in which particular *ngozi* cases were recorded for future reference. In addition, giving particular examples of *ngozi* cases would probably not have clarified what Gelfand wanted to know of *ngozi*. This could explain why Gelfand's informants gave examples of causes of *ngozi* by saying, "Let's suppose..." Moreover, if a person wanted to speak on condition of anonymity, he or she could refer to his/her experiences by saying, "let's suppose..."

Gelfand's work on the Shona seems very credible and was carried out with an objective approach. As Hannan (in Gelfand 1962) rightly states, "In the first

place, the readers of Dr Gelfand's studies of Shona ritual and beliefs cannot help noting his avoidance of value judgments expressed or implied". For the reasons that Gelfand extensively studied *ngozi* and his work is scientifically credible, this researcher undertakes a special study on his works on Shona beliefs and practices particularly on *ngozi* (in his 1956; 1962, 1964, 1976, 1973 publications). While other sources on *ngozi* will be consulted, Gelfand's will be the principal source.

In addition to the analysis of Gelfand's works, interviews of the advisors of traditional Shona chiefs and those who have grown up in traditional communities where *ngozi* cases are common will be reflected upon. The choice of the interviewees was based on *ngozi* enculturation. According to Spradley's (1979), interviews should be conducted with people who have been thoroughly exposed to the phenomenon through enculturation, in terms of current involvement and adequate time. Babbie & Mouton (2003) describe enculturation as acquiring knowledge in a programme for a long time rather than being involved for a short period. Current involvement entails actively participating in the programme with inside information and insights on current matters, which relate to the subject of study. In analyzing the interviews, the researcher employs a thematic analysis whereby themes emerging from the informants' responses are identified and inferences are drawn. Further, this researcher's personal experiences of growing up in a traditional Shona community and pastoring people affected by *ngozi* will also be subjectively reflected upon.

### 3.1.2 THE SHONA UNDERSTANDING OF NGOZI<sup>2</sup>

*Ngozi*, according to Shona<sup>3</sup> people, is an aggrieved or angered spirit of a deceased person who was either murdered or mistreated during his lifetime. The

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<sup>2</sup> *Ngozi* "spirit" according to the Shona is the spirit of the deceased that causes trouble. In this research, when the word "*ngozi*" is used without the word spirit following it, it refers to the trouble caused by the avenging spirit. Thus, at times, the word *ngozi* appears as an adjective describing the spirit and at other times as a noun referring to the trouble caused by the spirit.

<sup>3</sup> The Shona is comprised of seven major tribes, namely, Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Ndau and Korekore. They share the same language called Chishona. Some historians however, argue that

Shona believe that spirits of dead relatives hover around their village, on the housetops, in the forests, on the hills, in trees, in the pools or in the depth of the earth. In their spirit world, they eat, drink and take snuff, and are in harmony with each other, with other groups of spirits and with living relatives (Gelfand 1964:32). If a person was murdered, the Shona believe that his/her spirit becomes restless and angry and returns to seek revenge on the one who killed him or her. Shona traditionalists hold that *Ngozi* spirit seeks to afflict or harm, even to the point of death, the murderer's family members and the entire village (Thorpe 1991:57).

According to the Shona belief, when evil occurrences persist, it is probably caused by spirits. For instance, if a person constantly abuses his wife physically, the Shona will suspect the abuser of harbouring an avenging spirit (1973:99). Other signs of the presence of *ngozi* can be an illness that is resistant to drug treatment or incidences of mysterious death. Any misfortune is blamed on possession by an aggrieved spirit (*ngozi*), which wishes to take revenge on an individual or family that wronged the person when alive (Gelfand 1973:61).

The Shona claim that the *ngozi* spirit is not a bad spirit but that it has been wronged (Mpofu & Harley 2002). If one never grievously mistreated or murdered anyone, the *ngozi* spirit can do him no harm. A Shona proverb therefore says, "*Zingizi warikanganisira saka rakuruma*", that is, "You have wronged a wasp, therefore it has bitten you" (Gelfand 1977:114).

There are various types of *ngozi* spirits and each one is handled differently. The focus of this chapter is to outline the different types of *ngozi*, their causes and the

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Shona is not the real name for these tribes but Mbire, which comes from the presumed great ancestor of the "Shona" known as Mambire who the people believe migrated from the north of Africa (Mutsvairo & Chiwore 1996:17). The origin of the name Shona has been a subject of much debate but with no clear resolution. In this study, the name Shona is used in preference to Mbire as it is more commonly used.

methods, which have been used to address them among the Shona. These methods will include the traditional and Christian approaches to the crisis of *ngozi*.

### **3.1.2.1 Types of ngozi**

The most common types of *ngozi* spirits are that of a victim of murder, a servant or slave, who was mistreated and deprived of his rightful recompense, and a parent who was deeply hurt by his or her child. Others are a husband or wife who was neglected by his or her spouse and one from whom goods were stolen or borrowed and never returned (Bucher 1980:68). Each one of them manifests differently from the other and they vary in degree of gravity.

#### **3.1.2.1.1 The *ngozi* of a murdered person**

There are two types of *ngozi* spirits of a murdered person, that of a stranger<sup>4</sup> or a relative. The gravity of *ngozi* varies with the kind of relationship between the offender and the victim.

The *ngozi* spirit of a stranger is more vicious than that of a relative. It can attack suddenly and harshly, and yet in other cases, it takes a while before it strikes. The *ngozi* of a stranger manifests itself in various ways. Among the Makorekore<sup>5</sup> people, if the murdered person was elderly, the *ngozi* spirit may reveal its complaints and intention through a grandchild (*muzukuru* or *dunzvi*) of the deceased (Gelfand1962:65). This spirit tells the child that he was killed and wishes to be brought into contact with the living. This can happen soon after the burial of the deceased. Gelfand (1962:65) points out that as soon as the *muzukuru*<sup>6</sup> realizes the significance of these persistent dreams, he procures a calabash (*mukombe*), also known as *mukombe unovava* or sour calabash,

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<sup>4</sup> A stranger in this regard is anybody with whom one has no blood ties or relationship.

<sup>5</sup> Makorekore people are a Shona tribe of the north-eastern part of Zimbabwe.

<sup>6</sup> The *muzukuru* can be either a male or a female grandchild. The same applies to the *ngozi*. The masculine pronoun is used here (and henceforth) without prejudice.

because it has been used for a long time in the preparation of beer or cereals. The *muzukuru* fills it with a millet meal and covers it with *mbanda* (medicine). In the evening, he takes it to the grave of the murdered man. The *muzukuru* must go alone and no one must see him. At the grave, he kneels and speaks with the spirit saying, "If someone killed you, go and tell the person what you want." With these words, he breaks the calabash on the grave over the spot where the dead man's head was laid (1962:65).

The *muzukuru* returns to his hut without looking back. It is believed that this procedure awakens the spirit and it becomes an *ngozi*. He then gets a black goat or a pitch-black fowl without spot and takes it to his hut. He kneels, clasps his hands and prays telling the deceased that if he has awoken, the spirit must not come to the *muzukuru's* house again but go to the source of his troubles. He then leads the goat to where he found it. The goat dies suddenly and mysteriously without developing any illness as soon as the *ngozi* spirit enters the village (1962:66). The *muzukuru* watches the goat. When he is convinced that it is dead, he takes its carcass, cuts pieces of flesh from every part of its body and carries the pieces to a place near the village where he disposes of them. No one should eat them.

After a few days, the *ngozi* spirit moves into the village of the person who is responsible for the death of the deceased. One or more deaths may take place in the family. It is expected that the affected family should be alerted by the occurrence of death and seek advice from a *n'anga* (witchdoctor) who warns them of the gravity of their plight. The *n'anga* warns of the *ngozi* spirit and that it will not rest or leave the family until it is fully compensated (Gelfand 1962:66).

In other families, a *muzukuru* does not need to do anything at the grave of the deceased. The elders of the family give their family members a certain traditional herb to drink, which makes them come back as an *ngozi* spirit against the

offender and his family<sup>7</sup> if they are murdered. The herb taken by men is called *mhamba yemuti* (literally, the beer of a tree) and the herb for women is called *kwambo* (literal translation unknown).

If a person who consumed this herb is murdered, the family head takes millet in a wooden plate with *nhekwe* (a container of snuff). He kneels inside the hut before a potsherd and says, "This is your millet, we are going to brew beer for you and here is your snuff." The millet is then soaked and brewed into beer. When it is ready, a son-in-law kneels before a potsherd in which there is medicine and a snuff container and then speaks to the spirit saying, "We have brewed beer for you. If you have been killed, we do not know who killed you. Show your signs by destroying the family of those who killed you". The son-in-law then calls the spirit to perform signs of destroying the family of the murderer. The son-in-law then calls the spirit to drink the beer. He (the son-in-law) drinks the beer and shares it with some relatives of the deceased (Gelfand 1977:112).

In some Korekore families, if a murdered person did not protect himself by using herbs, the family elder goes to a *n'anga* who then gives him the medicine to put on the grave of the murdered person. A goat is killed and its blood is mixed with the medicine and every member of the family takes a sip of it. In doing so, it is believed that the whole family is protected and if any one of them is murdered, the *ngozi* can rise for vengeance on the murderer and his family.

In a similar way, if a person dies and the relatives are not sure of the cause of death, they consult a *n'anga* who establishes the cause of death. If the person was poisoned or he was hit by a car and the driver fled, a family elder (e.g. the father) gets some medicine from the witchdoctor that he puts in a calabash and mixes with water. He then goes to the grave of the deceased and crashes the calabash there, targeting the spot the head of the corpse lay. He declares, "*muka*

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<sup>7</sup> The Shona believe that when *ngozi* occurs, it attacks the family rather than just the individual. If the offender dies before settling the *ngozi* crisis, it continues to rage against his family.

*uzvirwire*" (arise and avenge yourself). After these things, the father returns home crying as a sign of mourning for his son and that he would like to hear of disaster in the family of his son's murderer (Gelfand 1977:187).

Not all *ngozi* manifestations happen after the use of herbs. The most common happens without any ritual performance by the relatives of the deceased. This *ngozi* can reveal itself eventually after the murder of a person. When it strikes, members of the family realize that an *ngozi* spirit must be responsible and someone in the family may recall an injustice that he committed Gelfand (1964:32). The *ngozi* may take temporary possession of one of the family members, perhaps a child, and speak through him. He identifies himself and asks why a member of that family killed him. The *ngozi* also states the amount of compensation it requires for retribution. When the family hears this from a possessed person who, in this case, is their relative, they become so astonished and hasten to consult a *n'anga* for confirmation. If the *n'anga* confirms what the *ngozi* said to be true, the family seeks ways of paying retribution to the spirit to stop the crisis of *ngozi* from ravaging their family.

In some cases, *ngozi* appears many years after the burial of the murdered person. This *ngozi* might send a signal to the family of the offenders by way of persistent illness or misfortunes. If this alerts the family of the offender, they go to the *n'anga* who then tells them the looming disaster perpetrated by an *ngozi* spirit. This family can accept the guiltiness of the matter and promise to pay compensation to the *ngozi* spirit. If they fail to do so, the *ngozi* continues to cause havoc in the family. On this point, Bourdillon (1976:272) explains that at times, *ngozi* manifests years after the death of a person due to the failure of the offender to fulfil his obligations to the *ngozi* or its descendants.

Gelfand (1959:79) illustrates this with the story of a man who was called Chinyowa who contracted a severe form of leprosy that affected all his fingers and toes. Some men of his village, afraid of his sickness, decided to eliminate

him by throwing him into a deep pool. They did as planned. Some years later, after they forgot about what they did to him, and had been enriched through numerous cattle obtained as *lobola* for the many buxom daughters of Chinyowa, sicknesses and diseases broke out in their community. They visited a *n'anga* who revealed that the problem was caused by Chinyowa's *ngozi* and that many cattle would be required to propitiate the angry spirit. After complying with this request, the epidemic abated and no more deaths followed (Gelfand 1959:79). In a similar episode, a chief from Mt Darwin (North-Eastern district of Mashonaland in Zimbabwe) shared a testimony with other chiefs at a conference of traditional leaders about a family in his area, which suffered from *ngozi* for a murder committed more than a century ago (Municipal Reporter, 2007).

In general, the characteristic of the *ngozi* of a stranger is that it insists on its demands. The most common demand is for a girl from the family of the offender to be married into the family of the offended. In addition to this, payment is made in form of heads of cattle, the number of which varies from one family to another. One *ngozi* spirit may demand lesser heads of cattle while another calls for more (Gelfand 1977:30).

Another characteristic of the *ngozi* of a stranger is that it continues to insist on its demands even if the offender has died. Simmons (2007) narrates the story of a Mutare-based man who testified that his paternal grandfather ritually murdered one of his employees on his large farm to ensure the farm's continued success and productivity. He explains that the murdered person's spirit often returned as *ngozi*, causing death. The Mutare man lamented that members of his father's family always died when the guavas were ripe<sup>8</sup>. He also attributed his chronic misfortune to the *ngozi* and believed that things would only get better if he visited a *n'anga* and performed the proper rituals to put the murdered man's spirit to rest.

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<sup>8</sup>The association of the deaths with the season of ripe guavas is not clear. It may be that the murdered person was killed at such a season.

Whatever the *ngozi's* demands are cannot be altered by anyone. The relatives fear that if they alter the demands of the *ngozi*, the spirit may come back and cause havoc in their family. In the editions of the 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> July 2006, and March 30<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> April 2007, Manica Post (a Zimbabwe local newspaper) published the story of an *ngozi* episode, which took place at Nyanga (east-central part of Zimbabwe). The *ngozi* had been threatening to cause havoc in the family of the offender. It claimed to be the spirit of a man killed in 1996 by a man from Saunyama area in Nyanga. The man accused of the murder had hired a young man to dig a borehole using some detonators to blast beneath some rock. When the hired person came the next day, the Saunyama man asked the young man to get into the borehole and continue with the work. The hired person refused suggesting that he had to wait three days for the poisonous gas to be diffused from the pit. The Saunyama man insisted that since the young man had already been paid for the work, he was bound by their agreement. The hired man succumbed to pressure and got into the pit. It was not long before he felt weak and exhausted. It is alleged that the Saunyama man delayed to take him out of the pit. By the time he was taken out, he had become too exhausted to stand. He therefore collapsed, bleeding profusely and later died (Kadungure 2007:1). It is reported that when the mother of the deceased came, she washed the bloodied reed mat on which the man lay, saying, "Our son we are leaving your blood here". The wife of the Saunyama man washed the pillow and threw it together with the reed mat in a latrine.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007, a daughter of the Saunyama man became possessed at school and started to relate how the hired man died eleven years ago. She became hostile and set alight two Saunyama huts. The *ngozi* spirit claimed that it was of the young man who died at Saunyama. The *ngozi* spirit also claimed that the Saunyama man used the blood of the deceased as talisman to boost his grinding mill business. Even though the Saunyama man initially denied the accusation, he later admitted the act and went to the family of the deceased man with five heads of cattle for the appeasement of the *ngozi* spirit. The family of the

deceased refused to accept the payment claiming that it was not according to the terms dictated by the spirit of the deceased (Kadungure 2007:2). The *ngozi* spirit wanted a girl from the accused family to be married into the family of the deceased, in addition to ten heads of cattle, five goats and five chickens (2007:2). The Saunyama man could not give his daughter in marriage to appease the *ngozi* spirit since it is now illegal in Zimbabwe to do so (Zim Editor 2007). The *ngozi* spirit insisted however, that in lieu of the marriage, it needed 200 heads of cattle, goats and chicken. This was beyond what the Saunyama man could afford.

In a similar case, a human rights organization called Girl Child Network (GCN) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) managed to rescue four of the five girls who had been given in marriage to appease an *ngozi* spirit in Honde Valley<sup>9</sup>. The fifth one had already had children with one of the brothers of the deceased. The five families (from which the girls came) allegedly connived with one another to kill a young man of a Honde Valley family. Eleven years later, the five families suffered from the *ngozi* spirit. The five families admitted they killed the person. They arranged to appease the spirit by providing a girl from each of the families as the *ngozi* demanded.

When they gave their daughters to the Honde Valley family, the matter was brought to the attention of the GNC and ZRP. They hastened to rescue the five girls. Initially, the offended family became hostile and threatened to fight the members of the GNC and ZRP. The family of the deceased had already conducted a traditional ceremony for the spirit to stop his vengeance on the five families. Releasing the girls was tantamount to a betrayal of their commitment on behalf of the deceased. The mother of the deceased threatened to let the spirit of her son cause havoc to those (the GCN and ZRP representatives) who disturbed the traditional arrangement of appeasing the *ngozi* spirit by taking the four girls away (Mungure 2006).

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<sup>9</sup> Honde Valley is in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe.

The *ngozi* spirit of a relative may not be as vicious as this. As already highlighted above, the *ngozi* of a brother or sister is easier to appease than that of a stranger. When the *ngozi* of a brother manifests, often by possessing a very young person,<sup>10</sup> it states its demands through the person. If the brother was murdered, a daughter of the murderer cannot be given in payment because the girl cannot marry her cousin (the son of the deceased man); they are close relatives. Instead, the *lobola* for the girl (the daughter of the offender) would be used to get a wife for one of the sons of the deceased. He would bear children with her but they would be called the children of the *mudzimu*, that is, the spirit (Gelfand 1977:115).

#### **3.1.2.1.2 The *ngozi* of a wronged person**

Various forms of *ngozi* of a wronged person exist and include, mistreated parents, abused wives, mistreated husbands and in-laws, servants deprived of their just recompense, the deceased whose widow was married unceremoniously or the deceased whose property was stolen, children who die of witchcraft attacks and the deceased who did not receive a decent burial.

Shona custom demands respect for one's parents. If a child mistreats his parents and they die bearing serious grievances, the child is likely to experience *ngozi* problems. The *ngozi* spirit of a father is considered less vicious than that of a mother (Bourdillon 1976:272). It may wait until the child is grown up and is married. The offender's woes may begin with losing all the wealth received from the father's inheritance. When this is over, one of his children may contract an illness, which does not respond positively to medication (Gelfand 1959:154). If he visits a *n'anga*, he may be told that his father's spirit is grieved because of what

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<sup>10</sup> In most cases, the *ngozi* possesses a young person who may not even have a clear knowledge of what happened in the past. Perhaps this makes it easier to believe that the spirit is real.

he did to him. The relatives are summoned and the guilty person brings a he-goat. He takes off his clothes and wears rags and large leaves. When the family is gathered, the offender takes a calabash of beer and informs them that the beer is for his father, whom he mistreated. The others then chase the guilty brother out of the room. They pick branches and sticks and try to beat him until he runs out into the bush. The offender is not allowed to taste anything of all he has prepared for the appeasement of the angered spirit of his father. At the end of the ceremony, he returns and the relatives go to their respective homes (1959:154).

In a more serious way, if one scolds or beats his mother, he is likely to suffer from avenging spirits in the future. As earlier mentioned, the Shona believe that the *ngozi* spirit of a mother is more vicious than that of a father (Bucher 1980:65). The understanding among the Shona is that because every child takes the surname of his father, the guardian spirits of the father are the same as those of the child but a mother's guardian spirits are different (Bucher 1980:65). If a child offends the mother, he is tampering with different ancestral spirits, which do not share the same name and taboos with him. For that reason, the *ngozi* of a mother can be more vicious than that of a father. The avenging spirit of a mother may require the child to humiliate himself by dressing in rags and beg for grains for the feast in her honour (Bourdillon 1976:272). This ritual, known as *kutanda botso*, is the method used to placate the avenging spirit of a mother.

As the first step in the reparation of an *ngozi* spirit, the offender must give an ox to the spirit of his mother. The relatives of the aggrieved parents gather and the oldest son-in-law of the deceased is asked to kill the ox. After this, the one who insulted his parent is dressed in rags. A small piece of meat is cut, roasted by the son-in-law and handed to the guilty person. As he is about to take it, the son-in-law pulls it away. The others, except the guilty one, eat the meat. A reed is slung around the neck of the offender and he goes around telling the people that he is paying for mistreating his parent, *kutanda botso*.

In old rags and sacks, the offender moves around the village holding in one hand a small calabash and in the other, a bigger calabash as he addresses the spirit of the mother thus, "This is the ox I am giving to you" (Gelfand 1956:153; Gelfand 1977:31). He goes around the neighbouring villages begging for millet to make beer for his mother's spirit (Gelfand 1965:17). People in the village mock the offender and give him millet. He continues until he has collected three buckets of grain (Gelfand 1959:153). The son-in-law who killed the ox then looks for him. When he finds him, he takes the bag of millet from his neck and that is used to prepare the beer for the ritual of the offended parent (Gelfand 1977:31). When the beer is ready, the offender is again chased away for two or three days and he only comes back when everything is ended. All the relatives of the insulted parents are gathered and when the offender returns, he admits that he is guilty and promises never to offend his parents again. He then gives the son-in-law a fowl to eat. The Shona believe that when this is done, the *ngozi* of a mother is appeased (Gelfand 1959:153; 1977:31-32).

The *ngozi* spirit of a daughter-in-law falls in the category between a relative and a stranger. The spirit is a relative in the sense that there is a relationship by marriage and yet is a stranger because the daughter-in-law does not have the same paternal spiritual guardians as her in-laws. While traditional Shona culture tolerates the beating of a wife, if it is done repeatedly and unmercifully, without good reason, and she dies, the Shona believe that her spirit can return as an avenging spirit. It is even suspected that beating one's wife repeatedly is prompted by an avenging spirit, which wants to cause havoc by killing one's wife. When the elderly observe this tendency in their sons, they consult a witchdoctor to find out what prompts a person to beat his wife so often (1973:99).

Ribeiro (1967) describes how vicious the spirit of a daughter-in-law can be to the family of her in-laws. In his book *Muchadura*, (a Shona novel translated as, "You shall confess") he presents a character, Chipu, who was severely mistreated by her husband and mother-in-law. Her husband beat her so badly that it later led to

her death. Chipo's *ngozi* did not manifest immediately. It took some time, but when it did, it was so vicious that it threatened to wipe out the whole family.

The compensation of a mistreated daughter-in-law is never to be enjoyed by her children. They have a distant spiritual relationship with their mother. The compensation belongs to the brothers of the deceased. Aschwanden (1987:40) writes about an elderly woman also called Chipo, who had two sons and a daughter. One night, one of her nephews (a son of her husband's sister) found her in a state of drunkenness and she laid down in a rather seductive way, so the nephew took advantage of the situation. She became pregnant and she was accused by her husband of having seduced her nephew. Broken with grief from the shame of being accused, she committed suicide. Aschwanden reports that retribution followed swiftly. The *ngozi* spirit attacked children in her nephew's family, and they died.

The nephew tried to conciliate Chipo by paying twenty-five heads of cattle to her closest consanguine - her brother. However, Chipo's sons felt they had a better right to the cattle, so they stole them. This made the *ngozi* spirit angry and it became even more vicious toward her own children. The *ngozi* spirit attacked them. Within a week, two of her son's children were dead. In the following year, the first son lost six children and the second lost four. They consulted a traditional doctor who pointed out their error and advised them to return the cattle to their uncle. The 'mother's spirit' then suggested that her brother, who had been given many cattle, should give his daughter to the family of her husband to continue taking care of her children. Generally, the woman given in marriage as compensation for *ngozi* is treated carefully. She cannot be scolded or mistreated since she is the wife of a *mudzimu* (spirit of the deceased). However, she has every right of a married woman and the husband fully takes care of her.

The *ngozi* of a son-in-law is equally vicious. According to the Shona, the ill or invalid husband cannot be neglected for his spirit can come and avenge on the

wife or her father's family for the neglect. If a man is ill and the wife neglects him by refusing to clean his bed and take care of him or she leaves him for her parents' house so that the husband dies being alone, it is likely that an *ngozi* will show up later. The Shona claim that such an *ngozi* can get into the family of the in-laws in a very subtle way that they may fail to realize that it is operating among them. They may attribute disastrous experiences to other causes (Gelfand 1977:154). It is for this reason that when the elderly Shona people detect some abnormality of behaviour in their family members, they visit a *n'anga*. The people believe that failure to do so, gives opportunity to the *ngozi* to ravage the family without being noticed.

Gelfand (1959:155) explains that the remedy for the *ngozi* of a son-in-law is to ask the wife of the deceased to return to the family of her husband. The wife's father is to pay a he-goat to the family of his in-laws. The *ngozi* spirit will then possess the wife of the deceased. The father-in-law has to perform some periodical rituals to let the spirit know that they have reconciled with it and it should no longer disturb them.

The *ngozi* caused by committing adultery with a man's wife (*kukotsodza*) has a unique classification. It is unlike the murder of the person since the man could even have died from an illness but the death is associated with the adultery committed by his wife. The Shona, especially the Ndaus<sup>11</sup>, strongly believe that if one commits adultery with another man's wife, particularly in her husband's house, the husband will become sick. Usually, he coughs and spits blood. If he dies, this can cause *ngozi*. An informant to this researcher explained that if there was salt in the house when the adultery was committed, it causes illness to the husband of the adulterous woman. If the husband dies, both the wife's family and the family of the man who committed adultery suffer from the *ngozi* spirit.

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<sup>11</sup> The Ndaus are a Shona tribe of the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe.

When this happens, the woman who committed adultery goes to her brothers and requests for money to placate the spirit of her husband. She is not permitted to take money from her children for they are also the same blood with the offended husband. If they participate in appeasing their father's spirit, then they share their mother's guiltiness and the spirits will treat them as accomplices in their father's death. It is strongly believed by the Shona that whoever assists his mother in appeasing the angered spirit dies after the payment of compensation.

Similar to the *ngozi* of committing adultery with another man's wife, is that of bypassing traditional ceremonial methods when marrying a widow. In Shona culture, if a married man dies, his widow has a choice of either staying single in her husband's family or choosing to get married elsewhere. If she chooses to be married somewhere else, she is required to leave all the property she accumulated with the late husband for the children (that is, if they have children). The widow cannot use the property she acquired with a deceased husband in another marriage so she has to be prepared to start afresh in the next marriage.

However, some women are not prepared to leave behind all they worked for with their deceased husband to go and start afresh. Instead, they choose to remain in the family of their late husband. In this case then, she is required to choose between being married to one of her brothers-in-law and staying single, taking care of her children. If a widow chooses to remain single, she ceremonially takes a dish and a spear belonging to her late husband and gives them to her eldest son or to one of her sisters-in-laws. The action symbolizes that the chosen one represents her husband in the family. In this case, she is to remain single for the rest of her life (Bourdillon 1976:250; Gelfand 1973:187).

If she engages in sexual activities after this traditional ceremony, she is considered an adulterous woman. This is a violation of cultural values according to the Shona (Gelfand 1973:170). The man who takes her is likely to encounter misfortune, for which he will need to pay recompense.

Another cause of *ngozi* is stealing from the property of a deceased person. The property of the deceased belongs to his family or those to whom the family decides to give it. The Shona handle this with respect. When death strikes, the relatives of the deceased inquire whether the deceased owed money or any property. The community members and the relatives are also asked whether they owed the deceased anything. Among the Shona, failure to return the property of a dead person can cause some misfortunes. It is even a more serious offence when someone steals from the property of the deceased. In some places in the rural areas, the property of the deceased is locked up in a house for the children of the deceased to use later when they need it. If a thief breaks in, there will be problems in the family of the thief. It is another form of *ngozi*, which however may not be as vicious as that of killing a person.

Similar to this cause of *ngozi* is depriving a servant of his due wage. According to Gelfand (1973:122), *ngozi* can arise when a person in the employ of another is not given his just recompense. When that servant dies, the Shona believe that his spirit returns to punish the guilty master<sup>12</sup> until he pays the debt. Likewise, this *ngozi* is less vicious than that of a murdered person and can be chased away by the *n'anga* (Gelfand 1977:30).

Another less vicious *ngozi* is that which comes when a person fails to pay *lobola* for his wife. In a traditional Shona family, whenever *lobola* is paid, the spirits are informed. This is done so that the spirits may take care of the daughter who is marrying into another family. Among the demands of *lobola* is a special payment to the mother, which is called *mombe yeumai* (literally, a cow for the mother). The purpose of *mombe yeumai* is to appreciate the service the mother rendered to the girl-child in bearing her and caring for her as she grew up. Even though the boy-child has the same attention and care from the mother, he is expected to continue caring for the mother for the rest of his life. The girl-child will be married

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<sup>12</sup> Generally, the employers were men and in most cases, the employed were young men as well.

into a different family so she will care for her mother-in-law more than her mother. This is the reason *mombe youmai* is paid.

The *mombe youmai* connects the new family with that of the bride's mother. In the event that the mother dies, the payment of *mombe youmai* goes to her family (Gelfand 1973:35). If *mombe youmai* is not paid, then the married daughter may have some problems in her new family. When she bears daughters, their *mombe youmai* may not also be paid until her debt with her mother's family is settled (Gelfand 1973:118).

Lastly, another cause of *ngozi* is failure to notify the people concerned of the death of their relative. If one walks in the bush and comes across a dead body, he should report the matter to the chief, the police or the relatives of the deceased if they are known. The traditional Shona believe that the spirit of the dead can see a person who comes near its body and it expects such a person to inform his relatives of the whereabouts of the corpse. Among the Shona, if one comes across a dead body, he has to place branches<sup>13</sup> on top of it, declare, "I did not kill you, I have just found you dead", and then proceed to tell other people what he has seen. He rushes to the relatives of the dead person and tells them what he has seen. This exonerates the person from the *ngozi* of the person found dead.

#### **3.1.4 Summary**

The literature study shows that the Shona believe that *ngozi* is the spirit of a mistreated or murdered person, which returns to take vengeance on the living offender. These spirits come with different levels of demands. The *ngozi* of a murdered stranger is most vicious and cannot be exorcised.

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<sup>13</sup> The purpose of placing a branch on top of the body is to prevent wild animals from preying on the dead body.

### **3.1.5 Findings from literature on the Shona traditional understanding of *ngozi***

The following points represent the traditional Shona belief concerning *ngozi*:

- *Ngozi* is the spirit of the mistreated or murdered person, which returns to take vengeance on the offender.
- *Ngozi* spirits vary in the way they manifest and the extent of their demands.
- The *ngozi* of a murdered person cannot be exorcised.
- Only an experienced *n'anga* with special powers is able to solve an *ngozi* crisis.
- The only way to placate an *ngozi* spirit is by paying compensation.

## **3.2 EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE SHONA UNDERSTANDING OF AVENGING SPIRITS**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

Interviews conducted for this study were semi-structured. Huysamen explains that a semi-structured interview involves topics or aspects and not specific questions on a topic of study (1996:145). From the literature on *ngozi*, topics were formulated, such as the definition, the types and the causes of *ngozi*, and its remedy. Each of the interviews with respondents sought to cover these topics. At times, a question was phrased to accommodate the different experiences and levels of education of respondents. This is consistent with Huysamen's suggestion that the interviewer may adopt a formulation, including a terminology, to fit the background and educational level of the respondent (1996:145).

The semi-structured method is preferred here particularly because of its advantage in promoting a relaxed atmosphere between the interviewer and the interviewee. Moreover, unlike the structured method, which sticks to a questionnaire, this method enables the interviewer to gain additional insight on

some issues that were not thought of prior to the interview (Huysamen 1996:144).

In this research, a qualitative study method is employed. For that reason, the number of respondents is few; only four people were interviewed. However, the interviews were in-depth and rewarding. The respondents all know about *ngozi* either through enculturation or through current participation in *ngozi* trials. As Babbie & Mouton (2003), citing Spradley (1979) point out, in choosing interviewees, three criteria are used, namely, enculturation, current involvement and adequate time. All the criteria are good samples for representing the general population of the Shona in their understanding of *ngozi*. Even though most of them are from Ngorima area<sup>14</sup> in Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, attempt was made to include other interviewees from other Shona tribes in the Northern and Southern parts of Zimbabwe.

### **3.2.2 Interviews**

#### **3.2.2.1 First respondent**

##### **3.2.2.1.1 The background of first respondent**

The first respondent is a high school teacher who is related to the Chief Ngorima family. Chief Ngorima rules in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. He is one of the chiefs of the Ndau people (a dialect of the Shona), which is situated in the Chimanimani district. Ngorima area covers a radius of 50 kilometres stretching along the Chimanimani Mountains, which divide Zimbabwe from Mozambique.

This respondent learned about *ngozi* through enculturation. He refers to family experiences as well as several cases he has presided over in the chief's court in his capacity as court secretary. Part of his responsibilities has been to call

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<sup>14</sup> This researcher has been a pastor in Ngorima area and has seen many Christians dragged to community court on accusations of causing *ngozi* attacks on their relatives. Some believers went to witchdoctors in trying to prove their innocence. This prompted the researcher's interest to study *ngozi*.

witchdoctors to the chief's court to find out the cause of unrest in families especially when there was suspicion or a confession that an avenging spirit was causing havoc in a family.

### **3.2.2.1.2 The interview questions and responses of first respondent**

**Question 1:** What is your understanding of *ngozi* as a traditional Shona person?

**Response:**

Ngozi is the spirit of a deceased person that returns to take vengeance on the offender. This vengeance may be for mistreatment or murder done to the deceased.

**Question 2:** How does *ngozi* show its presence in a family?

**Response:**

Common ways in which *ngozi* manifests are madness, unusual illness, mysterious deaths, failure to marry, becoming a vagabond, being unfortunate and the like. Madness is a common sign of the presence of *ngozi*. In some families, this madness shifts from one member to the other at different times. In some cases, the mad person speaks of what happened when murder was committed. The mad person, his child or relative can be the offender. This type of madness does not easily respond to medication. At times, the mad person can be very violent.

**Question 3:** Which are the most common cases of *ngozi* in Ngorima courts?

**Response:**

The most common cases of *ngozi* judged at Ngorima communal courts were of murder, betraying one another in times of war, committing adultery with

somebody's marriage partner and marrying a widow without taking proper traditional procedure (sic).

**Question 4:** Can you describe what the *ngozi* that is caused by murder is and what it does?

**Response:**

If one killed a person intentionally or accidentally, one has to be responsible for it by confessing the murder to the family of the deceased. If one does not do so, the spirit of the dead person comes back to take vengeance on the family of the offender. The spirit may not attack the offender straight away but can cause problems among the kinship (sic) of the offender until the elderly seek the cause and require the offender to meet the demands of the avenging spirit.

If one did not intend to kill a person but it was an accident, there is need to go to the family of the deceased and ask them what to do in order to settle the problem. If one takes this step by engaging in a dialogue with the family of the deceased, *ngozi* does not happen. Among the Shona people, a person should never be killed in any circumstances even if one finds somebody robbing him (sic). Such cases have been reported to the chiefs' courts when the spirits caused havoc in the families of the offenders.

**Question 5:** What can you say about the *ngozi*, which comes by committing adultery with another man's wife?

**Response:**

Among the Ndaou people, if one commits adultery with somebody's wife (sic) especially in her husband house, the husband might die by coughing blood. The Ndaou people, like other Shona tribes, believe that what causes this coughing is salt. The salt (that was in the house when the adultery was committed) makes the husband to cough and spit blood until he dies. There are two cases of *ngozi*

in this incident (sic). One is that the wife has to pay for indirectly killing her husband by committing adultery. The other is that the man who committed adultery with somebody's wife (sic) also has to pay for his act, which resulted in the death of the woman's husband.

**Question 6:** Can you describe the *ngozi* caused by stealing or failing to return the property of the deceased?

**Response:**

The property of the deceased belongs to his family or those to whom it has been willed. Failure to return the property of the deceased can cause the spirit of the dead to come back demanding its treasures. Stealing from the property of the dead has grave consequences. One must never tamper with it.

**Questions 7:** What about the *ngozi* that comes by marrying a widow without following proper cultural procedure?

**Response:**

If a married person dies the widow has a choice to remain in the family of her late husband, or to go and be married somewhere else (sic). If she chooses to remain in the family of the late husband, she can choose from her husband's brothers one to marry (especially one younger than her late husband) or to remain single. If she chooses to remain in her husband's family and not to remarry her late husband's brothers, she is to remain single for the rest of her life.

If she has sexual relationship with anybody (sic) after making that decision, she would have breached the cultural procedures and that is capable of causing *ngozi*. If *ngozi* manifests, both the woman and the man she has had a sexual relationship with would have to appease the spirit.

**Question 8:** Can you describe the *ngozi* that comes when one fails to pay his servant his/her due recompense?

**Response:**

If a person employs another on agreement of certain payment (sic), he or she has to get it. This can be in the form of money. If the employee dies without the promised payment, his/her spirit can come as an avenging spirit. This was (sic) more common for male servants than female.

**Question 9:** Can you describe the *ngozi* that comes by failing to report seeing a dead body?

**Response:**

It is Shona belief that if one sees a dead body and fails to notify the relatives of the deceased or the police (if he does not know the relatives of the deceased) he or she is likely to be affected by *ngozi*. It is believed that the spirit of the dead can see who comes near its body and expects such a person to inform the relatives. Before you go and tell the relatives, you should speak to the body that, you have just come across the body but you are innocent of the death of the person (sic). You should put a branch on top of the body so that dogs may not eat the body and then go and tell the chiefs, if you are in the rural area or the police, if you are in town. If you do not communicate this information to such people, the *ngozi* will affect you for failing to help the family of the bereaved by telling them of the whereabouts of the body of their relatives (sic).

**Question 10:** You pointed out that one of the causes of *ngozi* is betraying some people during war times. Can you explain that?

**Response:**

If people are fighting a common enemy during a war, it is not expected to betray a member of one's squad (sic). If one does so, he or she is capable of suffering from *ngozi*. Betraying one's friend is deception, which can lead to the person's

death. His spirit will come back and tell you that, "You killed me". This is the same when one shoots a member of his squad. That also is capable of causing *ngozi*. In Ngorima communal courts, there was a case of such nature (sic). After the liberation war that ended in 1980, a certain family came complaining against their brother who they say killed (sic) his commander during the war. The family members learned this from a witchdoctor. The accused person denied the allegation but disaster continued to ravage the family until he mysteriously died on a journey to a nearby town.

**Question 11:** Can you describe the *ngozi* that manifests as a result of being accomplice in a murderer?

**Response**

If a person sees someone being robbed and does not help to save the person, that person is likely to incur *ngozi*. The same goes with a person who is accomplice in the murder to hinder those who pass by from seeing what is happening (sic). In Ngorima court, a case of four families who decided to kill a mentally ill person was judged. The four people composed of three men and a woman who decided to kill this person so that they may use some part (sic) of his body as a talisman to boost their business. The person was killed. After sometime, a spirit manifested affecting the four families. Among them, some of their children died mysteriously and other perpetrators of the incident also (sic) died soon after the incident. One of the remaining two families (sic) involved in the murder committed suicide.

**Question 12:** In which way is misfortune a sign of the presence of *ngozi*?

**Response:**

Misfortune is taken seriously as caused by *ngozi* especially when it recurs several times in a family. This misfortune could be happening (sic) to an individual or the whole family. This can be loss of regular job or failure to get one,

failure to have a steady family, accidents at work, being treated roughly by co-workers and the like. If such things happen, it is likely to be caused by *ngozi*.

**Question 13:** What in your view is the remedy to *ngozi* and how can one go about it?

**Response:**

The remedy to *ngozi* crisis is compensation. It has to be followed by a beer ceremony where the spirit of the deceased is informed of the compensation. In terms of payment of the compensation, the affected family goes to the chief and tells him that one of their family members killed somebody and the *ngozi* spirit is causing trouble in the family. The chief sends a messenger to the family of the deceased and tells them that a family is claiming responsibility for the death of their relative (sic). Sometimes the guilty family requests from the chief a person to go with to the family of the murdered person (sic). The person who escorts them is called *mupurisa wamambo* (the police of the chief). Upon arrival at the home of the deceased, *mupurisa wamambo* tells the family of the deceased his story. Sometimes the family of the deceased denies that the spirit that is speaking is of their relative. In anger and pain they can say, "How do you know that the spirit that is troubling you is of our child? We do not want to get a foreign spirit in our family (sic). If it is our child why does he not tell us also?" The representative of the chief can ask the two families to go to a reliable *n'anga* who will confirm that the *ngozi* spirit is of their relative.

The witchdoctor may be taken to the chief's court where he can call the spirits in the presence of the chief and traditional court judges or the chief may send the two families to two or more witchdoctors that are reliable and a report of what happens there can be brought to the chief by his messenger. From there on, the family (sic) can be brought together to settle the *ngozi* crisis.

There is need to brew beer to the spirit (sic). The beer takes seven days to be brewed (sic) and is done at the outskirts of the family yard. If they brew this beer within the family yard, it will confuse other spiritual rituals in the family. *Ngozi* is a spirit of anger and its ceremony must never be mixed with other family rituals such as of the ancestral spirits (sic). For that reason, the *ngozi* ritual has to be conducted outside the family yard.

The guilty family therefore brews the beer and kills a goat outside the yard. The goat meat is boiled without salt. The general public is invited to the ritual to drink beer and eat the goat meat (sic). As they eat the meat, they taunt the guilty family throwing bones all over so that they may pick them. The guilty family does not taste anything prepared for this occasion. After the ritual, they clean the pots, pick the bones and leave without eating anything from the ritual. Without the brewing of beer and boiling of goat meat, *ngozi* spirit does not stop (sic).

**Question 14:** Are there cases, which serve as examples of rebellion, partial obedience and total obedience to the demands of *ngozi*? If there are, can you explain the outcome of each example?

**Response:**

We have three examples and their outcomes are clear. I will start with the example of total rebellion. During the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, a certain local man was a freedom fighter. It is alleged that amidst a battle he turned his gun to one of his commanders and shot him dead (sic). After the war, a spirit manifested claiming that this man innocently killed him during the liberation struggle. The accused denied the charges and did not respond to the demands. However, his relatives pressed on for the case to be dealt with at the chief's court. His relatives claimed that they were experiencing trauma from the spirit of this man. The man denied the accusations. He did not submit to the demands of the *ngozi*. After a short time, he died sitting in his lorry. His relatives attributed the cause of his death to his refusal to accept the *ngozi* demands.

An example of partial obedience is of a certain woman who stole some gold from her husband. The husband had smuggled the gold from South Africa. The husband realised the disappearance of his gold and summoned all members of his family to confess if there was anyone who had stolen it (sic). No one admitted that he/she had stolen the gold.

Later when the husband died, an avenging spirit manifested causing havoc in the family of one of the brothers of the woman. This woman happened to be my aunt and the spirit was causing havoc in our family. The spirit demanded a recompense for the gold. The woman admitted that she had stolen the gold. Her brothers with her were to pay back to the family of her husband (sic). The payment was done. However, her brothers did not brew beer after the payment of the gold. The spirit continued to cause havoc until a ceremony was conducted where beer was brewed. They killed and boiled a goat. After this incident, the problem abated. This is a model of partial obedience to the demands of *ngozi*.

An example of total obedience is of two sons of a chief in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe who were born on the same day to different mothers. The system of succession was that the older one becomes the successor of their father to the chieftainship. Zwenhaka<sup>15</sup>, a nephew to the two sons of the chief preferred one to the other. He allegedly poisoned the one who had been chosen to be the chief, after he had been on the position for some time (sic), so that his half brother may have a chance to rule as a chief as well. The chief died and the friend of Zwenhaka became an acting chief. In the passage of time, a spirit caused havoc in Zwenhaka's family. He remembered what he had done and confessed it. He was charged for it and was required to follow all the demands of *ngozi*. He did as was required. The *ngozi* problems stopped.

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<sup>15</sup> This is not his real name. For ethical reason it has been replaced with a pseudo-name.

**Question 15:** What do you think is the best way to stop the *ngozi* spirit?

**Response:**

It is always necessary for the guilty family to conduct a ritual with the family of the deceased after the payment of recompense. This is the only way the spirit of the dead can be a part of the appeasement process. If this is not done, the spirit of the deceased can continue to attack the family of the offender(s) since the spirit was not invited in solving the grievances with (sic) the offender(s).

### **3.2.2.2 Interview with second respondent**

#### **3.2.2.2.1 The background of second respondent**

The second respondent has been one of the advisors to five generations of Ngorima chiefs. He started with Chief Garai, and then worked with Chiefs Sanyari, Peter, Tambai and Prosper. The respondent had first-hand information of the cases of avenging spirits in Ngorima area. His main responsibility to these different chiefs was as a *mupurisa wamambo*. He was sent to call people who were accused by their relatives of causing *ngozi* crisis in their families.

#### **3.2.2.2.2 Interview questions and responses with second respondent<sup>16</sup>**

**Question 1:** What is *ngozi*?

**Response:**

*Ngozi* is the spirit of a murdered person that comes to take vengeance on the offender. There are other causes of *ngozi* like failing to pay a servant his due recompense. If he/she dies, his/her spirit comes as *ngozi* into the master's family. This has been common when Mozambique boys came to Zimbabwe for

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<sup>16</sup> The researcher asked the second respondent fewer questions due to his health and age. However, the respondent showed more insight in the answers to the three questions than the first respondent.

employment (sic). Some of their Zimbabwean masters promised them payment and did not fulfil the promise.

## **Question 2**

Which *ngozi* problems are most common in the Ngorima courts?

## **Response**

The most common *ngozi* cases in Ngorima courts were of murdered people. This was particularly so during the time of Chief Garai. This marks the period between 1970 and 1980. Some unscrupulous misguided people were deceived by some *n'angas* to kill people to boost their projects especially grinding-mills (sic). They mostly targeted the Mozambique<sup>17</sup> boys who came to the then Rhodesia for employment (sic). Years later, *ngozi* spirits manifested demanding compensation. The offenders had to go to Mozambique to pay compensation for the murder. In such cases, a possessed young person, who hardly knew what happened when the person was killed, led them to Mozambique to the family of the deceased. On arrival, (sic) the offender had to go with the chief's representative otherwise, he/she could be attacked and killed by the relatives of the deceased.

## **Question 3**

Were you asked to participate in solving any particular case of *ngozi* crisis?

## **Response**

Yes I was. One incident I will never forget is when a certain man from a nearby Ngorima village connived with some people to kill a mentally disabled person in order to boost their business by use of the man's parts (sic). The man died but not long after his death, a vicious *ngozi* spirit manifested mercilessly. All the three families involved in the murder of that man suffered badly. One man, in

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<sup>17</sup> Perhaps boys from Mozambique became the target because people would not be aware immediately that they were missing. The community could assume that they had gone back to their home country.

particular, had to accept that he participated in the killing of this mentally disturbed person after his children rose against him. He accepted that he had participated in the killing of the man. A day after his confession in the Ngorima court, he hanged himself in the front of his house. I was required to report the case to the then British South Africa Police (BSAP). When I reported the BSAP came and we went to the place the man hanged himself. He had written a note to his children and placed it in his pocket. The message on the note was an admission that he killed the mentally disturbed person and he wanted his children to pay compensation to the *ngozi* spirit of the man.

The BSAP instructed me to untie the corpse from the rope that hanged it to the tree. Frightened by the eyes of the corpse that bulged out from its face, I declined to carry out the task. The BSAP officer beat me so much and compelled me to untie the rope. I had no choice but to do as was required.

**Question 4:** In your view, what is the remedy to *ngozi* crisis?

**Response:**

The only remedy to *ngozi* crisis is to pay compensation. There are no two ways to it.

**Question 5:** What else would you want to tell me about *ngozi*?

**Response:**

I faced many challenges because of *ngozi* spirits. On one hand, we had to help the affected families from a traditional perspective and yet there has always been a time when the legal aspect had to be brought in (sic). This became particularly complicated when the accused person committed suicide, as I have already said. By law, you cannot simply bury such a person. You had to inform the police which then descended harshly on you suggesting that what you spoke with him (sic) caused his death. This was common during the colonial years. However,

most of those who hanged themselves had admitted that they murdered people but could not stand the stigma of being called a murderer by one's own people.

### **3.2.2.3 Interview with third respondent**

#### **3.2.2.3.1 His background**

The third respondent comes from Chivi, Masvingo province in the southern part of Zimbabwe. He is a high school teacher who grew up in a rural setting and learned much from his grandfather who periodically conducted traditional family rituals. The grandfather was very meticulous with ritual processes and always advised his grandchildren to be careful when conducting spiritual ceremonies.

**Question 1:** What is *ngozi*?

**Response:**

My understanding of *ngozi* is that it is a spirit that manifests as that of the dead seeking to take vengeance on the offender. The offender could be a person who mistreated or murdered the deceased. If the offender is also dead, the spirit attacks his/her family members.

**Question 2:** You claim that, "it is a spirit that comes as that of the dead," do you think it is the real spirit of the murdered or offended person?

**Response:**

I do not think so. There are some ritual practices, which the living relatives or children of the deceased do for these spirits to manifest. There seems to be some *magical practices*, which evoke these spirits and call them to manifestation. That's why I say these spirits come as those of the dead because I am not really convinced that they are spirits of the dead.

**Question 3:** How do these spirits come into the family?

**Response:**

My grandfather always told us that whenever we have a family ritual for family protection against evil spirits and witchcraft, we eat a bull's meat consecrated to the family ancestral spirits. Every member of the family has to eat the meat. However, eating meat from this bull also opens up a way for avenging spirits to attack any member of the family that commits murder or mistreat parents. So, one has to choose whether to eat the meat or not to.

**Question 4:** Why is it that the family spirits do not protect the one who committed murder from *ngozi* attacks?

**Response:**

The elders say committing murder is never acceptable. The spirits of the family cannot protect such a person.

**Question 5:** What do you think is the remedy for *ngozi*?

**Response:**

If a person committed murder, then he/she has to face penalty for that. He/she should pay compensation for the murder.

**Question 6:** What did your grandfather advise you about *ngozi* since you said he emphasised carefulness when relating with the spirits?

**Response**

My grandfather advised us never to tamper with magic in evoking the spirits. That can cause disaster to the family (sic). Stay off and it will be better with you (sic).

### 3.2.2.4 Interview with fourth respondent

#### 3.2.2.4.1 Background of fourth respondent

The fourth and the only female respondent comes from the Northern Province of Zimbabwe from among the Zezuru<sup>18</sup> people. The respondent has been living in Central Mashonaland Province and among the Manyika people from north-eastern Zimbabwe. Her grandfather was a witchdoctor who was once requested to treat a person suffering from an *ngozi* spirit. Her knowledge of *ngozi* spirits is through enculturation.

**Question 1:** What is *ngozi*?

**Response:**

*Ngozi* is the spirit of either an offended or a murdered person. If you murder a person, he/she comes as an *ngozi* spirit. If you do something that results in the death of a person, that can also cause *ngozi*. Sometimes *ngozi* can happen when you are innocent (sic). This may be caused by wicked people who use magic to make you accountable for the death of a person. An example of this is when somebody comes to your house when he is about to die and you fail to help him/her. The spirits of this person is likely to torment you for failing to assist the person. This *ngozi* can cause misfortune to you as well (sic).

**Question 2:** How is that possible?

**Response:**

A relative of mine parked his company car in town and he went shopping. When he came back, somebody had collided on his car from a motorbike (sic) he was riding on and instantly died there. From that day, this man became so unfortunate, lost his job and become a very poor person (sic). He could hardly get employment anywhere (sic). He did not kill a person but some evil powers

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<sup>18</sup> The Zezuru are one of the Shona tribes of Zimbabwe.

likely (sic) caused by magic made him suffer this *ngozi* spirit when he was innocent.

**Question 2:** You said *ngozi* could manifest when one does something that leads to the death of another person. Can you explain that?

**Response:**

My cousin's mother-in-law did not like her. The mother-in-law visited a bad *n'anga*, who made some evil spirits to possess her daughter-in-law (sic). One day, the mother-in-law came to her daughter-in-law's house with a bottle of sulphuric acid and left it in the house. Under unclear circumstance, the daughter-in-law drank it. It burned her from the mouth to the intestines and eventually she died at the hospital in Harare.

She was taken for burial at her parents' home. After the burial, her father together with some elders remained at the grave and mixed soil with cornmeal. They spoke these words, "Our daughter, we do not know what has killed you. You know it. If you have died by natural cause, then rest forever. If you have had your life shortened, you have to settle your case." I was watching these men speaking at the grave of my cousin (sic). My cousin's mother-in-law had also attended the funeral. On the same day, she started beating herself calling the name of her daughter-in-law and shouting, "Oh no please, do not do that. Oh no, what are you doing?" As she said these words, she was calling the name of the recently buried person (sic). Even though people rebuked her, she continued and I knew what was happening having seen what was done at the grave. So *ngozi* is real and can strike immediately after burial.

**Question 4:** In your understanding, what is the remedy to *ngozi*?

**Response:**

The only remedy to *ngozi* crisis is payment to the family of the deceased for the murder or the offence caused.

**Summary**

The empirical study above, like the literature study, shows that most Shona believe that *ngozi* spirits are those of the dead that return to take vengeance on the living. There are various types of *ngozi*. The most vicious of all is that of a murdered stranger. The Shona believe that the only way to appease *ngozi* spirits is by payment of compensation.

**3.2.3 Findings of the empirical study on the Shona understanding of *ngozi***

- The traditional Shona people believe that *ngozi* is a spirit of the deceased.
- There are many types of *ngozi* spiritual manifestations.
- According to the Shona, the only way to placate *ngozi* is by admitting the case of murder or offence and paying for it.

If the traditional Shona uniformly understand *ngozi* as the spirits of offended dead people that come to take vengeance on the living, then there is need to investigate the way the church in Zimbabwe, particularly among the Shona, has been relating to *ngozi* crisis.

**3.3 THE SHONA NATURAL POTENTIALS AND EXISTING CHRISTIAN MODELS****3.3.1 The traditional Shona response to *ngozi***

The Shona have a natural tendency to look for spiritual solutions to problems. Nothing is taken for granted. There has to be a cause for anything that happens to the Shona whether good or bad. In like manner, the Shona have a traditional response to *ngozi* crisis.

According to the Shona, a remedy to *ngozi* varies with the type and with its relationship to the offender (Bourdillon 1976:272). The Shona believe that if a person died naturally, his spirit can be chased away by the *n'anga* (Gelfand 1977:30). If it is the *ngozi* of a servant who was deprived of his due rewards, then a *n'anga* prepares porridge and mixes it with a special herb and puts it in a winnowing basket. Each member of the family dips his clenched fist into the porridge saying, "Go away, we do not know you; you only worked for us. They eat the porridge after which each member smears the door post saying, "We do not want you to come into our rooms; go away we do not know you" (Gelfand 1977:30). This ceremony is done in the morning.

The *n'anga* then takes the family members to a riverbank and sits under a tree (preferably a water-berry tree, which is common along the riverbanks in some parts of Zimbabwe). The *n'anga* puts some porridge in the mouth of a goat saying, "This is the place we have allocated to you. Do not come back to our village." The goat runs into the bush. The family returns to its village without looking back. The head of the family is given the same herb that he divides to members of the family. In the evening, before they go to bed, the herb is sprinkled on hot ashes and then they go to sleep (Gelfand 1977:30).

The Shona say, "*Mushonga we ngozi kuripa*, that is, the only remedy to *ngozi* crisis is to pay compensation (Ribeiro 1967:116). It is held that only an experienced *n'anga* can solve an *ngozi* crisis. If one does not have enough power to calm an *ngozi* spirit, he is discouraged from attempting to do so (Thorpe 1991:57; Gelfand 1959:155; Ribeiro 1967:94). It is reported that some *n'angas* die while attempting to exorcise *ngozi* spirits (Gelfand 1959:155; Ribeiro 1967:94). If this happens, the family of the offender ends up with two *ngozi* spirits to appease (Ribeiro 1967:120). If the incompetent *n'anga* does not die, the Shona claim that, disaster will strike his family. In such situations, the *n'anga*

would need to pay the *ngozi* spirit for disturbing it. When this is done, the *ngozi* goes on to the family of the offender (Gelfand 1959:155).

Normally, the *ngozi* of a stranger demands a head of cattle. The amount of cattle varies from one family to another. To some people, it can be five heads of cattle and yet to others it can be more or less than that (Gelfand 1977:30). In addition to a head of cattle, the *ngozi* of a murdered person usually demands for a girl to be married into its family.

From the explanation above, it is obvious that the Shona have a traditional way of dealing with *ngozi*. It is also clear that they acknowledge that very few traditional healers can treat an *ngozi* crisis. This means that if one cannot get a capable *n'anga* to appease the *ngozi* spirit, it is better to seek other ways. The church has always been an alternative solution for those affected by *ngozi*. However, the churches in Zimbabwe have been engaging *ngozi* crisis in different ways. The African Independent Churches (AICs) have been more forthright than the mission churches<sup>19</sup> in dealing with the *ngozi* crisis.

### **3.3.1 Mission churches' response to *ngozi* crisis**

Missionaries who came to Zimbabwe from denominations and organizations such as, South Africa General Missions (SAGM), American Board, American Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church etc, established schools and hospitals in various places in Zimbabwe. These missionaries discouraged the Shona people from consulting witchdoctors. They counselled the sick to get medical help from hospitals. The availability of hospitals, however, lessened the mission churches' emphasis on the prayers for the sick. They prayed for the sick but it was in addition to medical care. At times, medical attention took precedence over prayers for the sick. Consequently, this duality weakened the

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<sup>19</sup> "Mission churches" in this case refers to churches, which were started in Zimbabwe by missionaries from the West.

Christian focus in addressing the reality of the African spiritual world particularly their perception of sickness, which is associated with spirits such as *ngozi*. As highlighted in the first chapter, in cases where the Shona found that some illnesses could not be treated in the hospital, they attributed the cause to spirits. In such cases, hospital medical care is perceived to be ineffective.

Mwaura notes that the churches overemphasize the physical healing and treatment to the total exclusion of the spiritual, social and other forms of healing (2000:73). He claims that it is regrettable that the scientific secularized western view of sickness that is adopted in medical centres fails to appreciate that the struggle against sickness goes beyond the physical connotations of the word (2000:82). Mwaura attributes the phenomenal increase of AICs to the lack of emphasis on praying for the sick on the part of mission churches, especially when the cause of the sickness seems to be spiritual. It is for this reason that there is in part, a huge gap in Christianity in responding to *ngozi* crisis. Very few mission churches, particularly evangelicals have seriously reflected on the subject. As a result, some Shona Christians who struggle with the *ngozi* spirits resort to alternative ways of dealing with the crisis.

There has been some recent development in the effort toward addressing *ngozi* crisis among mission churches. For example, the United Baptist Church leadership has been discussing the problem at their national conferences. Rev Partson Munjuwanjuwa<sup>20</sup> presented a paper on pastoral response to *ngozi* at the Zimbabwe United Baptist Church (UBC) pastors retreat in June 2007 at the Harare UBC) conference centre. The United Baptist Church pastors agreed at this conference that further research on *ngozi* is required. Some participants at the conference considered it God's punishment to the murderers but others understood it to be a clear demonic activity. It was resolved that *ngozi* should be acknowledged as a real spiritual phenomenon among the Shona people. Those guilty of murder were encouraged to confess their sins and make restitution of

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<sup>20</sup> Partson Munjuwanjuwa is a lecturer at Rusitu Bible College in Zimbabwe

the murder to the family of the deceased. The restitution should always be in monetary terms and not with human life as the traditional method demands.

However, Gundani (1998) cautions Zimbabwean believers on the issue of restitution. He argues that the restitution system is suspect since only Jesus Christ truly sets people free. His argument is that the purpose of restitution should not be aimed at getting freedom from the spirit. Rather, it has to be an acceptance of accountability for the murder.

While these seminars on the role of the church in addressing *ngozi* crisis are good, much needs to be done to implement the church's position on how it should relate to *ngozi*. Explaining the biblical position on *ngozi* and the role of the church in addressing it is good but it is not enough to equip the affected. There is need for the church to guide the affected member through the process of healing by fellowshiping with him and giving him the necessary advice. Magezi (2005:137) defines healing as that which enables us to be fully human in relation to our society, to our environment and to ourselves.

On the implementation of healing, Gundani's (1998) suggestion is helpful. He recommends that the church should develop a ministry of exorcism and find ways of convincing people that God wants them to be free from fear. He explains that the lasting answer is not to drive harmful spirits out but to promote faith in God and the communion in and with Christ that the church celebrates in the Eucharist, which should not be underestimated. The African Independent Churches (AICs) have been practising exorcism as suggested by Gundani. However, some of their methods have been questioned.

### **3.3.2 The response of African Independent Churches to *ngozi* crisis**

There are many AICs in Zimbabwe but their views briefly discussed in this section are from the Zion City Church (ZCC), Mugodhi, the John Marange Apostolic Church (popularly known as *Positori*) and the Ethiopian Church (known

as *Topia* in Zimbabwe). These are chosen for this discussion because of the availability of information both in books and on the internet, on the way they deal with *ngozi*.

Daneel (1988:150-151) explains that the AICs emerged as a reaction to the failure of mission churches to address some spiritual matters affecting the African Christians. Bishop Mutendi of ZCC resented the missionaries for negatively appraising his experiences of spells and spirit possession as an instance of traditional *shavi*<sup>21</sup> and not as a sign of the Holy Spirit. John Marange, the founder of the Apostolic Faith Church (*Positori*) criticizes the missionaries for withholding the essential gospel message of the Holy Spirit from Africans (Daneel 1988:152). The Shona Christians seek biblical ways of dealing with their social and spiritual problems. As Anderson (2000:30) remarks, the main attraction of the AICs was that Africans had an opportunity to bring concrete social problems to the church leaders. In the context of Zimbabwe, the AICs came up with ways of engaging with the spiritual challenges of *ngozi*.

The ZCC makes whole families in their church to undergo *ngozi* treatment. The affected family has to submit to cleansing rituals with hallowed water<sup>22</sup>. The ZCC prophetic healer prays on newspapers, which are then burned in the yard of the family affected by the *ngozi* spirit. This ritual is known as the 'water smoke' treatment. According to the ZCC, when this is done, the power of God is unleashed at the family house and the spirit is forced to flee.

When the first sign of an *ngozi* spirit appears in the form of psychic imbalance, the ZCC leaders take the mentally disturbed person to a place of prayers, which they call Moriah. While this is being done, some protective measures are taken for the family members that stay behind. The prophetic healer and church leader,

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<sup>21</sup> *Shavi* is a Shona name for an alien spirit. Alien spirits are those which the Shona call foreign and evil wandering spirits capable of bringing bad influence to families.

<sup>22</sup> The ZCC prophetic healer boils water and then prays over it. This water is called 'hallowed water' and the victim is required to drink it (Daneel 1970:40 – 41).

Mutendi<sup>23</sup> usually summons the victim of *ngozi* to appear after the morning prayers. Mutendi then utters an inaudible prayer. Its effect on the victim varies but generally, the person falls to the ground and remains motionless for a long time.

Daneel (1970:48) writes of a church leader in the Zion church called Matuvure, who became a member of this church when an *ngozi* spirit attacked his family. Matuvure testified that if he had not joined this church, the avenging spirit would have continued attacking his family. He however, feared that if he backslides, the *ngozi* spirit might return to attack him (Daneel 1970:48). Even though he believes that the church leader saved him from the *ngozi* attacks, it is clear that Matuvure is not saved from fear and his allegiance to the church is in part caused by the fear that the *ngozi* might come back.

The Topia and Mugodhi churches also exorcise *ngozi* spirits in a similar way. Maxwell (1995:328) interviewed some members from these churches who claimed to have exorcised a number of *ngozi* spirits. The respondents stated that exorcising an *ngozi* spirit is costly, not only to the host but also to the offending family. The *ngozi* spirit can threaten to destroy the family of the one attempting to drive it away. They also explained that it could be devastating to the family and it might be hard to exorcise the spirit. Maxwell's respondents from both the Topia and Mugodhi churches stressed that in treating *ngozi*, there is need for confession of sins in order to make the process work effectively. They pointed out that while restitution may be necessary, often the perpetrators of past violence do not live in the same community, therefore, the process might not work. The situation can become complicated if some members of the family are unbelievers and they insist on a traditional method for the treatment of *ngozi*.

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Mutendi was the founder of ZCC in Zimbabwe. In ZCC, like other AICs, the first son of the church founder inherits the leadership of the church upon the death of the father (Daneel 1977:185).

Even though the leaders of Topia and Mugodhi claim they are able to exorcise *ngozi* spirits, the process is not always successful. In some cases, the avenging spirit overpowers the Christian exorcist. For this reason, some people (even among the Pentecostal churches) prefer a traditional approach to *ngozi* crisis (Maxwell 1995:328). However, this does not mean that the traditional approach is more effective since it has its own problems. Not every *n'anga* is able to dislodge the *ngozi* spirit. Moreover, those who claim they have the power to do so, require that the victims of *ngozi* undergo rituals that are forbidden by Scriptures, such as speaking to the spirit of the dead.

While the AICs have been offering more assistance to those affected by *ngozi* spirits than the mission churches, some of their practices are similar to those of the traditional healers. Daneel (1977:189) points out the following similarities between the *n'anga* and prophets in some AICs:

Both concentrate on the personal causes of the illness or misfortune. Every patient visiting the prophet is subjected to one or several diagnostic spells, and invariably the prophet, like the *n'anga*, ascribes the malady to the following stereotype conflict patterns:

1. A living person who wrongfully with or without the aid of the spirits, causes illness or death; this type of situation frequently involves some form of witchcraft or sorcery;
2. An ancestral or alien spirit who causes illness, sometimes as a sign of calling the afflicted person to perform some duty; this includes the call to become a medium or *n'anga*;
3. A spirit which, according to the tribal laws, has a legitimate claim to some form of restitution and, as a result functions in conjunction with a living representative.

These similarities make some people (both Christians and non-Christians) to wonder if there is any difference between the prophets and the traditional healers. Even though the name of Jesus is used in the exorcism, one wonders whether that makes it differ much from the traditional Shona methods. Moreover, some prophets use linen strips carried around the neck, arms and abdomen, smoke repellent and even needles to draw the so-called polluted blood from the patient. This practice clearly lacks biblical support. As a result, many questions are raised such as: Is this innovation by the AICs acceptable in light of what Scripture teaches on the exorcism of spirits? To some people, this looks more like a transformation of traditional divination than a biblically based practice (Daneel 1977:190).

### **3.3.3 Summary**

From the above explanation, it is evident that the Shona admit that *ngozi* is difficult to treat even with traditional means. It has been stated above that it takes an experienced and specially gifted *n'anga* to treat *ngozi*. Even if this is done, there is no certainty that the *ngozi* crisis has ended permanently. An informant to this researcher explains that the *ngozi* spirit can still resurface later. On the other hand, the churches in Zimbabwe have not been effective enough. As observed by the UBC pastors, there is need to explore other ways of helping those affected by *ngozi*. The mission churches have not been forthright in addressing the crisis but there has been some improvement as seminars are conducted on how *ngozi* crisis can be addressed. The AICs have been more practical than the mission churches but their methods lack biblical support.

### **3.4 Findings on the Shona's natural potentials and existing Christian models**

- The Shona are naturally prone to search for spiritual causes for their physical problems.
- They have a traditional method of appeasing the *ngozi* spirit.

- The Shona method needs a specialist traditional healer to appease the *ngozi* spirit.
- The traditional method does not guarantee complete solution to the crisis.
- The mission churches have not been forthright in addressing *ngozi* in their churches.
- The use of hospitals encouraged by mission churches in dealing with sickness has been ineffective in treating sicknesses caused by spirits.
- The AICs have been more up-front in encountering *ngozi* crises.
- The AICs have been mixing the traditional and biblical methods in addressing *ngozi* crises.
- The traditional method is unbiblical since it treats the avenging spirit as those of the dead.

### **3.5 Preliminary Summary**

The problem statement of this chapter is how the church in Zimbabwe should understand the Shona perception of *ngozi*. In summary, the church in Zimbabwe has to understand that traditional Shona people believe that *ngozi* is the spirit of a murdered or aggrieved person, which returns to take vengeance on the offender. The church in Zimbabwe needs to realize that the approach of mission churches has been less practical in addressing the fears the Shona have of *ngozi* and that the AICs' approach, though more practical than that of the former, resembles the traditional approach. The church in Zimbabwe needs to critically evaluate the strength and weaknesses of both approaches and find ways of bolstering the strengths as it eliminates weaknesses. This is what this research seeks to do in the fourth chapter.

### **3.6 Findings of the meta-theory on the Shona understanding of ngozi crisis**

- Traditional Shona people believe that *ngozi* is a spirit of the dead.
- There are many types of *ngozi* spiritual manifestations.

- The *ngozi* of a murdered person is the most vicious of all.
- The *ngozi* of a murdered person cannot be exorcised.
- The Shona claim the only way to placate an *ngozi* spirit is by paying compensation.
- The traditional Shona method does not guarantee complete treatment of *ngozi*.
- Mission churches have not been forthright in addressing *ngozi* crises.
- The AICs have been mixing the traditional and biblical methods in addressing *ngozi* crises.
- There is need for the church Zimbabwe to use methods that are practical and biblically sound.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRACTICE THEORY - GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO *NGOZI* CRISIS AMONG ZIMBABWEAN CHRISTIANS

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim and objective of this chapter is to propose and design a model of pastoral intervention for the churches in Zimbabwe about caring for and counselling believers affected by *ngozi*. The pastoral approach will draw from Shona natural potentials and from existing Christian models and it will be informed by them. The natural potential implies the Shona traditional methods while the Christian models refer to the approaches of mission churches and the African Independent Churches (AICs).

#### **4.2 The method**

The practical-theoretical guidelines will be established by relating the findings of the basis theory on biblical teaching on communication with the dead with the meta-theory findings on the Shona understanding of *ngozi*. In this section, the operational scientific model by Zerfass will be applied (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:35-36). De Wet (2006) explains that the Zerfass' model starts from the study of the current praxis, in which the action is cast. This praxis often shows its inadequacy in addressing a problem. By an interaction of accepted theological tradition and situation analysis, one comes to a practical theory, which should lead to a second praxis. The second praxis is better than the first since it is an interaction between theological tradition and situation analysis. Based on this model, this section proposes guidelines rather than develop an entirely new praxis that could be employed by the church in Zimbabwe in response to *ngozi* crisis. To proceed, therefore, the findings of the basis theory and meta-theory will be recapitulated.

#### **4.2.1 Final basis theory**

The following points represent the findings on the basis theory:

- God forbids consultation of the living with the dead.
- The dead cannot communicate with the living.
- The dead cannot take vengeance on the living.
- Only God is the avenger.
- The spirits that manifests as those of the dead are demons.

#### **4.2.2 Final inferences from meta-theory**

The following points represent the findings on meta-theory:

- *Ngozi* spirits vary in types and in their demands for recompense.
- The *ngozi* of a murdered person cannot be exorcised.
- Only an experienced *n'anga* with special powers is able to solve an *ngozi* crisis.
- The only way to placate an *ngozi* spirit is by paying compensation.

#### **4.2.3 Positive aspects of *ngozi***

1. Fear of *ngozi* restrains people from contemplating murder and mistreating their parents.
2. *Ngozi* holds the guilty person responsible for his/her sins.

#### **4.2.4 Negative aspects of *ngozi***

1. It promotes fear of the unknown and uncertainty about the future in the families under its attack.
2. It promotes child abuse especially on the girl-child when she is required to be married to the family of the murdered person to appease *ngozi* spirit's anger.
3. It punishes innocent members of the murderer's family who also suffer attack especially when the offender is already dead.
4. It contradicts biblical teaching that vengeance belongs to God.
5. It promotes fear of unknown spirits rather than of God.
6. The Shona might refrain from murder for fear of *ngozi* and not of God.

7. It potentially promotes hatred among family members especially when misfortune successively occurs in the family.

#### **4.2.5 The Shona natural potentials and existing Christian models**

- The Shona have a natural tendency to seek solutions for their spiritual lives.
- The traditional remedy for *ngozi* is to pay compensation.
- Mission churches have not been forthright in addressing *ngozi* problems.
- The use of hospitals encouraged by mission churches in dealing with sickness has been ineffective in treating sicknesses caused by spirits.
- The AICs have been more up-front in encountering *ngozi* crises.
- The AICs have been mixing the traditional and biblical methods in addressing *ngozi* crises.
- The traditional method is unbiblical since it treats the avenging spirits as those of the dead, therefore it can not be used by the church in addressing *ngozi*.

### **4.3 Critical hermeneutical interaction**

The findings of meta-theory on the study of *ngozi* have shown that the Shona people perceive *ngozi* as a spiritual reality. The Shona claim that these spirits are the offended dead that return to take vengeance on the living. Fear of these spirits is apparent among the Shona. Despite their fears, the Shona have a natural tendency to seek solutions for their spiritual and physical problems. They believe that the traditional remedy for *ngozi* crises is very restricted since it needs specially trained and experienced *n'angas* to address it.

On the other hand, the basis theory has shown that *ngozi* spirits are demons. Since the people of God are forbidden to consult demons, they should seek the will of God as demonstrated in Scriptures and not demons. Addressing *ngozi* crises by consulting demons, which manifest as spirits of the dead is an

abomination to God. For that reason, the traditional method should not be used by the Christians in addressing *ngozi* crises.

The churches in Zimbabwe have not been effective in addressing the *ngozi* crisis. However, the approaches of both mission churches and AICs have strengths and weaknesses. The strength of most mission churches<sup>24</sup> is that they seek to address *ngozi* crisis by enlightening believers that these are demons. While this theological position on *ngozi* is biblical, the mission churches have not been practical enough in engaging the *ngozi* crisis. There is need for the mission churches to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit in overcoming the forces of evil spirits. The believers affected by *ngozi* cannot do it alone. There is need for the mission churches to show more pastoral care by visiting the families, praying with them and exorcising the *ngozi* spirits if necessary. This has not been the case in mission churches and it is one of the reasons for the emergence of the AICs, which reckon that the church has to be more involved in the lives of its members (Daneel 1988:150-151; Mwaura 2000:82).

The strength of the AICs has been that they seek to practically assist the affected people. As already shown in the case of ZCC and Topia churches, they collaborate with the family of the affected to remove the *ngozi*. We have seen that ZCC takes the whole family for a healing ritual involving drinking of hallowed water, burning of newspapers that have been prayed over and the like. The clients are told that by these performances, the spirits are chased away.

While the chasing away of *ngozi* spirits is not recorded in the Bible, we expect to see these spirits exorcised in the manner Jesus, his disciples and the early church did. *Ngozi* spirits are demons and therefore should be exorcised as demons. The burning of newspapers and drinking of hallowed water was never a method of exorcising demons in biblical times. The methods of the AICs take the

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<sup>24</sup> Not every mission church maintains a biblical position on spiritism in Africa. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, accommodates *kurova guva* practices which are associated with *ngozi* as permissible rites, which the Shona are allowed to carry out (Kumbirai 1977:128).

form of African traditional methods whereby the witchdoctors burn some fats and vegetables to ward off sorcery (Semenya 2007:27). As already pointed out by Daneel (1977:190), every victim visiting the prophet is subjected to one or several diagnostic spells, and invariably the prophet, like the *n'anga* ascribes the malady to some stereotype conflict patterns such as witchcraft in the family. These practices are syncretistic. It is therefore inappropriate for the church to engage in them.

An effective pastoral intervention in *ngozi* crises is a dual approach whereby the strengths of both AICs and mission churches are utilized. Their weaknesses can be improved on. The mission churches need to be as practical as the AICs are, in addressing *ngozi* crisis. If they teach that *ngozi* spirits are demonic manifestations and that believers have power over such forces, then they should demonstrate this belief by being involved in the deliverance of those affected by *ngozi*. On the other hand, the AICs should seek ways of dealing with *ngozi* spirits through biblically justifiable methods. They should not mix Christian beliefs with unbiblical traditional practices.

#### ***4.4 Towards a pastoral intervention - guidelines on care and counselling ngozi-affected Christians***

##### **4.4.1 Utilizing the Shona's natural potentials**

The Shona's natural tendency to face spiritual challenges can be utilized in pastoral care. The biblical teaching on the reality of Satan is not a strange message to the Shona. Unlike Bultmann's<sup>25</sup> denial of the reality of evil spirits, the Shona believe that these forces are real (Bultmann 1964:5). Gehman (2005:273) concurs that belief in these spiritual powers is not mere superstition. However,

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<sup>25</sup> Bultmann argues that, "It is impossible to use electric lights and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles." He considers belief in spirits and miracles as both unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world (1964:5).

the Shona need to realize that these spirits are not the offended dead. The dead do not come and take vengeance. Vengeance for a murdered person is from the Lord. These spirits are demons.

#### **4.4.2 The need to create an exorcism ministry for those possessed by *ngozi* spirit**

The Shona recognize that bad spirits should be exorcised. Scriptures show the power that Jesus and his disciples had in exorcising the demons (Luke 11:26; Acts 19:12). There is a need in the church to cast out demons. As already discussed above, sound theological teaching on demons and their influences is necessary. However, it is not enough in addressing the *ngozi* crisis especially for those struggling with the spirits. The church leadership has to cast out demons in a manner taught and shown in Scriptures.

#### **4.4.3 Encouraging confession of past sins**

*Ngozi* spirits manifest mostly when a person does not want to be accountable for the sin of murder or mistreatment of parents. When one becomes a Christian, he should be encouraged to confess all his sins of the past. This helps the new believer when other believers counsel him on to overcome the effects of those sins. In the case of murder, he should be helped to go to the offended family to settle the grievance. If he does not do so and the spirits manifest, it may be hard for him to refuse the dictates of the *ngozi* spirit. If restitution is called for, then it has to be done in a biblical manner. This payment should only be done in monetary terms and not by giving one's daughter in marriage to compensate for an offence. To compensate with one's daughter is to deprive her of the freedom to have a husband of her choice.

#### **4.4.4 Teaching the young to avoid the mistakes of the past**

The present and future Shona generations can be saved from the *ngozi* crisis by teaching young people that disobedience to the Lord can be costly. They are to avoid bad influence that can result in murder, mistreating parents and any form of bad behaviour that can deprive them of happiness in the future. The demons can take advantage of this and appear as the spirits of the dead who are offended.

They are to learn from the mistakes of others who got entangled in the crisis and became victims of demonic forces.

#### **4.4.5 Encouraging believers to put their trust in God for protection**

The church has to encourage believers who have been saved from *ngozi* threats to put their trust in God for their protection. The believer should not solely depend upon pastors and church members for protection from *ngozi* threats since their absence could make him resort to traditional ways that are incompatible with biblical teaching. Bible passages that teach on the omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of God can help believers to realize that God is always with them, He knows what they are going through and is able to save them. The church leaders should demonstrate trust in God in their day-to-day lives to set an example for other believers to put their trust in God as well.

#### **4.4.6 Preliminary Summary**

Even though the Shona believe that *ngozi* is a spirit of the dead that comes to take vengeance on the living offender, the Bible shows that these are demons. The church has to help believers affected by these demons by exorcising them and equipping believers to stand against future attacks by trusting God for their protection.

### **4.5 Findings on the practical pastoral guidelines in addressing *ngozi* crisis**

1. Effective pastoral ministry has to acknowledge that *ngozi* is a spiritual reality in Zimbabwe.
2. The pastor needs to involve other parish members in giving pastoral support to families affected by *ngozi*.
3. The church has to come up with an exorcism ministry for those possessed by *ngozi* spirits.
4. If a person killed another before he was a Christian, he has to confess the sin and be prepared to bear the consequence in a God fearing manner.

5. Payment of restitution can only be done in monetary terms and not by giving one's daughter in marriage.
6. If the offender is now a Christian, he/she has to trust the Lord for protection from future demonic attacks.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The problem statement of this study is: How can *ngozi* be understood from a biblical perspective in a way that would enable pastoral ministry address the issue appropriately and allay the fears of believers? The aim of this study is to contribute to a biblical perspective of *ngozi* by coming up with an appropriate design for pastoral ministry. This approach attempts to address the Shona believers' fear of *ngozi*. The model for practical theology defined by Zerfass that deals with the basis-theory, meta-theory and praxis-theory model has been used in this research (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36).

In the second chapter, the study demonstrated that the spirits that manifest as those of the dead are demons. This conclusion is from the basis theory findings that the dead cannot communicate with the living. Based on the outcome, it has been asserted in this study that the dead cannot take vengeance on the living and that the practice of necromancy is forbidden by God since that can lead people to the worship of demons.

In chapter 3, we noted that the church in Zimbabwe needs to understand that the traditional Shona people believe that *ngozi* is the spirit of a murdered or aggrieved person, which returns to take vengeance on the offender. It has also been observed that the gravity of vengeance varies with the type of *ngozi* spirit. The study has shown that traditional Shona people strongly believe that the only remedy to *ngozi* is payment of compensation through traditional means.

The fourth chapter aimed at determining pastoral and strategic guidelines, which the churches in Zimbabwe can use in helping those affected by *ngozi*. The study has shown that the church has to promote a network of relationships. The believers have to provide pastoral support for the member affected by *ngozi*. If

the affected person committed murder, he should be encouraged to make restitution in a manner that does not violate biblical teaching. He has to trust upon the Lord for protection.

### **5.2 Final conclusion**

In the Shona context where Christians are gripped by fear of the spiritual forces of *ngozi*, believers need to recognize that *ngozi* spirits are demonic manifestations, which come in the form of apparitions of the dead. For this reason, a biblically-based pastoral ministry should be informed of the beliefs and fears of *ngozi* among the Shona and provide care and guidance in addressing *ngozi* crises. The church has to teach believers that they are not to submit to demons, which come as the spirits of the dead demanding retribution. Only God can demand retribution since vengeance belongs to him alone. If the believer is guilty of killing an innocent person, he has to confess the sin in order to get God's forgiveness. As he does so, the church has to give pastoral care to the guilty person by fellowshiping with him. The believer has to make restitution to the offended family as an expression of remorse and a good testimony of the church to the world.

### **5.3 Recommendations for further study**

There is still much to be studied on this topic especially on the following questions and related issues:

1. Why is *ngozi* more common among the Shona than in the surrounding nations?
2. How can churches that have not been addressing Shona spiritism be encouraged to face the challenges of *ngozi*, which their church members may be struggling with in silence?
3. For biblical studies, a study on the communal effect of an action/sin is recommended; there is a parallel between the Hebrew (Old Testament) and Shona families.

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