

**THE INFLUENCE OF BEMBA TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN
MYSTICAL POWERS ON BEMBA CATHOLICS AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR
CATHOLIC FAITH IN MPIKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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**A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Education in Religious
Studies**

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DECLARATION

I, **CHANDA Armstrong**, declare that this dissertation is my work and that it has never been submitted by anyone at any level of education, either at the University of Zambia or at any other university.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation by CHANDA Armstrong has been approved as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in the School of Education of the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of Bemba Catholics' continued belief in mystical powers has continued to interest many scholars and people. Some Bemba Catholics have continued to adhere tenaciously to their traditional belief in mystical powers and their manifestations in the 21st century Mpika district despite the 122 years of an intensified Catholic missionary and local priests' evangelisation. The African synods from 1994 to 2009 have shown the inclination of the many African Catholics toward the belief in mystical powers to be the most overwhelming of other African traditional religious beliefs and wondered about its influence on the African Catholics. This study intended to investigate the influence that Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers has on Bemba Catholics and its implication on the Catholic faith in the twenty-first century Mpika district in Zambia. It explored mystical powers in Bemba cosmology, discussed the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers and examined the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholic's belief in the mystical powers. The study employed a descriptive case study design and a qualitative research method. In-depth interviews and focus group discussion methods were used to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The population of the study included lay Bemba Catholics, priests and community traditional leaders. A homogenous purposive sampling technique was used to sample 34 participants. The study has established that Bemba Catholics believe in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology and practise their manifestations. The reasons were socio-religious and cultural dynamics, and fear and anxiety. This belief influenced them to create a worldview that everything that happened in life had either their source in the supernatural world or manifestations of these powers. Mystical powers influence every aspect of the Bemba Catholics' life. Although this belief contradicted both their Catholic identity and faith, they have continued holding on to the belief which has consequently influenced them to suspect, use and practise: witchcraft, divination, magic, traditional medicine, rituals, vows and oaths to consult with the traditional healers and so on. However, the local Catholic Church was involved in sensitisation, dialogue and inculturation as means of responding to the problem. The research has recommended that in its response to the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers the Catholic Church promotes mutual, prudent and reverent engagements.

Keywords: Mystical powers, Inculturation, Dialogue, Cosmology, Bemba Catholics

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is a special dedication to my lovely wife Michelo Mbaale Chanda for her unwavering support and sacrifices during my academic and research journey and to my daughter Michelle Changwe Chanda. I further dedicate this piece of work to my mother, sister and entire family for their prayers and belief in my academic abilities.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATR	African Traditional Religion
BTR	Bemba Traditional Religion
COVID-19	2019 Corona Virus Disease
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
Fr	Father (Title for a Roman Catholic Priest)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
UNZA	The University of Zambia
W.F	White Fathers (Missionaries of Africa)
ZTR	Zambian Traditional Religion

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the background of the problem, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, aim and objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, conceptual framework, scope of the study, limitations and definition of terms. This chapter stands as an introduction to the research problem and a guide to what has been studied in this research.

1.2 Brief Background to the Research Problem

In Bemba land now covering parts of Northern and Muchinga provinces, the local people have converted to Christianity in large numbers and this has been going on since the 1890s with the arrival of the London Missionary Society and the Missionaries of Africa popularly known as the White Fathers. According to Ogez (1991), the Catholic Church's history in Mpika dates back to 1899 with the arrival of the White fathers in Mpika district and the founding of the Chilonga mission followed by the Chalabesa mission in 1934. According to Hinfelaar (2004), Katibunga parish was founded in 1936 while Mpika Boma was founded in 1970. This indicates a history of 122 years of the Catholic Church's presence and evangelisation in Mpika district. It further shows the unquestionable foundations of the Catholic faith in the Bemba people's lives. This indicates a profound history of Catholic evangelisation in Mpika district, which should correlate with Catholic faith development among the Bemba Catholics. However, Oger (1974) argued that despite the number of years of missionary evangelisation, Bemba Catholics had not developed the desired levels of the Catholic faith due to their continued belief in their indigenous beliefs.

Decades later Hinfelaar (2004) still lamented the same ordeal of the Bemba Catholics' slow development of the Catholic faith. Similarly, in his recent study, Udelhoven (2017) asserted that the belief in supernatural powers by the Bemba Catholics still hindered the

growth of their Catholic faith and identity. Yet still, some Bemba Catholics hold on to a dual religious cosmology of both Catholicism and Bemba traditional religion since the coming of the Catholic missionaries to the Bemba land.

Ogez (1991) observed at Lwitikila, Chilonga and Mpika missions that in times of crises such as sickness, death, dispute and distress, the Bemba Catholics turned to BTR (Bemba traditional religion) as a pre-Christian way they formerly employed in dealing with crises, which they understood was discouraged by their Christian teachings and doctrines. This phenomenon is present at individual, family and community levels. He observed that this belief created a conflict between the Catholic Church and the Bemba Catholics in areas of faith, identity and church teachings. Ogez cited many times where these conflicts were very evident. Additionally, Oger (1974) argued that this problem created a socio-moral dilemma, defeating the church's moral stance and teachings on the oneness and dignity of all humanity. Therefore, one major question begging answers is why Bemba Catholics, like any other African Christians, believe in ATR beliefs and cosmologies in certain circumstances.

Bascom and Herskovits (cited in Sourou 2014) argued that, despite the intensity of Christian missionary efforts proselytising, which have marked the various parts of Africa, African religions continue to manifest vivacity everywhere. This vivacity was to be seen in the worship of African deities, the homage to ancestors and the recourse to divination, magic and other rituals practised by African traditionalists, African-born Catholics and African converts to Catholicism. Hinfelaar (2004) supports these assertions in his study of the Bemba people, that the inclination of the Bemba Catholics to their traditional worldview and particularly the belief in the elements of mystical powers was overwhelming. He observed that even when Catholics professed Catholicism they would in certain circumstances turn to witch finding, diviner visitation, use of magic, use of charms, use of traditional medicines and so on. The Catholic Church expects the Bemba Catholics who profess the Catholic faith and spirituality to adhere to the teachings of the church on the issues of suffering, death, fortunes and misfortunes. Yet, this has not been

the case; therefore, the church finds it to be a challenge that hinders a smooth coexistence with these indigenous followers of the Catholic faith.

Mbiti (1999) believes that these behaviours result from the belief in the traditional cosmology of mystical powers, whereas the African people believe that out there, there are powers beyond them that control things and life. Besides, they also believe that there are certain individuals in the community that possess and manipulate these mysterious powers. Hence, to every happening, there is a mysterious evil or good power. In a recent study, Udelhoven (2017) narrowed this argument down to the Bemba Catholic as he argued that the world of spirits did not come as a theoretical world like the one renounced at baptism for the converted Christians, but that it was enshrined within the concepts of the human body and often confirmed by individual experiences. This emphasises how strong the belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba Catholics still holds in the recent past and today.

Mbiti (1970) further affirmed this African reality when he stated that many millions of Africans were followers of over one religion, even if they may have registered or been counted in the census as adherents of only one religion are correct. As Pope John Paul II puts it concerning African traditional religion in his 'Ecclesia in Africa' encyclical, a serene and prudent dialogue was needed to protect Catholics from negative influences which condition the way of life of many of them. According to Sourou (2014), Pope John Paul II observed through Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue during the second Synod for Africa, that ATRs still exercise a strong influence over Africans, who are naturally religious.

Some Catholics practise the belief in mystical powers consciously, unconsciously, casually or premeditated, while others take part in it persistently as their social and religious heritage. The Catholic bishop Cyprian (cited in Mbuka 2002:3) attested, "All Africans have ATR as their social and religious background." Many people give in to the influence of their religious traditional beliefs in mystical powers unconsciously; they oblige to Catholic faith and teachings and do not intend to be lured into believing and

taking part in their traditional cosmology. However, they find themselves confronted in everyday life with many problems and fears for which the 'traditions of home' offer certain solutions through divination, sacrifices, charms and so on, while Catholicism may usually seem not to address these problems. Ogez (1991) asserts that the Bemba people's belief in the existence of mystical powers results from fear and anxiety of the superstitious and occult powers. Garvey (1974) agrees with Ogez that Bemba people have a strong belief in magic powers, a belief that he believes is rooted in their culture and religious traditions. Oger (1991) also argues that the belief in the existence of mystical powers among the Bemba Catholics is predominant. The problem of the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology seems huge. However, the influence that this belief has on the Bemba Catholics remains unattended. It has been the duty of this study to investigate this influence and bring it to light.

The belief that has been held for so long and that continues to show vivacity among the Bemba Catholics must surely influence those who behold it. These might be responsible for the effects on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Bemba Catholics, low absorption of the Catholic faith, teachings and Bemba Catholics' identity problem as revealed in the mentioned studies. Therefore, for these issues to be resolved this study found it imperative that it investigated the influence of this belief as an issue of concern. The problem of the Bemba Catholics' dual religiosity is historical, from the coming of the Catholic missionaries to Mpika district up until the twenty-first century, therefore the study covered this period. This was so because this study intended to have a glimpse into the past (missionary times) of this problem as it tried to understand how this problem manifested itself in today's Catholic Church and Bemba Catholics of Mpika district. However, this study took interest in the 21st century, the period between '2001 and 2022', which signifies the 122 years of Catholic evangelisation in Mpika diocese. This history indicates the deep-rooted Catholic faith in Mpika and Bemba Catholics that are still shaken by BTR.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Scholarly research has discovered that Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers is deeply rooted in the Bemba Catholics, which infringes on their Catholic faith development and identity. Scholars such as (Garvey, 1994; Ogez, 1991 and Oger, 1991) and the current study by Hinfeelar (2007), demonstrated this discovery in their study of the Bemba Catholics. They indicated how serious the problem of the Bemba Catholics believing in the mystical powers of Bemba cosmology was and how much attention it needed. Nevertheless, according to this researcher's knowledge and literature reviewed, it was not clear whether any study had been done on what influence the belief in mystical powers had on Bemba Catholics of Mpika District. The influence that the belief in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology had on the Bemba Catholics of Mpika needed to be investigated to reveal the depth of the problem and the solution to the problem. If this study had not been conducted, the belief in mystical powers by the Bemba Catholics would have aggravated their faith and identity issues and coexistence conflicts between the Catholic Church and Bemba Catholics who believe in the mystical powers of their indigenous religious cosmology, which in return would have destroyed the relationship between the two parties involved.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively investigate the influence of Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers on the Bemba Catholics and its implication for the Catholic faith in the 21st century Mpika district in Zambia.

1.4.1 Objectives

- i). To explore the beliefs in mystical powers of Bemba cosmology present in the 21st century Mpika district
- ii). To account for the persistence of the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology in the 21st century Mpika district.

- iii). To investigate the influence the belief in mystical powers has on the Bemba Catholics of Mpika district and its implication for the Catholic faith
- iv). To examine the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholic's belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba traditional religious cosmology in Mpika district

1.5 Research Questions

- i). What beliefs in the mystical power of the Bemba cosmology are present in the 21st century Mpika district?
- ii). Why is the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology persistent in the 21st century Mpika district?
- iii). What is the influence of the belief in mystical powers on the Bemba Catholics of Mpika district and its implication on the Catholic faith?
- iv). What is the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba traditional religious cosmology in Mpika district?

1.6 The Significance of the Study

Different researchers have carried out studies on the Bemba Catholics' belief in individual manifestations of mystical powers. However, it is not evident from the reviewed literature that studies have been done to investigate the influence that BTR belief in mystical powers has on Bemba Catholics and in Mpika district. It is for this reason that this study becomes important because the findings and recommendations made in this study would help to advance the existing knowledge about this problem. The findings of this investigation might create awareness in the Catholic Church and the Christian Church in Africa at large on the phenomenon of their members' continuous practice of ATR belief in mystical powers and their manifestation. It might create an understanding of the Bemba traditional cosmology of mystical powers. The results of this study would help the church in finding resolutions to the problem of the continuous belief

and practice of belief in mystical powers by Bemba Catholics and other African Christians. It may help the church rethink ways of co-existing with the traditional religions and incorporating indigenous worldviews in their doctrines and theologies. The results might help the Bemba Catholics realise the influence that the belief in mystical powers of traditional cosmology has on them.

Finally, the research findings might bridge the research gaps, which if not filled risk misinterpretation, misunderstanding of the BTR heritage and patronisation of the influence of the belief. The research has contributed uniquely to the body of knowledge and bridged the research gaps by providing extensive knowledge of the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers and their manifestations. It has also provided profound knowledge of the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers and the reasons behind the belief. The study has provided new knowledge on the influence the belief in BTR mystical powers has on Bemba Catholics of Mpika district in Zambia. It has further examined and provided deeper knowledge on the responses of the Catholic Church in Mpika to the problem of Bemba Catholics' belief and practice of BTR mystical powers.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Bemba Traditional Religion has many beliefs, practices and cultural values that influence the Catholics. However, this research only focused on the influence that Bemba Traditional Religious belief in mystical powers has on Bemba Catholics. The research restricted itself to exploring mystical powers in the Bemba cosmology, explaining Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology, investigating the reasons for their belief in them and examining the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology.

The study took into consideration the period between 2000 and 2022 when the Catholic Church celebrates its 122 anniversary of evangelisation in Mpika district. This period was important for this study for it provided a clear glimpse into the late missionary and modern-day churches' efforts in making Bemba Catholics fully Catholics. Amongst all indigenous beliefs still held by the Bemba Catholics, the belief in mystical powers has

proved to be the strongest and most resisting. The belief presented a problem that needed urgent investigation to resolve the asserted conflicts by becoming aware of its influence on the people that believe in it. The study limited itself to the study of the influence of mystical powers on the Bemba Catholics as individual and collective humanity rather than principles or aspects of their Catholic affiliation. The study brought into play the relationship of three entities; the Catholic Church 'its faith', the Bemba Catholics and the BTR.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

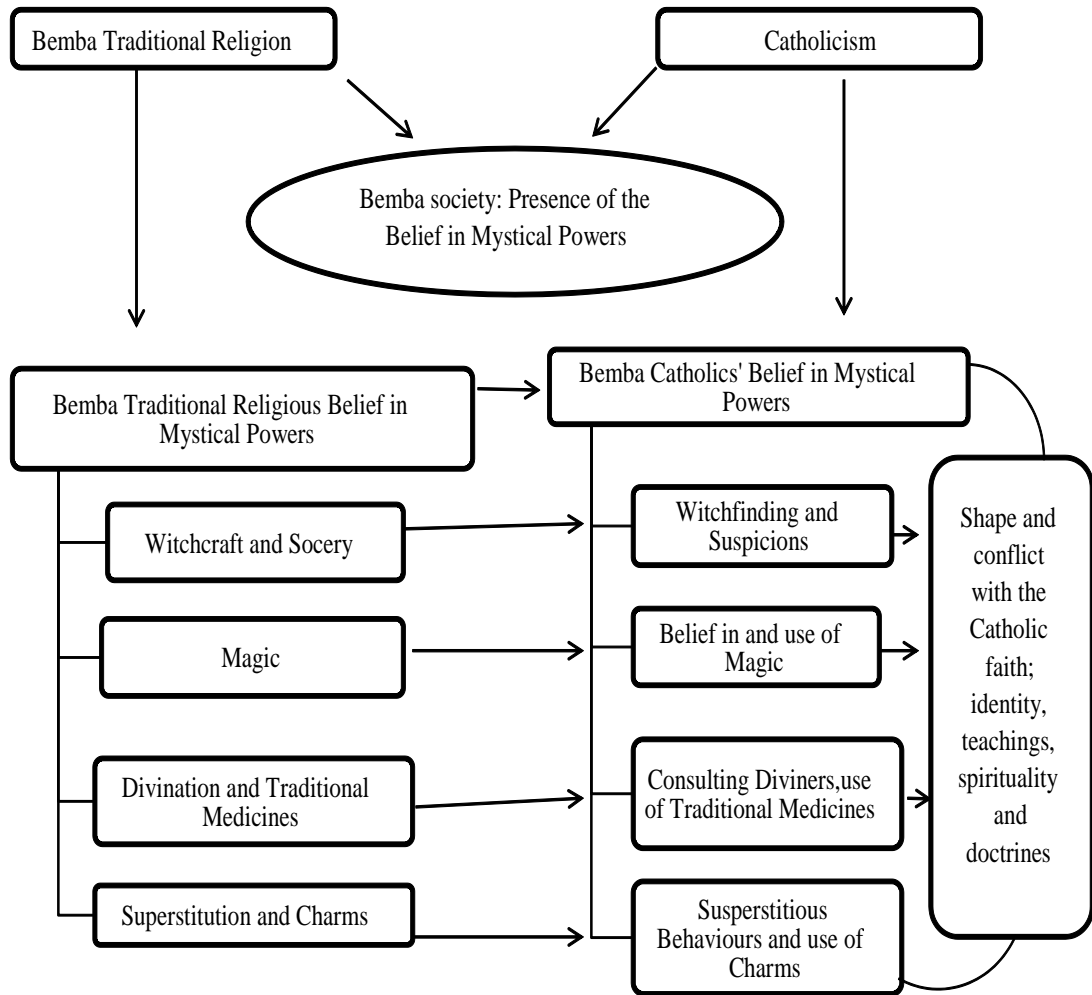


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

As seen in the diagram above, the conceptual framework tries to establish the relationship between the dependent variable (Bemba Catholics) and the independent variable (mystical powers). The Bemba society houses the Bemba traditional religion and Catholicism. Both entities co-exist in the same society that is primarily governed by Bemba traditions, beliefs and culture. The Catholics in this society are converted from Bemba traditional religion and others are descendants of the Bemba traditional religion adherents. This connotes that Bemba cultures and beliefs have always been part of them. Being part of a society that believes in mystical powers can be assumed to influence them to believe in these powers too. A belief in mystical powers in Bemba traditional religion is believed to manifest in witchcraft, magic, sorcery, ancestor veneration, charms, totems, taboos, cursing, oaths and superstition. When this belief is adopted or inherited by the Bemba Catholics, it could be assumed to influence their catholic faith, identity and spirituality and the influence could manifest itself in the use of witchcraft, oaths and charms, traditional medicines and magic, consulting of witch-finders and diviners, and practising of sorcery and venerating of ancestors. These behaviours do not only shape their faith, identity and spirituality as Bemba Catholics they conflict with the prescribed Catholic faith, identity, teachings and doctrine.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Practising elements of another religion apart from the one a believer is an adherent to is a sensitive matter which believers may not wish to share easily with anybody for the fear of embarrassment and church reaction to such beliefs as with the Catholic Church. Therefore, this caused a bit of a challenge with the collection of data before respondents could gather trust and confidence to share their views after assuring them of the needed confidentiality. The COVID-19 pandemic made the research process slower than expected and personal interviews challenging. However, the researcher engaged telephone, email and private social media platforms to interview when one-to-one interviews proved difficult and risky. When interviews were conducted, the researcher and participants adhered to the health guidelines provided to avoid the spread of the disease.

1.10 Operational Definitions

Dual-Religiosity	-Refers to a situation where individuals simultaneously practise two separate religions or elements of each.
Mystical Powers	-These are supernatural or magical powers that are believed to influence all human activities and their actions and portray good and evil characteristics.
African Christians	-These are Africans who either have converted to Christianity from African traditional religion or were born in Christianity living in Africa or diaspora.
Magic	-This is the use of mystical powers to attain benevolent or malevolent results in life. It is done by using charms, spells and magic materials.
Sorcery	-This is employing mystical powers to cast spells on others, use poisons and curses to cause others evil such as accidents, failure, death and bad health.
Witchcraft	-The manifestation of mystical forces, which may be innate in a person, inherited or gained in various ways. There are forces to destroy the products of others or to damage or even kill.
Diviners, intermediaries and Seers	-These are individual members of society believed to provide answers to who, what, why and when caused the problem people or an individual are facing.
Medicine Men and Women	-These are individuals who traditionally perform the healing of the sick and correct the misfortunes and health of individuals and the community by the use of

traditional medicine and healing methods.

Religious Cosmology

-This is referred to as religious knowledge of the world's realities. This includes all aspects of religion such as social, beliefs, rituals, experiences and doctrine.

Bemba Catholics

-These are Members of the Catholic Church that belong to the Bemba ethnic group of Zambia in Africa.

Worldview

-People's perception or belief about world realities usually influences how people behave in society.

Culture

-The knowledge learnt over time by a group of people, which they use to make meaning out of their lived experiences and act in appropriate ways to cope with their daily lives or challenges.

Syncretism

-This is the process by which elements of one religion assimilate into another religion, resulting in a change in the fundamental tenets or nature of those religions.

Inembo

-Bemba word that translates into tattoos-cuts made in the skin where traditional medicines and herbs are applied for healing and protection purposes.

Ifishimba

-Bemba traditional medicinal concoction used for healing and protection or believed to be used in magic.

Ubuloshi/Ubwanga

-These are Bemba names for witchcraft, sorcery and magic.

Ilomba/Amalomba	-A snake or human-like magical creature that is believed to be created by witches, it is believed to steal magically, prolong life, bewitch and do many evil things in Bemba culture.
Imipashi/Imyela	-These are spirit beings, both human and non-human/ both benevolent or malevolent.
Ulubuko	-It is a Bemba word for divination and witch-hunting.
Ng'anga	-It is a Bemba name for witchdoctor, diviner, medicine man/woman
Mucapi/ Bamucapi	-A Bemba name for witch hunters and diviners.
Dialogue	-A conversation about the meaning of beliefs, rituals, cultures, worldviews and ethics of the parties involved to create respect and appreciation.
Inculturation	-This is adapting Christian teachings, beliefs and practices to cultures or assimilation and incorporating cultures, beliefs and practices other than Christian to Christianity.
Influence	- This is the capacity of something to affect the character, worldview or behaviour of someone. In this study, it is the capacity of a belief (in mystical powers) to be a compelling force on (Bemba Catholics) or produce effects on their actions, behaviour, perceptions and others.

1.11 Organisation of the Dissertation

There are six chapters in this dissertation. Chapter One has established the background to the problem of Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba people in Mpika district. It has clearly stated the problem and the purpose of the study. It has outlined the aim, objectives and research questions that guided this study. The chapter has also stated the significance of the study; illustrated the conceptual framework and provided the scope of the study, limitations and operational terms. Chapter Two reviews the related literature and research to the problem of the study. It has provided the relevant information and evidence for the existence of the problem. It reviews both related literature and research findings for knowledge, contextual and methodological gaps.

Chapter Three describes the research methods and designs used in this study to collect and analyse data. It discusses research the study site, study population, sample size, sampling techniques, ethical considerations, measures of ensuring reliability and trustworthiness of the data collected, and research findings. Chapter Four presents the data yielded by the research field findings guided by the research questions. The presentation of these field findings provides relevant information about the existence of the problem in the area of study. Thematic themes have been deduced from the research data and have been used in the presentation of the research field findings.

Chapter Five discusses and analyses the data yielded from the research field findings guided by the research questions given in the literary review. Thematic themes have been deduced from the research data and have been used in the discussions and analysis of the research field findings. Chapter Six concludes the research findings and discussion in light of the research questions and objectives. It also provides recommendations to the local and universal Catholic Church and other Christian churches in Africa and worldwide, in line with the findings of this research. It also provides recommendations for further research by other researchers as provided by the gaps of concern.

1.12 Summary

This chapter has discussed the background to the problem of Bemba Catholics of Mpika District and their belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba people. It has clearly stated the problem of the study and showed the purpose of the study. It has also stated the aim, objectives and research questions that guided the research. The significance of the study, conceptual framework, scope of the study, limitations and operational terms have also been specified. The next chapter reviews the related literature and research on the problem under the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter is the presentation of the research problem from the related literature and research. The review of these sources provides the relevant information and evidence for the existence of the problem; gives an insight into how different authors and researchers have discussed the related problems and the methodologies used in the study of the related research problems. This chapter further reviews both related literature and research findings for knowledge, contextual and methodological gaps that the study intended to bridge.

2.2 Historical Overview

Although Africans were asked by Christian missionaries to abandon beliefs in mystical powers and their practices, which were described as being contrary to the will of God and against Christian values yet this hardly yielded much change. Hayes (1995) noted that in Africa, beliefs in supernatural power and its practices were found among those who claimed to have adopted Christianity and even those inclined to their indigenous religions. This means that despite Africans accepting Christianity, they still believed that mystical powers were governing the universe. It is in this vein that Mbiti (1969) argued that Christians in Africa believed in magical powers because Christianity seemed not to meet their immediate social, religious and cultural dilemmas.

The Bantu people hold a belief that the African knowledge of the power of supernatural powers helps them to find the causes of misfortunes and troubles. They engage in mystical powers activities to safeguard life or to be feared so that property and persons are protected. They also believe that magical powers are resident in plants and animals and are manifested through spoken words or mediated through specialists. Gehmann (2005) exemplified the fact that the belief in mystical powers was highly accepted by people in high government offices, rich urban dwellers and highly educated people, most

of whom were sometimes Christians. He further noted that the missionary church founded its mission stations in Africa, hoping they would transform the lives of Africans. Those who accepted Christianity formally believed in mystical powers, and practised in their manifestations were asked to renounce their former beliefs and be fully committed to Christianity. However, most of those who remained in the church and those born within the Christian church were still patronising their traditional belief in mystical powers whenever they felt Christianity was not addressing their social, religious and cultural demands. Nevertheless, they continued to attend church services and others even participated in critical church activities. As noted, despite the spread of Christianity in Africa, many Christians still believe in mystical powers, even though this was contrary to the Christian teachings offered in their churches.

Concerning the above observations, Nthamburi (1991) concluded that Africans neither inwardly accepted the Christian doctrine nor did they want to live up to Christian standards of morality, honesty and codes of behaviour. They even could not account for their strong African affection for their traditional religious beliefs and practices even after acquiring missionary education and Christian teachings. However, Tempels (1959) attributed this tendency to Africans' belief in the supreme value of life and their philosophy, which focused on the acquisition of life, strength in life, and protection of property. According to Ogez (1991), Bemba Catholics were not an exception to this historical phenomenon. Since the coming of the first Roman Catholic missionaries to the Bemba land in the 1890s, the assimilation of the Catholic faith and teaching has been done. However, studies have shown that the Bemba Catholics still clung to the belief in mystical powers. The belief in ATR's mystical powers certainly influences them. The research has endeavoured to find the influence of this belief.

2.2.1 Belief in Mystical Powers Worldwide

The belief in mystical powers is a worldwide phenomenon, as observed from the literary and research findings. For instance, Gehman (2005) observed that many traditions around the world believed in the existence of mystical powers. Many traditional societies and religions regarded these powers as impersonal, supernatural powers or magical powers

that permeated the universe, the force that operated behind all human activities in the world, a force that acted in all kinds of ways for good and evil. These powers are believed to influence the daily lives of people in the community and society. O'Neil (2008) added that most cultures of the world had religious beliefs that supernatural powers could either be compelled or influenced to act in certain ways for good or evil purposes. Using ritual formulas such as incantation, sacrifice, appeasement and others could summon mystical powers.

According to Kasomo (2010), the religions of indigenous peoples of the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia, among other sites, have been reported to have a strong belief in the existence of mystical powers. All these reports of traditional religions outside Africa engaging in activities such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic and superstition, which are regarded as manifestations of mystical powers, have been given. Sourou (2014) indicated that the phenomenon of African Christians and Muslims alike believing and sometimes practising the belief in mystical powers was commonplace all around the world. Certain indigenous religious beliefs and practices in mystical powers and their manifestations, such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic and divination outside of Africa, hold undeniable similarities with Africa.

2.2.2 Belief in Mystical Powers in Africa

The belief in impersonal (mystical) powers was dominant in the thoughts of adherents of African Traditional Religion and those that this religion was their native. These powers were invisible but lay in material and physical things. Their invisible nature gave rise to the belief that they were supernatural, spiritual or mystical (Turaki, 2000). The belief in mystical powers and the entire cosmology around it in an African context was quite familiar across all African traditional religions and the phenomenon of African Christians believing and sometimes practising the belief in mystical powers was common in all of Africa (Mbiti, 1990). Mlenga (2016) in her study of the Ngonde people exemplified that some of the Tumbuka and Chewa people who claimed to be Christians still held onto a dual religious cosmology. She conceived the phenomenon of dual religiosity as the tendency to hold onto some beliefs of a religion other than the one a person proclaims

openly as opposed to belonging to religions at the same time. She alluded that the sub-Saharan Christians have adhered tenaciously to the beliefs, practices and cultural values of ATR, especially mystical powers. Furthermore, she clarified that until then, this phenomenon has not translated into the practising of Christianity and ATR but the holding onto and practising of certain traditional beliefs from ATR.

Kagema (2020) observed that, despite the effects of globalisation, socio-economic, religious life and other revolutions that have affected every aspect of human life, the way Africans think concerning the traditional belief in mystical powers in their manifestations was still sturdy and unchanged. He further observed that Africans have delightedly acknowledged the many of the changes brought about by western education, Christianity and other religions, science and technology and so forth, but they have continued to hold to the belief in the effect of magic, witchcraft and sorcery. Additionally, Bascom and Herskovits (cited in Sourou 2014) argued that, despite the intensity of Christian missionary efforts of evangelisation, which have marked the various parts of Africa, African religions have continued to manifest vivacity everywhere. This vivacity is to be seen in the homage to ancestors, the recourse to divination, magic, and other rituals practised by African traditionalists and those converted to Christianity.

Mbiti (1970) affirmed that many millions of Africans were followers of more than one religion, even if they may have registered or been counted in the census as adherents of only one religion were correct. As Pope John Paul II puts it about African traditional religion in his '*Ecclesia in Africa*' encyclical (in Sourou 2014), a peaceful and cautious dialogue could safeguard Catholics from negative influences which condition the way of life of many African Catholics. According to Sourou, Pope John Paul II observed through Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, that African Traditional Religion still exercised a strong influence over Africans, who were naturally religious.

Some Catholics across Africa practise the belief in mystical powers intentionally, unintentionally, or casually, while others participate in it persistently as attested by a Catholic bishop, Cyprian (cited in Mbuka 2002:3), "All Africans have ATR as their

social and religious background.” He further hypothesised that these Catholics all over Africa oblige to the Catholic faith and teachings and do not intend to be lured into believing and taking part in their traditional cosmology. However, they find themselves confronted in everyday life with many problems and fears for which the ‘traditions of home’ often offer certain solutions through divination, sacrifices and charms and so on, when Catholicism may seem not to address their problems. Similarly, Chidi (2008) argued, “African Traditional Religion, despite many years of negative ‘propaganda’ against it by Christians, is still alive and remains the religious and cultural context from which most Christians in Africa come, and in which many of them still live to a great extent.” Bishop Justin Tetemu Samba of Tanzania (cited in Chidi 2008) agrees with Bishop Cyprian that ATR religion is indeed part of the life of the people in Africa. Cardinal Thiandoum (cited in Chidi 2008) categorically asserted, “For us Africans, ATR is neither alien nor even a separate religious system. Rather, it usually represents the common spiritual rooting for all who belong to the same ethnic group.”

2.2.3 Belief in Mystical Powers in Zambia

Zambian traditional religions (ZTR) have a robust belief in the existence of mystical powers as stated by Mildnerova (2010) that it was generally believed from a traditional point of view that the invisible powers infiltrate the whole of life and substantially influenced health, fertility, wealth and social relations of the Zambian people. Moreover, Magesa (1998) stated that the Bantu people were alleged to believe and partake in the manifestations of mystical powers such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic, divination/witch-hunting and traditional medicine. Mlenga (2004) described the incontrovertible belief in mystical powers of the Chewa and Tumbuka people that they believed in a ‘world dominated by the spirit beings and powers’. They also needed a spiritual compass for guidance and practical efforts for control, protection and security through religious rites, reverence to ancestors, symbolic totems and regulative taboos, rituals, superstitions, customs and specialists.

This explains how effective and bounding the belief in mystical powers is. Cheyeka (2015) made a similar observation that the Bantu people had a strong belief in the

existence and effects of mystical powers, which were exhibited in the fear and suspicions of it causing illnesses such as HIV/AIDS. Colson (2006) in her study of the Tonga religious life in the twentieth century also recognised the existence of the belief in mystical powers or forces as part of the Tonga religious cosmology. Across Zambian societies, the phenomenon of the Christians believing distantly in the ZTR beliefs is widespread and evidential in the traditional activities and perceptions Zambian Christians hold dearly.

2.2.4 Belief in Mystical Powers and its Implications for Catholicism in Mpika-Bemba land

Since the 1890s, which saw the arrival of the White fathers in Bemba land now covering most parts of Northern and Muchinga provinces, many local people have since converted to Christianity in impressive numbers as recorded by Ogez (1991). The Catholic Church in Mpika dates back to 1899 when the White fathers arrived in the territory and founded the Chilonga mission, which was followed by the Chalabesa mission in 1934 (Ogez, 1991). Katibunga parish was established in 1936, while Mpika Boma was established in 1970, according to Hinfelaar (2004). This reflects a 122-years presence and evangelisation of the Catholic Church in Mpika district. It also demonstrates the unshakeable foundations of the Catholic faith in the lives of the Bemba people in Mpika district. This reality suggests that the Mpika district has a long history of Catholic evangelisation, which should correspond to the development of the Catholic faith among the Bemba Catholics.

Despite the number of years of missionary evangelisation, Oger (1974) maintained that Bemba Catholics had not developed the expected levels of Catholic faith due to their continued conviction in their indigenous beliefs. Hinfelaar (2004) recounted the same experience of the Bemba Catholics' slow development of the Catholic faith years later. In a recent study, Udelhoven (2017) claimed that Bemba Catholics' belief in supernatural abilities hampered the formation of the Catholic faith in them. Since the arrival of Catholic missionaries in Bembaland, some Bemba Catholics have maintained a dual

religious cosmology of Catholicism and Bemba traditional religion. At the Lwitikila, Chilonga, and Mpika missions, Ogez (1991) observed that in times of crisis, such as sickness, death, conflict, and distress, the Bemba Catholics turned to BTR (Bemba traditional religion) as a pre-Christian way of dealing with crises which they knew was discouraged by their Christian teachings and doctrines. Individuals, families and communities were all affected by this issue. In the areas of faith, spirituality and church teachings, he observed that this belief created a conflict between the Catholics and mentioned several instances where these conflicts were clear. Furthermore, according to Oger (1974), the belief generated a socio-moral conundrum, undermining the church's moral stance and social teachings on the oneness and dignity of all people.

In his research of the Bemba people, Hinfelaar (2004) found that the Bemba Catholics' propensity to their traditional worldview, including believing in the elements of mystical powers, was a prevailing reality. He noted that even when Bemba people claimed to be Catholics, they would turn to witch-hunting, divination, magic, charms and traditional medicine in certain circumstances. The Catholic Church expects Bemba Catholics who practise its faith and spirituality to follow the church's teachings on issues such as suffering, death, fortunes and misfortunes and uphold its identity. However, this has not been the reality, so the church views it as a hurdle that prevents peaceful cohabitation with these indigenous Catholics. Udelhoven (2017:45) contended, "For the converted Christians, the world of spirits did not come as a theoretical world as the one renounced at baptism, but was enshrined within the concepts of the human body and often validated by individual experiences." This demonstrates how strong the Bemba Catholics' conviction in their mysterious powers remains in the recent past and today.

According to Ogez (1991), the Bemba people's belief in mystical powers stemmed from their fear of superstitions and occult forces. Garvey (1974) concurred with Ogez that the Bemba Catholics had a strong belief in magical abilities, which he felt was founded in their culture and religious traditions. While Oger (1991) claimed that, the Bemba Catholics' belief in the reality of supernatural powers was widespread on the territory. This belief could be to blame for the negative consequences on the Catholic Church's

relationship with Bemba Catholics, as well as low absorption of the Catholic faith, teachings and spirituality, as demonstrated by the studies. As a result, to tackle these challenges, this study determined to investigate the influence of this belief on the Bemba Catholic.

2.2.4.1 Brief Historical Background of the Catholic Church and Faith in Mpika District

To appreciate how deep the Catholic faith is supposedly rooted in the hearts of the Bemba Catholics and how obstinate the belief in mystical powers is in the Bemba Catholics, we first need to appreciate the history of the Catholic Church's presence in the area of study. According to Ogez (1991), the Catholic Church's history in Mpika dates back to 1899 with the arrival of the W. F in Mpika district and the founding of the Chilonga Mission along Great North Road by Bishop Joseph Dupont W. F, followed by Chalabesa mission in 1934. According to Hinfelaar (2004), Father 'Fr' Jan Van Sambeek founded Katibunga parish in 1936. In 1961, the Kopa Mission in chief Kopa's Chieftom of the Bisa-speaking people was founded. Mpika Boma Mission was founded in 1970. This history of 122 years of the Catholic Church's presence and evangelisation in Mpika illustrates the indubitable foundations of the Catholic faith in the Bemba people's lives. However, Oger (1991) observed that in times of crises such as sickness, death, disputes and distress, some Bemba Catholics turned to BTR for answers and solutions. He reported this phenomenon to have been present at individual, family and community levels.

2.3 Bemba Religious Cosmology of Mystical Powers

To understand fully the phenomenon of mystical powers and their relationship with the Bemba people, the researcher briefly explores the Bemba religious cosmology of mystical powers. Religious cosmology is the religious conception of the world and particular phenomena in the world that included beliefs, rituals, experiences and emotional (narrative and mythical), doctrinal, ethical, social and material. Cosmology was the way of explaining the origin, evolution and eventual fate of the universe from a

religious perspective (Kristensen, 1960). Additionally, cosmology is that which referred to the ways different people in different cultures understood the world of their experiences (Bourdillon, 1991).

Mystical powers were impersonal supernatural powers that pervaded the universe, the forces that operated behind all human activities in the world and the forces that acted in all kinds of ways for good and evil. They influence the daily lives of people in the community (Gehman, 2005). It should be noted that in the Bemba people's beliefs, the source of these mystical powers is rarely known. However, mystical powers are normally accredited to the activities of higher 'mysterious powers', whether personal or impersonal, that both generate powers in objects and people, stated Werner (1971). The power efficiency and the stability of such 'tenanted' mystical powers diverge from object to object and person to person (Mbiti, 1999). Some objects and persons were said to be more powerful than others or more endowed with powers. However, in African traditional religion real sources of mystical powers are not well known, yet the sources of these powers are, "usually attributed to the activities of higher 'mysterious powers', whether personal or impersonal that either generates or deposits such powers in things or objects" Turaki, (2006: 142). The existence of mystical beings and powers had a mutual relationship in animistic contexts, such as ATR (Van Rheenen, 1991). Therefore, he agrees with Gehman (2005) that mystical powers are impersonal powers. However, he adds that these powers include the powers behind magic, witchcraft, evil eye, vows and others. In Steyne's (1990) view mystical powers are required to make rain, a good harvest, protect property, heal diseases, grant fertility, protection from disease, evil spells, sorcery, various catastrophes and misfortunes, and others.

The Bemba people's experience of evils in their community results in a belief in mysterious evildoers. It is in this vein, that Hinfelaar (2007) states that the experiences of evil in society, which are mostly attributed to other members of the society, turn out to be the means of explaining much of their sufferings and misfortunes. This makes the Bantu people look for protection against and deliverance from these powers. Furthermore, the Bemba traditional religion explains evil in the world as the result of battles between evil

and good forces that use humans as their battlefield (Oger, 1991). Africans believe humans can call upon evil forces to punish or persecute wrongdoers or enemies (Mbiti, 1991). For the Bemba people, evil in the world is caused by mysterious powers that emerge from the unseen world of spirits. There was a shared belief among the Bantu people (Bemba people inclusive), that there is merely a division between the seen and the unseen realms and that the existence of the spirits and humans is lived in the fullness of these two realities (Mbiti, 1969). It was also believed that the personalities in both realms interact with each other. Moreover, people move into the unseen realm during dreams, visions or trances and at death (Fuller, 2001). These premises try to assert the existence of the unseen world and that this very world is the 'source' of mystical powers.

Since the unseen world is somewhat considered the source of mystical powers, therefore, there must be some sort of communication between the two worlds. Hence, Magesa (1998) stated that ATR had representatives who communicated with God and the spirits on behalf of individuals and the community. This also applied to specific ATRs such as the BTR. Besides, Fuller (2001) asserted that even the individual members of the religion could communicate with the unseen world. Additionally, Mbiti (1999) stated that the intermediaries were trained and initiated; they could be priests or diviners, witch hunters/doctors or medicine men and women. Communication between the two worlds took up many forms, such as prayers, incantations, sacred objects and incense.

2.3.1 Sources of Mystical Powers

Mwewa (1977) also observed that traditional Bemba people believed in spirits. The bottom line in this belief is that the reality and destiny of people are profoundly rooted in the spirit world. The spirits govern all social and spiritual phenomena through their activities and actions. Mbiti (1999) added that in the ATR thought, they believed spirits dwelt or inhabited certain trees, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, animals, human beings, objects, charms, amulets and so forth. He further asserted that the spirit world was divided into two broad categories: non-human spirits and human spirits (ancestral spirits and spirits of the dead). He asserted that these spirits were regarded in a hierarchical order by their kind and importance, depending upon their power and the role

they play in the world. The universe was full of spirits and the dwelling places of these spirits beings were many. These spirits were divided into two categories, the bad and the good spirits (Mlenga, 2016). The spirit world of the African people was densely populated with spirit beings and the living dead or the spirits of their ancestors (Mbiti, 1969). Therefore, the question of the relationship between spirit beings and mystical powers arose even in the twenty-first century.

Therefore, the realm of the supernatural beings operated mystical powers, which were then manipulated by humans or as magic, witchcraft, sorcery and many others to influence the course of human life (Mlenga, 2016). The belief in the mystical powers in Bemba cosmology may therefore entail that the spirit beings are ‘partly’ behind them and the human pursuit to control or influence these powers had created a variety of specialists such as traditional doctors, magicians, rainmakers, diviners, witch hunters, sorcerers, mediums and witches. The spirit beings are often divided into two categories in the Bemba cosmology: first, the spirits of the dead (the ancestors and spirits of the dead) and second, the non-human spirit beings. Magesa (1998) indicated that all spirit beings possessed certain mysterious powers and used these powers on humans for good or harm. The spirit beings were believed to be malevolent, unpredictable and sometimes benevolent, creating a caution that humans needed to be wise in their dealings with the spirits, for they could easily be angered, provoked or injured.

According to Scott (2006), ancestral spirits were those spirits of the departed members of the family and community. The Bemba people believed that the spirits of their dead relatives survived physical death and remained alive and that they became spiritual and immortal beings. Murphree (1969) added that the spirits transformed into an ancestor taking up a place in the spiritual hierarchy of the ancestors and that the ancestral spirits had a dual duty of protecting their people from dangers such as famine, droughts, disease and witchcraft but also punishing people when they lived contrary to traditional moral norms. While, Amanze (2010) observed that traditional Bantu people still believed that for them to have good health, prosperity and success in life, they needed to be subordinate to, and venerate the ancestral spirits. Therefore, failure to submit and bear the

moral norms led to sickness, suffering and failure. Bemba people shared in the Bantu people's belief that a person continues to exist after death.

2.3.2 Manifestations of Mystical Powers in Bemba Cosmology

The question to ask at this point is how then these mystical powers manifest in the lives of the Bemba people and community. According to Mbiti (1999), the manifestation and the use of the mystical powers were linked to the practice of traditional medicine, divination, magic, charms, amulets and others. Bemba people believed mysterious powers entrenched in things or objects could be taken out for certain use. Mystical powers could be transmitted through certain object media, such as amulets and charms, or by purely spiritual means. Mystical powers could be directed at specific destinations for an intended purpose of doing good or evil and could be transmitted through contact with objects carrying or mediating such powers (Moore, 1940).

2.3.2.1 Divination, Traditional healing and Witch-finding

Mbiti (1969) asserted that divination was a very common use of mystical powers in ATR societies. It was the art of finding out hidden, spiritual or future knowledge using some signs. A diviner or witchfinder and traditional healer presided over it. According to Fuller (2001) divination could still be used to find out which ancestor has reincarnated in a child, what or who has caused a death, sickness or other misfortune, provide a remedy, find lost items and plan or foretell the future. Diviners also interpreted dreams, contacted spirits for knowledge or mediated a spirit as their role. The role of the diviner among Africans is exceedingly important, for they are the official interpreters of the will of the ancestral spirits and the implementers of mystical powers.

According to Mbiti (1999), there were several methods used in divination: using bones, sticks, symbols and so on. In addition, one may decide to become a diviner because of instructions received in divination or dreams, a call through sickness or trouble, by inheriting the profession from a parent, or by some personal interest. He stated that traditional healing and witch finding were believed to manifest mystical powers. Mbiti (1969) acknowledged that sometimes medicine men/ women and traditional healers were

also diviners in that they used divination in diagnosis and prescription. Through divination, traditional healing and witch-finding mystical powers in African traditions were believed to manifest.

2.3.2.2 Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

According to Mbiti (1991), witchcraft was a manifestation of mystical forces, which could have been inborn in a person, inherited or gained in various ways. Garvey (1974) added that there was a belief among the Bemba people that some individuals in society had the knowledge of and ability to tap into, control and use these forces to destroy the products of others, or to damage or even kill. He stated that such practices were referred to as witchcraft or sorcery and practitioners were referred to as witches or wizards and sorcerers or sorceresses. 'Witchcraft' is a term used to describe all sorts of evil deployment of mystical powers secretly. While sorcery is the use of spells, poison, and curses through the employment of mystical powers or magic to others to cause them accidents, failure, death and bad health, or the same to their offenders' possession (Mbiti, 1969). However, they could also send blessings to those whom they like. Sorcerers as people who caused harm to the community by using destructive 'medicine' and other harmful substances (Mugambi and Kirima, 1984). Ogez (1991) asserted that the Bemba people attempted to explain their suffering as the evil deeds of witches or wizards or sorcerers

Mouton et al. (2015) magic still meant the power to manipulate the supernatural to obtain results in life, and such results could be harmful or benevolent. Bemba people believe that there are two types of magic, white and black magic. White magic is the manipulation of the mystical world for the good of the community in general, while black magic is the manipulation of the mystical powers to cause harm to someone or the community (Oger, 1991). The use of good magic was accepted and esteemed by society. It was chiefly the specialists, such as the witch hunters, traditional healers, witch doctors and medicine men/women, who used this mystical power for the welfare of their community. Even in the twenty-first century, good magic is used to treat diseases, counteract misfortunes, and ward off, dilute and destroy evil 'powers' or witchcraft

(Mouton et al. 2015). Mbiti (1991) argued that evil magic involved the belief in and practice of tapping and using magic powers to bring harm to human beings or their property. These magical powers are believed to be used by sorcerers, witches/wizards and traditional healers or medicine men and women.

2.3.2.3 Traditional Medicine, Tattooing and Charms

The Medicine men and women prepare the traditional medicines. These individuals of the community heal the sick and correct the misfortunes and health of individuals and the community. They use magic and traditional medicine (Mbiti, 1999). The Bemba people believe God created magic powers for them to use to solve their problems. Traditional medicines are substances, charms, herbs or other objects used by the medicine men and women to bring about the desired effect (Oger, 1991). Fuller (2001) indicated that traditional medicines were administered orally or rubbed into cuts in the body or used to wash the body. Some are just worn or kept around. Some traditional medicines need certain requirements in their concoctions. Traditional medicines have specific taboos around their use and requirements that must be strictly observed.

The one most common way in which the witch doctors and medicine men or women administered traditional medicines for purposes of healing and harming was through tattoos which were cuts made in a person's skin in which medicine was applied (Oger, 1991). These tattoos are cut on the part of the affected part of the body or as directed by the ancestral spirits, as practised by the Bemba people. Fuller (2001) agreed with how traditional medicine was administered by the Bemba people and their believed protective power. These medicines were administered orally, rubbing into cuts on the body, washing the body, worn and kept around. Arinze (1970: 20) supported this statement as he defined a charm as, "Any formula, act or object supposed to have the magical power to ward off danger or to bring good luck." Parrinder (1949: 158) added to the notion of mystical powers' presence in herbs and other traditional medicines used in tattoos and charms, he stated, "each medicine is believed to contain a power or breath of life, and might be the abode of a spiritual being, a minor god or an impersonal force."

2.3.2.4 Oaths, Vows, Curses and Covenants

Africans had a strong belief in the great power of the spoken word. It was believed that there was a mysterious power in the word that can be used to bless or cause harm (Mbiti, 1991). Oaths and vows often accompany promises to confirm the truth in it. In addition, oaths or vows were spiritually bounding (Bernadi, 1959). Therefore, it is believed that the one taking them is mindful of the punitive consequences. Cursing is predicting an evil future for someone or wishing someone bad through a word. A curse from elders was regarded to be very powerful and that was why some rituals needed to be done to revoke the curse once an elder dies after making a curse (Mbiti, 1969). According to Magesa (1998) to increase the power of a curse, it is combined with medicines and rituals to make them binding. He also stated that curses could also be cancelled with medicines or/

Furthermore, oaths and vows are believed to serve a community from deceitfulness, promote truthfulness and faithfulness and settle disputes. For traditionalists, oaths are usually made in shrines or upon the names of gods or spirits. Many times oaths and vows are often made before the community or family members (Bernadi, 1959). A covenant is a type of oath where a person promises to reciprocate a favour for some benefit (Anderson, 1986). Just like any other ATR, in BTR it was also believed that people made covenants with certain spiritual powers, which they promised to serve or worship and /or sacrifice to, in return for some benefit such as protection and wealth (Oger, 1991). Ordinarily, if such covenants are broken, the person is apt to lose his or her life or suffer other dreadful consequences. It may be inferred then that oaths, vows and covenants are the manifestations of the mystical powers believed to be present in the world by the Bemba people.

2.4 Bemba Catholics' Belief in Mystical Powers

Zambian Catholics believe and practise the ZTR elements for various reasons. However, these Catholic Christians believe and practise elements of ZTR because in some areas these elements are perceived to be more effective than Christianity (Hinfelaar, 2007). To this effect, Hinfelaar intends to emphasise the fact that Bemba Catholics do not have a

unique belief in mystical powers, but simply share in the Bemba belief in this cosmological reality. Moreover, Garvey (1974) argues that Bemba Catholics are aware of the presence of the supernatural world. They believe that this world and its content affect their lives and that it influences every significant and insignificant per diem activity.

Ogez (1991) agrees with Garvey (1974), he, however, emphasises that fear leads the Bemba Catholics into believing in mystical powers which in return may lead them to practise rituals and activities that manifest mystical powers such as witch-hunting, magic, sorcery, witchcraft and others. Ogez (1991) confirmed these conclusions made by Garvey through his assertion that Bemba Catholics believe and fear occult powers used by witches and sorcerers, which in turn influences their behaviour of self-fortifying, fortifying children and securing houses, property and fields with charms.

Mwewa (1977) observed how deeply rooted the belief in spirits was among the Bemba Christians. He further observed that many Bemba Christians shared in the Bemba belief of how mystical powers, the spirit world and spirit beings influence the course of their lives. The Bemba people believe these realities govern the social, physical and spiritual phenomena of human life. Oger (1991) argues that Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers is clear in moments of hardship such as the inability to conceive of a child, prolonged illnesses, poverty, family tension and many others. These moments then lead them on to superstition, the use of charms, traditional medicines, magic and suspicions of witchcraft, sorcery and magic and consultations with witch doctors and diviners. Hinfelaar (2004) agreed with Oger in his study of the Bemba people, which indicated the overwhelming inclination of the Bemba Catholics to their traditional worldview and belief in impersonal powers and the spiritual realm. He observed that even when these Catholics professed Catholicism they would in certain circumstances turn to witch finding, divination, showing fear and interest in magic, using both charms and traditional medicines.

Literary materials and research have reviewed that the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers is significantly anchored on some crucial reasons. Garvey (1994)

pointed out that the supernatural reasons that the Bemba people applied to events and circumstances were rejected to a large degree by the missionaries on the premise that they were primitive and irrational. He observed that there were supernatural events, which took place in the church during mass and baptism and the other sacraments of the Catholic Church, but outside the church nothing 'supernatural' happened. However, Garvey (1974) observed that Bemba people knew there was a supernatural world present and that not only did it profoundly affect their lives but affected their every significant daily activity. The Church's view that the supernatural only occurred within the sacraments and church, made Catholicism to be seen as what only happened in the church building. Oger (1991) noted that the Catholic theological and scientific explanations of daily phenomena such as suffering, sickness and evil did not seem to satisfy the Africans. ATR was then unknowingly left to explain and give answers to the reality of the world in which the Bemba people lived daily. In effect, anything outside the Church walls is still seen in the light of ATR.

According to Ogez (1991), the fear associated with the wrath of the mysterious powers causes many Bemba Catholics to believe and practise rituals related to the belief in mystical powers. Examples given are such as if one is not taken to the witch-finders or diviners when he or she is believed to have been bewitched, then he or she could die. Hence, Ogez contends that 'fear of death is the 'motivating factor' for one to visit the witch doctor or witch-finder or diviner. He adds that the fear of witchcraft made some Bemba Catholics fortify their bodies, houses, fields, positions, businesses and everything with charms so that they could be protected. For Van Rheenen (1991) an African person often lived in fear of the spiritual powers that he or she believed might bring evil to their life. An African consequently believes that only by the use of the same powers can they overcome the consequences of these powers.

Some Bemba Catholics get involved in the belief and practice of mystical powers because it is their culture and tradition. The Bemba people are socialised that way during their growing up so that becomes part of them (Garvey, 1974). This provides a sense of belonging to the initiates because that identifies and separates them from others, and no

one likes to be outside the group. Belonging to a family and community implies that one has to be loyal to them. In addition, Garvey (1994) recorded that when one fell sick, the family took charge, and it decided where they would take the patient for treatment, in either modern hospitals or traditional healing places. He further observed that those who would want to abandon ATR elements failed to do so due to pressure from relatives or society.

Africans have a sense of oneness, that a person is not an individual in an African society. Families in Africa often exert tremendous pressure on individuals within them to bow to the desires and wishes of the family (Mbiti (1969). Family is an important entity in Bantu traditions and other African traditions at large. A person is always seen in relation to others, both dead and living, along with the spirits which inhabit this world. Magesa (1998) agrees with Mbiti as he observes that, some individuals in the community believe and practise mystical power-related rituals and rites because it involves the family that believes and practises such. In addition, they do it for the sake of peace with the family. Subsequently, family is perceived as a reason some Bemba Catholics believe in mystical powers.

Zambian Catholics (Bemba Catholics inclusive) practise the ATR elements because they feel that in some areas ATR elements are more effective than Christianity (Hinfelaar, 2007). This is so, especially in circumstances such as sickness, a Bemba Catholic would try western medicine from a hospital and may ask a priest to pray for them. However, if nothing comes out of the western medicines and priests' prayers, then they seek help from traditional avenues (Ogez, 1991). This phenomenon could be premised on the Bemba people's belief in mystic powers in African traditional medicine.

Oger (1991) in his study of the Bemba Catholics observed that they did not believe that Catholicism addressed all of their problems. He observed that when they were attacked by spiritual beings *Imyela* ('demons' as per Catholic perspective), they would go to diviners for solutions. If they were having issues with success in business, infertility, poverty, family tension and other complex issues, they would ask the witch doctors and

medicine men or women for solutions. This means that if the solution could not be found in the church, then the solution would immediately be provided by BTR. Ramashapa (1996:358) made a familiar observation, he stated, “Members leave in thousands those churches that do not take seriously and address the threat posed by witchcraft.” He added that this scenario happened when churches were considered inept at solving African people’s sufferings and misfortunes.

In Bemba society, many illnesses and misfortunes are believed to be caused by witchcraft or, sometimes by ancestral spirits. Therefore, traditional means are to be used to ward off illnesses and misfortunes if the well-being of individuals and society is to be achieved. Other misfortunes such as accidents are believed to be caused at times by the anger of the spirits and at other times because of forces of witchcraft (Garvey, 1974). Therefore, something needs to be done to protect one from these attacks and consequences. For many, what is needed to be done in these circumstances is not prayer, but traditional means. These are still strong as before among the Bemba people.

Oger (1991) noted that Catholicism preached the afterlife. So, many Bemba Catholics became Catholic and practised the Catholic faith with no intentions of benefiting anything, hoping that after death they would be rewarded abundantly in heaven. Conceivably, if Catholicism only cares about their well-being after death, then it becomes difficult for Bemba Catholics to see how it can affect their lives today. Oger further observed that Bemba people believed in the present more than in the afterlife. Hence, they invested their energy in trying to live a good and righteous life while on earth regardless of their involvement in traditional activities banned by the Catholic Church as long as they are bringing them happiness. The philosophy of some Bemba Catholics was therefore to make sure that their entrance into heaven through baptism in the Church was secured while they used ATR principles to affect and direct their daily lives, argued Oger (1991).

ATR allows a person to ‘be a Christian’ while still practising ATR. In ATR, someone could attend church services, receive baptism, partake of the sacraments and still practise

ATR (Mlenga, 2016). This is the reason Bemba people do not seem to see a problem with holding on to both ATR and Christian beliefs (Oger, 1991). It could therefore be indicated that this syncretistic combination is acceptable among the Bemba people and could be the factor in the Bemba Catholics' belief in the cosmology of mystical powers of the Bemba people.

One reason for the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers was a non-holistic conversion of the Bemba people to Roman Catholicism. Paloutzian (2014) defined conversion as a more distinct process by which a person went from believing, adhering to and/or practising one set of religious teachings or spiritual values to believing, adhering to and/or practising a different set. He theorised that the transformative process in conversion could take variable amounts of time, ranging from a few moments to several years, but it was the distinctiveness of change that was its' central identifying element. Bemba people before the arrival of the European Christian missionaries were adherents of their own Bemba traditional religion. The coming of these missionaries to Bemba land brought about the conversion of some Bemba traditionalists to Catholicism.

According to Horton's (1971) theory, the African conversion to Christianity was more to the influence of the social change brought about by colonialism and modernity than religious conviction. With the tenacious behaviour of the Bemba Catholics of holding to some traditional beliefs of their land, especially the belief in mystical powers, it could only make sense to postulate that these Bemba Catholics may have been reconnecting themselves with the macrocosm. Since that, modernity and colonialism that influenced their conversion no longer sustain their faith and provide answers and solutions to their problems. It could further be deduced that Bemba Catholics are once more finding the sense, enlightenment and interpretation of life with the macrocosm, which they may have lost during the dawn of Catholic evangelisation and conversion of the Bemba land.

On the other hand, Behringer (2004) argues that minimal effort to understand the African culture and practices by early missionaries in their contacts was made. Therefore, that could be said to have been the reason Africans still embraced some ATR beliefs. Ter

Haar (2007) argued as well that missionaries began cataloguing the entirety of African activities as pagan and prevented their practices without providing people with biblically practical substitutes. He further argues that the missionaries paid less attention to addressing the underlying worldview assumptions and values that directly opposed the Bible. He postulated that their action resulted in many of the prohibited activities continuing to happen, this time around in the background and hiding.

2.5 The Influence of the Belief in Mystical Powers on Bemba Catholics and its Implication for the Catholic Faith

Mbiti (1991:81) argued that the Africans' awareness of the spirit world "affects their [Africans] outlook and experiences in life for better and for worse." Van Dyk (2001:61) affirmed this as he asserted, "Knowledge about their meso-cosmos is especially important for understanding the behaviour of Africans because nearly all forms of illness, disease, conflict, suffering, misfortunes, accidents and death are ascribed to this level." He described the Meso-cosmos level as, "The intermediate universe that is the universe between the macro-cosmos and the micro-cosmos, and is inhabited by genies, evil spirits, witches and sorcerers." In agreement, Achola (2005:10) also affirmed these views through his assertion that in every African society, misfortunes had a cause. He stated, "It is believed that every misfortune is caused by humans or spirits." Garvey (1994) consolidated these views that Bemba people applied supernatural explanations to events and misfortunes around them. He stated that the Bemba people viewed suffering, sickness, death and evil as the doing of the mystical powers. The powers they believed were beyond them. Garvey (1974) emphasised that Bemba people perceived the supernatural as powers that affected their lives and their daily activities. Hence, we can argue that the belief in mystical powers influences Bemba Catholics in the way they perceive realities of life, such as suffering, evil, death, prosperity, fertility and others. These perceptions in return contribute to the Bemba Catholics' actions, such as consultation with diviners, witch doctors, diviners and others believed to possess mystical powers.

2.5.1 Child Naming as Ancestor Veneration

The notion of remembering the dead is embedded in the Bemba culture, tradition and beliefs. Bemba people bring back the names of their dead relatives to continue the dead person's spirit in the newborn child. The belief that the spirit of the dead relative may be represented in the childbearing name is a manifestation of the belief in mystical powers (Werner, 1971). This belief still shows vivacity in today's Bemba society among the Bemba Catholics. This was witnessed by Udelhoven (2017) as he stated, "In Bemba culture, for example, the soul of a departed person usually became a benevolent spiritual agent for his/her family, a *Mupashi*; a new-born child in this family would inherit its name and character." Some Bemba Catholics still keep this practice and the rituals surrounding it. Some Bemba Catholics make consultations with a diviner about which spirit of the ancestors or the dead member of the family is calling to be brought back. They believe that if the demand of the ancestor or deceased is not granted, then there would otherwise be misfortunes in the child's life and family. The belief in the malevolent and benevolent mystical powers of the ancestral spirits influences Bemba Catholics to name their children after their ancestors (Oger, 1991).

2.5.2 Consultation of the Diviners and Witch Hunters

Some Bemba Catholics are believed to pay visits to the diviners for consultations in times of prolonged sicknesses, death perceived as 'mysterious' and calamities befalling a family or community (Ogez, 1991). These consultations are sometimes done as a community or the village head or chief invites a diviner or witch hunter to do the divination (Garvey, 1994). Ogez attributed this behaviour to the Bemba Catholics' belief in witchcraft and fear of 'occult powers'. Hinfelaar (2007) contextualised this phenomenon as he argued that the witch-hunting business was still regarded as a significant one in today's traditional society, for it purged the causes of people's misery and misfortunes away from society. Some Bemba Catholics are sometimes implicated in the hunt, which tears the church and communities apart. It can categorically be deduced

that the belief in the supernatural powers and their believed effects on the lives of people influences today's Bemba Catholics who believe in such powers to seek the help of witch doctors and diviners for protection and help.

2.5.3 Consultation of Traditional Healers and Practice of Traditional Medicine

Africans believe that evil spirits and witches cause some sicknesses. Therefore, the logic is that only traditional healers could heal them. Some Bemba Catholics believe God healed them of their sicknesses directly. However, they sought traditional healing when God delayed the healing. Bemba Catholics believe in the healing power of God to be present in nature and herbs used by traditional healers (Moore, 1940). Some Bemba Catholics are medicine men and women who either practise their expertise in hiding or in the open (Oger, 1991). From the above information, we can discern that there are two categories of Bemba Catholics influenced by mystical powers: those that consult the medicine men and women, witch doctors and use traditional medicine, together with those that provide the services, the medicine men and women and witch doctors. The belief in the existence of mystical powers endowed upon the medicine men, women, and witch doctors and those others who use the same powers to harm others influence Bemba Catholics to seek intervention, healing and consultation from the traditional healers, which greatly conflicts with their Catholic faith.

2.5.4 Suspicions and Practice of Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

Africans hold a strong belief in the existence and effects of witchcraft and sorcery. Misfortunes, suffering and death in African societies are mostly attributed to acts of witchcraft, sorcery and magic (Magesa, 1998). This is the reason some Bemba Catholics today still hold a strong belief in the existence of witchcraft, which influences their behaviour to seek divination and use charms for protection from the witches/ wizards and sorcerers. The desire to protect oneself or family and possessions from witchcraft and sorcery could be seen in the traditional measures taken by some Bemba Catholics such as tattooing, wearing of charms on the body, wearing of amulets and planting of charms around the property and the like. Suspicions of some Catholics practising witchcraft are

rampant (Hinfelaar, 2007). Oger (1991), even reported some incidences of witch finding and hunting among Bemba Catholic communities. He feared this act affected the growth of the Catholic Church in Bemba land. This could entail that it is not only that Bemba Catholics suspect the existence of witchcraft, sorcery and magic and are afraid of its effects but also that some of them are suspected of practising these activities. As observed above, it can then be postulated that the belief in the powers of witches/wizards and sorcerers to harm influences some Bemba Catholics that share in this belief to have fear and anxiety of being bewitched, which leads to suspicious and superstitious behaviours. Furthermore, some Bemba Catholics are influenced by this belief to the point of practising the art, a behaviour condemned by the Catholic Church because it goes against their Catholic faith.

The belief that some evil people such as witches and sorcerers in society use magic to harm innocent people's lives, goods and property made some Bemba Catholics suspect others of using magic and for others to practise magic (Oger, 1991). Such a belief leads Bemba Catholics who believe in it to stay in fear and resort to the use of magic charms to protect themselves and their property. Some Bemba Catholics are believed to use mysterious powers to better people's lives. Ogez also observed that in cases where Bemba Catholics believed that magic could better their lives then they resorted to visiting witch doctors to collect lucky charms for success in specific areas of their lives such as charms for riches, marriage, sports and so on.

2.5.5 Performance of Mystic-Related Traditional Rituals

Mbiti (1991: 131) asserted, "Through ritual action and word, people feel able to exercise a certain amount of control over the invisible world and the forces of nature." He observed that Africans all over African societies perform rituals of almost everything from agriculture to homestead. This is a direct influence on their belief in mystical powers. Moreover, he asserted that some rituals involved mystical powers; invocation of supernatural powers to inhibit places, herbs and objects to be used as charms, fetishes and amulets. He noticed that many Africans who believed in mystical powers were influenced to participate in rituals involving mystical powers. He further observed that some

Africans were involved in inviting mystical powers to influence certain activities of their life such as professional works, examinations and competitions through the practice of some rituals. Mbiti (1991: 140) observed, “The rituals are intended to bring blessings upon the homestead, to remove the impurities of sickness and to make the life of the homestead run smoothly.” He stated, “In professional rituals, there are many taboos concerned with what people may not do, what not to eat or touch, how they should behave at certain times.” This was about restrictions provided by the mystical powers through the diviners or elders who performed the rituals. This has shown that some Africans are involved in performing professional rituals for success and protection.

Debating health rituals, Mbiti (1991) argued that for an African person disease was not only a physical condition, that was why Africans used religion to find the mystical cause behind the disease and try to find the ‘who’ was responsible for it and ‘who’ [implying a person or mystical powers] sent it to the sick person. It is this belief that has led Africans to perform certain rituals against black magic, witchcraft and curses. Mbiti (1991: 139) contended that Africans were in an endless search for the supernatural and human cause of their health predicament and death. He stated, “The death of any individual is believed to have a cause. Therefore, many rituals are performed to prevent death, delay death, to ward it off, part of the funeral rites include the idea of chasing away death from the family.” It could be established that its due to this belief that many Africans have been influenced to perform rituals to ward off and prevent death from the evil ones. It is, therefore, deducible that some Bemba Catholics being Africans are victims of these influences of believing in mystical powers, just as the rest of the Africans who share in the same belief and this has a great deal of damage on their Catholic faith as observed by Garvey, Oger, Ogez and Hinfelaar in their studies cited above. However, arising from these studies as to why belief in mystical powers and their manifestation is so hard to challenge by the catholic faith after so many years of evangelisation and teaching. These behaviours are still rampant in the twenty-first century after the 100-plus years of the Catholic presence among the Bemba people of Mpika district as observed through cited literature.

2.6 The Catholic Church's Response to African Catholic Belief in Mystical Powers

The Catholic Church in Africa acknowledges the intensity and vivacity of the phenomenon of its African members' belief in the mystical powers of their traditional religions of the land. This was demonstrated by the request of Pope John Paul II to the African church concerning African traditional religion in his *'Ecclesia in Africa'* encyclical that the African church needed to protect its African members from the negative influence of ATR beliefs (Sourou, 2014).

2.6.1 Dialogue

The Catholic Church suggests dialogue as one tool in handling the continuous belief in traditional beliefs by African Catholics. The church feels that a serene and prudent dialogue was needed to protect Catholics from negative influences which condition their way of life for many of them (Sourou, 2014). According to Sourou, 2014 Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, expressed the need for Interreligious dialogue during the second Synod for Africa, for ATR still exercised a strong influence over Africans. He revealed that with the 1994 synod, the Catholic Church officially began an engagement toward cohabitation in dialogue with ATR. This engagement called on African Christians to discern what was good in their 'spiritual roots' and to make peace with them. These efforts are being made by the church to make faith and African culture meet somewhere so that all Africans could accept it. Nevertheless, Sourou felt the dialogue implemented by the Catholic Church in Africa was not mutual enough to appease the African followers.

Sourou (2014) reported that the synods and encyclicals have repeatedly invited the African Catholics to salvage good elements from their 'spiritual roots' and reconcile them with Catholic teachings. He, however, was sceptical about what this invitation to adopt good ATR elements into the individual Catholic faith or the entire Catholic faith meant. He felt that these invitations might simply be meant to entertain these ATR elements for the sake of peace between the African members and the Catholic Church. Chidi (2022) entertained Sourou's scepticism over the true essence and direction of the dialogue

propagated by the Catholic Church in Africa. He, however, argued that the dialogue with African traditional religion required a change in the attitude of the Catholic Church in its pursuit of the dialogue.

Mbuka (2002) in his 'Proclamation and Dialogue with the African Traditional Religion communiqué' argued that the church had taken steps and made strides in implementing dialogue between Catholicism and ATR. He argued that the church in Africa had made tremendous achievements in dialoguing with the ATR although, among those elements considered for inculturation into the Catholic teachings, the belief in and practice of the manifestations of mystical powers such as divination, witchcraft, magic, traditional medicine and others were secluded. Udelhoven (2015) supported bishop Mbuka that the church had made progress in dialoguing with the Zambian traditional religion. He acknowledged that the belief in the unseen worlds: dealing with spirits and witchcraft by the Zambian people was very deep and observable in their daily activities. However, the church was implementing dialogue to enable the church and the Africans to appreciate the gospel and live in harmony with each other.

Chidi (2022) challenged the church to make its intentions for dialogue clear to the African members to foster transparency. Young (2022) argued that the Modern Roman Catholic Church's ways of dealing with occult powers needed to be modernised, agreeing with Chidi that the responses to the Catholics' belief in magic and other occult powers be it dialogue or inculturation needed to be improved and particularised to the needs of the followers. Hinfelaar (2007) supported these arguments as he stated that the approach to mystical powers in Africa was a sensitive issue and that it needed specialisation and subjective application.

2.6.2 Inculturation

The African church engages inculturation as means of solving the problem of Africans continued holding onto a dual belief system. The church engaged itself in incorporating vital ATR elements in Catholic religious life and liturgy. However, the church emphasised the discarding of magical elements that were assumed to cause division and

ruin families and societies, observed Sourou (2014). He believed the church did not seem friendly with the mystical elements of ATR because it did not discern the clear distinction between witchcraft/ evil rites and ATR. Ryan (2004) agreed with Sourou, he argued that interreligious relations such as inculturation and dialogue were the safest way of building coexistence with other religions and cultures. Agbonkhianmeghe (2008) acknowledged the efforts made by the church in Africa to live in harmony with the African cultures and traditions through implementing the African theology which he considered must be 'brewed in an African pot' to signify the African peoples' engagement in the activity and the seriousness of ATR influence on African Christians. He also argued that the issue needed agent response and inculturation of some African cosmologies into Christian theology.

This concurred with Sourou's (2014) observations that although the church promoted inculturation of some of the ATR beliefs in the church in Africa, it strongly discarded mystical elements that were assumed to cause division and ruin families and societies. Mlenga (2016) recorded similar concerns about the inculturation of the ATR elements of mystic beliefs into Christianity as rare in Malawian society. She believed that the church seemed to contradict itself when it labelled the belief in powers of its members as pagan and occult while it held its belief in mystic powers behind its sacraments and saints. Kirby (2015) argued that inculturation in Africa posed inevitable challenges. In his case study 'towards a Christian response to witchcraft in a Ghanaian society', he argued that inculturation in Africa posed many challenges and invited a deeper reflection as the Christian church embarked on an inculturation journey. Ogez (1991) approved these arguments, yet he even had a greater concern that if inculturation was not handled with prudence might lead to syncretism, which he felt was a danger to ATR and its cultures and traditions.

2.7 Research Gaps

The consulted literature and research have revealed the tendency of over-concentrating on the influence and impact non-indigenous religions such as Christianity and Islam have on the indigenous Africans and their African traditional religions. This study has

observed from the literature and research reviewed that no study has been carried out to uncover the influence the Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers has on Bemba Catholics who shared in this belief as to the problem under this study. No exact study has been studied in Mpika on the Bemba Catholics, creating a contextual gap, which this study intended to bridge.

Familiar studies have been done although have taken a different dimension from this study by taking a minimal interest in the manifestations of mystical powers, such as witchcraft, magic, sorcery, divination and witch-hunting, as per a review from the cited studies. Most Catholic missionary scholars have done studies on the Bemba people and Catholics. Oger (1991) extensively studied the Bemba Catholics of Ilondola mission, basing his study on a life of a Bemba Catholic and the missionaries that served them. Issues such as manifestations of mystical powers have been discussed. Garvey (1974) and (1994) studied the white fathers' mission among the Bemba-speaking people and the Bemba land Church respectively and unveiled Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers, creating a foundation for this study. Hinfelaar (1994) studied witch-hunting and the history of the Catholic Church in Zambia and disclosed the unwavering Zambian Catholics' belief in mystical powers.

All these studies have proven the existence of the belief in mystical powers among the Bemba Catholics in the study area. Even so, these studies have given an insight into the significance of the problem among the Bemba people and the Catholic Church in Bemba land; they have also given methodological and knowledge foundations key to the study of this phenomenon from which this study has benefitted. It has been reviewed from the literature and research consulted on this work that most of the studies closely related to this study have been done by Catholic missionary scholars whose judgments may have been influenced by their Catholic theologies, teachings, belief systems and worldviews. Hence, these factors may have influenced their perception and judgement of the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Bemba people. Moreover, from the literature and research reviewed in the study, it is believed that no research study has

been done on the influence of the belief in BTR belief in mystical on the Bemba Catholics.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the data about the research problem from the related literature and research in response to research objectives. This data has provided insight into discussions and discoveries of different authors on this problem. The next chapter discusses the research methods and methodologies used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The chapter describes the designs, paradigms, research methods, methodology, research study site, study population, study sample, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods that were used in this study. The chapter also provides the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings and the ethical considerations adhered to during the research process.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Design

Cohen et al. (2000) define the scientific research paradigm as a wide structure that encompasses perception, beliefs and awareness of different theories and practices used in scientific research. The study was guided by the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. Creswell (2003: 8) describes the dual as a philosophical paradigm that intends to understand “the world of human experience.” This suggests the fact that reality is socially constructed. He further states that this approach to research helps a researcher rely upon the ‘participants’ views of the situation being studied. In addition, it helps the researcher to acknowledge the effect on the research of their background and experiences. These views affirmed the epistemological stance of this research.

The paradigms further influenced the research methods, methodology and design. The research design is the overall approach used to investigate the problem under study. Bless and Achola (1988) state that research design includes the method of data collection and related specific strategies. They also state that research design is a plan of any scientific research from the first to the last step. The study engaged the qualitative research method. Bryman (2001) and Bryman (2008) cited in Hambulo (2016), defines qualitative research as a strategy that usually emphasises narratives rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Additionally, Creswell (2009) states that in qualitative research; the researcher interacts or collaborates with his or her subjects fully; a situation that helps

them collect information in a natural environment. This study employed a descriptive case study design. According to Yin (1989), a descriptive case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This design could study the complex relationships between phenomena, context and people. The descriptive case study design was appropriate for this study because it is a design that aims at describing and analysing a unit it studies. Thus, its overall purpose was to understand how BTR's belief in mystical powers influences Bemba Catholics by describing and analysing this phenomenon.

3.3 Study Site

The study was conducted in the Mpika district of Muchinga Province. Mpika district lies at the junction of Kasama, the gateway to Northern Province and on the east, the border town of Nakonde along the great north road. It covers an area of 40,935 sq. km with a population of 203,379 by the 2010 census (Central Statistics Office, 2012). The district hosts a rich catholic presence of 122 years and the Catholic Church headquarters for the diocese of Mpika. It is home to three big Bemba chiefdoms of Chikwanda, Luchembe and Mpepo. This provides a great deal of traditional political leadership, culture and traditions for the Bemba people. The reasons for the choice of this area were; first, the researcher was a resident of Mpika, hence, making it made it easier to access the respondents and interviewees and second, it was a home for Bemba people under study.

3.4 Population

The population of the study comprised Bemba Catholics, their Church leaders and Bemba traditional community leaders in Mpika District. Mpika Catholic Churches fall under the Mpika diocese that covers Muchinga Province as a geopolitical area. Mpika diocese is estimated to have 176,000 members by 2019 (Cheney, 2021). The study was restricted to the four Catholic parishes, namely, St. Joseph's the worker Cathedral, St. Andrew, Chilonga mission (our Lady of Lourdes parish) and Christ the King (Katibunga) because they were predominantly Bemba and had a rich history of the Catholic faith in Mpika

district. According to Bryman (2001), a population is a group of elements or causes whether individuals, objects or events that conform to specific criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalise the results of the research. Bless and Achola (1988) state that a population is the entire set of objects and events or groups of people, which are the objects of research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics.

3.5 Sample Size

White (2005) defines a sample as a group of subjects or situations selected from a larger population. While Webster (1985) defines it as a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. Bryman (2001) defines a sample as a subset of a population or the segment of the population that is selected for investigation. Therefore, the researcher used a sample of (34) participants of which (4) were pastorally engaged Catholic priests selected from the four parishes. These provided the study with a Catholic church's perspective on the subject matter and evidence of the influence of the belief. While (4) Traditional leaders were selected from local communities of the parishes, they provided in-depth knowledge of the Bemba cosmology. Twenty-six (26) lay Bemba Catholics were selected, of which (20) participated in in-depth interviews (5) from each of the four parishes and (6) participated in FGDs. They were studied to establish their belief in mystical powers and their influence on them. The study was gender-balanced; it was considered a fair representation of both genders. Both genders played a critical role in providing valuable information for the research. The study had (17) male and (17) female respondents. This was done to promote unbiased dissemination of information and equal participation in the problem by gender. The next table shows the distribution of the respondents according to their classification and coding.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

Types of Respondents	Code	Male	Female	Sub-total
Lay Bemba Catholics	Participants 1-20	06	14	20
Catholic Priests	Priest A-D	04	00	04
Traditional Leaders	Traditional leader F-I	04	00	04
Lay Bemba Catholics (FGD)	FGD	03	03	06
Sub-total		17	17	Total 34

3.6 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure is a process or criteria that the researcher puts across to gather participants from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group (Orodho and Kombo, 2002). Therefore, the study used purposive sampling. This sampling enabled the researcher to target a group of people who were believed to be connected to the study purposefully. A homogenous purposive sampling method was appropriate for this study because it only targeted those respondents who shared characteristics and who were expected to have adequate knowledge and information about the research problem; it was used in choosing the local traditional leaders and Catholic priests and the lay Bemba Catholics.

3.7 Methods and Instruments for Data Collection

The research used primary qualitative data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. Bryman (2001) defines an in-depth interview as a situation in which the interviewer or researcher questions respondents face-to-face and records their answers. Kombo and Tromp (2006) argue that interviews are well suited for exploring and confirming ideas and providing in-depth information about particular cases of interest. The research engaged in semi-structured interviews, which allowed a researcher to raise the open-ended questions for the detailed responses and allowed for flexibility but followed a predetermined thematic framework. The justification for the use of interviews is that it has a high response rate. Interviews focus on the world of the

interviewee and seek to reveal their beliefs, values, reality, feelings and experience of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). In this process, note-taking and audio recording were vital, as they led to a credible analysis.

Kombo and Tromp (2006) describe focus group interview/discussion as composed of individuals who share certain characteristics which are relevant to the study and that the discussion must be carefully planned and designed to obtain information on the participants' beliefs and perceptions on a defined area of interest. The research engaged a 'single focus group' as a type of FGD in which the researcher was a moderator, asked questions and participants responded. This was important to the study as it enabled the researcher to gain insights into how BTR's belief in mystical powers influenced them. The research also used literary secondary resources. These external resources included but were not limited to published and unpublished materials books, research reports, articles, eBooks, documents and the internet.

The Bemba Catholics who are the primary target respondents were subjected to multiple data collection methods such as in-depth interviews, which were carried out through one-to-one interviews, telephone, emails and social media. In addition, focus group discussions were conducted to gain in-depth insight into the problem. The researcher randomly chose (6) willing Bemba Catholic participants, with a minimum of (1) and a maximum of (2) participants to represent each parish, to participate in focus group discussions to avoid overcrowding and promote effective communication. The FGDs took place in a centrally located parish. The discussion was audio-recorded and short notes were taken during the discussions. The discussions took 45 minutes and the language of the discussion was open to Bemba and English to make every participant comfortable to contribute in the language they are conversant with. The data collection process was done over a period of six months and the completion of the entire study took a year.

3.8 Data Analysis

Patton (1990) describes qualitative data analysis as a manipulation of the collected data to draw conclusions that reflect on the interest, ideas and theories that started the study. She further holds that data analysis involves uncovering underlying structures and extracting important variables. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) further suggest that, in analysing qualitative data, the initial task is to find concepts that help make sense of what is going on. Patton (1990) seems to suggest that these concepts about data analysis arise during data collection, which marks the beginning of the analysis, and this continues throughout the study. In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation of the data (Sarantakos, 2005). The collected data that was recorded in the Bemba language was translated into English, all data was initially analysed by transcribing all interview audio records into written verbatim to give room for the thematic analysis for further processing.

The researcher employed thematic analysis in his data analysis and interpretation due to its efficiency in exposing the hidden and reoccurring common themes of data. Creswell (2009) describes thematic analysis as an analysis technique that emphasises the identification, analysis and interpretation of patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This method is usually applied to sets of data closely examined to identify common themes, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Dawson, 2002). This data analysis was best suited for this study because it is an approach that is appropriate when qualitative research intends to find out people's embedded opinions, beliefs, and experiences; which is exactly what the research intended to investigate. The research during data analysis assigned, firstly, preliminary codes to the data to describe the content. Secondly, he searched for patterns or themes in the codes across the different data sets. Thirdly, he reviewed the themes. Lastly, he defined and named themes. Thereafter, analysed data was presented and validated through double-checking and member-check. The development of themes was informed by the reconciling patterns of data discovered within the collected data.

3.9 Trustworthiness

The researcher engaged multiple and combined qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews and focus group discussions, to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings. This was because these methods complement each other with no overlapping weaknesses, observes Creswell (2009). According to Patton (1990), a combination of methods ensures inconsistencies are removed and thus credibility and trustworthiness of data are achieved. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research data interpretations and conclusions were shared with the participants, to clarify what their intentions were, correct errors and provide additional information where necessary.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Considering that the research involved human subjects, the researcher adhered to ethical principles by safeguarding the anonymity and confidentiality of participants' identities and data to avoid risking the social and psychological safety of the research participants. The researcher also sought informed consent from participants. To attain this, participants were informed of what the study was about so that their decision to take part was made voluntarily. Participants were encouraged to remain silent when they did not want to respond or give an answer. They were made aware that the researcher was going to visit them once for interviews and once for verification during the life of the research.

An in-depth interview lasted for 40 minutes and then FGDs took 45 minutes and once. Both in-depth and FGDs were held in a conducive and mutually agreed upon place. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher ensured that he and the participants adhered to the provided health guidelines by shortening and observing the time for interviews. He ensured everyone observed masking up, hand washing, hand sanitizing and social distancing. To avoid risking participants from Covid-19 infection, the research conducted some one-to-one interviews via telephone, email and social media. The UNZA Humanities and Social Sciences and Ethics Committee cleared the proposal of the study with the clearance number: HSSREC-2021-MAY-009.

3.11 Summary

The chapter has discussed the research methods and design that were used in the study. It has also described the area where the study took place and its population. The chapter has as well discussed the study sample, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and procedures used in the study. It has also discussed data analysis methods that were used in the investigation. The next chapter presents the research field findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

This chapter is about the presentation of the field findings of the research problem. The presentation of these field findings intends to provide relevant information about the problem in the area of study. The researcher has deduced thematic themes from the research data and these themes have guided the presentation of the research field findings. However, the research questions of the study have guided the themes. These research questions for the study were:

- i). What beliefs in the mystical power of the Bemba cosmology are present in the 21st century Mpika district?
- ii). Why is the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology persistent in the 21st century Mpika district?
- iii). What is the influence of the belief in mystical powers on the Bemba Catholics of Mpika district and its implication on the Catholic faith?
- iv). What is the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba traditional religious cosmology in Mpika district?

4.2 Mystical Power Beliefs of the Bemba Cosmology Present Mpika District

Some themes emerged from the research question on what mystical power beliefs of the Bemba cosmology were present in the twenty-first century Mpika district. The first theme was the belief in the presence of evil in the world as proof of the existence of mystical powers. The second theme was the belief in the unseen world as the source of mystical powers. The third theme was the communication between the unseen and seen world as evidence of the existence of mystical powers. The last theme was spirit beings as the possessors and dispensers of mystical powers.

According to priest A, the Bemba ideology of mystical powers entailed a religious belief in supernatural powers that encompassed the entire world and things that happen in it daily. He noted that beliefs, rituals, emotional experiences, ethical and social aspects all surrounded the Bemba person's life. In addition, priest D asserted that the world of Bemba people's daily experiences was culturally a world of mystical powers. Similarly, traditional leader F stated, "We Bemba people believe in powers that go as far as the universe and that these impersonal powers control all human events. We also believe that these powers have good and bad nature," Participant 2 added, "We believe mystical powers can influence the daily lives of people." Participants from both Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders expressed the belief that these powers took possession of objects, humans and nature and that they could be moved from one object to another and person to person.

4.2.1 The Presence of Evil in the World Proving the Existence of Mystical Powers

Participants from all target groups expressed a similar view that evil in the world was the reason behind the belief in the existence of mystical powers in the Bemba tradition. Participant 6 stipulated, "The existence of evil in the world makes me believe in the existence of external forces that bring evil and suffering into the world." To which participant 12 added wondered as to where evil could come from! She wondered if it could be from God, whom she said was good. Participant 20 opined, "Looking at the evils committed and present in our community and the world, you can surely say that there are evildoers behind them." Priest C aired a similar view. However, he emphasised the philosophy of causality that he felt Bemba people attached to misfortunes of life and wondered how this philosophy likely influenced their behaviour towards other people in the community. He said, "I think the notion behind the presence of bad things that happen in the community motivates Bemba people's belief in the existence of powers beyond them. They do not believe in other explanations for sufferings and misfortunes, apart from the supernatural cause."

Several Participants across the target groups expressed the view that evil in the world, especially the unexplained evil and people's appetite to do evil and harm others, indicated evil powers. These powers influenced people to do evil things and they directly caused physical calamities such as drought, floods, diseases and others.

4.2.2 The Belief in the Unseen World as the Source of Mystical Powers

Most of the participants expressed the view that there was an unseen world, which was the source of the mystical powers. Participant 9 asserted that Bemba people believed in the presence of the unseen world, otherwise known as the spiritual world. She added that they believed that the spiritual world comprised human and inhuman spirits. To which traditional leader I added that Bemba people believed that both worlds of humans and spirits were in constant interaction. He added that there was also a belief that some people such as witch doctors, witch-finders, witches and sorcerers had access to the physically unseen world and tapped into the supernatural powers. "This is because people believe that the spiritual world is the source of the supernatural powers," he added.

4.2.3 Communication with the Unseen World as Evidence of Mystical Powers

The participants were convinced that there was communication between the seen world and the unseen world and that this was evidence enough to prove the existence of mystical powers. They further stated that some people acted as intermediaries between the two worlds. To affirm this, traditional leader H stated, "Witches, witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men and women communicate with the spirits in the spiritual world for powers and revelations, but ordinary people also get in touch with the spiritual world through dreams, visions and near-death experiences."

Participant 14 acknowledged that the belief in the ability of witch doctors and medicine men and women to communicate with the spirits of ancestors and inhuman spirits was very strong in Bemba tradition. She added by citing legendary stories and folktales of how the ancestors communicated with the long-deceased members of the community for everything from asking for protection, fertility of the land, rains and prevention of diseases. Traditional leader G in affirmation said; "The witch doctors and medicine men

and women are the best examples of individuals in our society who communicated with the spirit world.” In addition, Participant 18 said, “Traditional healers are believed to transcend this physical world and enter the spiritual world through trances and incantations.”

Traditional leader I stated that there was a belief in Bemba religious traditions that spirits reveal to witch doctors, medicine and women the impossible and direct them on how to solve spiritual and physical problems of the people. He further stated that Bemba society regarded medicine men and women, and witch doctors as intermediaries between the physical world and the spiritual world.

4.2.4 Spirit Beings as the Possessors and Dispensers of Mystical Powers

Participants from all samples unanimously expressed the belief that the spirit beings: ancestral spirits and spirits of the dead and non-human spirits were possessors and dispensers of mystical powers experienced by the Bemba people. According to traditional leader H, Bemba religious traditions had two types of spirit beings, which are the ancestral spirits and spirits of the dead, and the non-human spirit beings. He further showed that the Bemba people believed that all spirit beings possess certain impersonal powers and they too, possess both good and bad qualities. Traditional leader F who revealed himself as a medicine man added that Bemba people believed bad spirits possessed and harmed people while good spirits provided for and protected people. He further stated; “Usually the bad spirits are manipulated or employed by bad people in society such as the witches, sorcerers and wizards while the good spirits did good to people.” Whereas traditional leader I asserted that Bemba people believed witch-doctors, rainmakers and medicine men and women used good magic for the good of the people.

Participant 1 added that Bemba people shared a belief that some humans manipulate supernatural powers from the spirit world to use them as magic and witchcraft. She added that witch doctors and traditional healers used the same powers to do good to people and intermediate between the believed possessors of power (spirit beings) and the people. Participant 20 added that Bemba people regarded the natural environment and natural

resources in higher esteem, for they were believed to inhibit spirits. They also believed that nature such as trees, rocks, mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, and animals sheltered supernatural powers. In addition, they believed these powers inhibited human beings, objects, charms and amulets. Besides, participant 16 opined that:

The Bemba people believe that the spirits of their dead relatives survive physical death and remain alive and that they become spiritual and immortal beings. The spirits are transformed into an ancestor. The ancestral spirits are believed to have the powers to protect people from misfortunes such as famine, droughts, disease and witchcraft. They are also believed to have the power to cause misfortunes for people and the community when they get offended or people disobey the traditions and customs of society.

In addition, participant 10 observed that Bemba people believed that good health, prosperity and success in life came about because of their obedience to and veneration of the ancestral spirits and other spirit beings. They believed misfortunes such as sickness, suffering and untimely death resulted from disobedience and failure to respect the spirits.

4.2.5 Manifestation of Mystical Powers in Bemba Cosmology in Mpika District

The following themes emerged from both one-to-one interviews and group discussions on the research question of how mystical powers manifest in the lives of Bemba people and the community; the first theme was divination and witch-hunting. The second theme was witchcraft, sorcery and magic. The third theme was traditional healing and medicine. The last theme was oaths, vows and curses.

Participants from across the target groups universally affirmed that mystical powers manifest through divination, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, traditional healing, traditional medicine, oaths, vows and curses. Most of the participants from all samples conveyed a similar view that mystical powers in Bemba society manifested through the aforementioned activities. According to traditional leader I, mystical powers are also manifested through charms, amulets, and many other ways that are directly linked to magic. Participant 19 argued that Bemba people believed in the enshrinement of

mysterious powers in things or objects such as herbs, forests, mountains, rivers and others. Many participants expressed their belief in the transference of mystical powers to amulets and charms as objects of mediation. Some respondents said that mystical powers could be sent anywhere despite the distance to cause harm or good.

4.2.5.1 Divination and Witch-hunting

Participants from all target groups ascribed to the belief in the manifestation of mystical powers through divination. Priest C asserted, “Divination shows supernatural powers, it is used to find out about many things hidden from ordinary eyes but clear in the spirit.” He also added that through divination, it was believed that diviners could tell which ancestral spirits have reincarnated in a newborn child, the cause of death, sickness or other misfortunes which were mostly attributed to witches/wizards or sorcerers.

Interestingly, Participant 3 appeared to support the above assertion by describing the roles of divination and diviners have in society, emphasising their role as seers and intermediaries between people and the unseen world. He said, “Through divination the diviners or witch-doctors provide medicine, foretelling the future, finding lost things, interpreting dreams, consulting spirits for revelation and so on.” Participants in FGDs agreed with this statement and added that the Bemba people regarded the diviners as the official interpreters of the ‘will of the ancestral spirits’ and intermediaries between the physical and the spirit worlds. The Bemba Catholic participants from one-to-one interviews expressed the reconciling idea with the above, expressing the role and place of divination and diviners in the Bemba society. They expressed the view that diviners and witch doctors played a role of a religious leader, therefore, endowed with the responsibility of protecting, interceding with the spirits and providing guidance to people and community.

4.2.5.2 Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

Several participants overwhelmingly described witchcraft, sorcery and magic as manifestations of mystical powers in the Bemba society. They described the belief of the Bemba people in the supernatural as one completed and unpackaged through the magic

exhibited in witchcraft and sorcery. Out of this disposition priest B asserted, “It’s in Bemba people’s belief that some amongst us in the community are people who can access mystical powers and use them to manipulate and to destroy other people’s property or even to kill others.” Many participants agreed with the assertion above as they expressed the view over the secret nature of witchcraft practice and Bemba society’s regard for witchcraft to have the power to harm.

Similarly, Participant 5 stated that often the evil people used magical spells, curses and poison to cause accidents, death and misfortunes for others and sometimes this was extended to their offenders’ possessions. She added that they also used damaging ‘medicines’ substances to cause irreparable damage. She echoed the view that not only did sorcerers and witches use magic to cause harm to individuals, families and property, but to the community as well. To this effect, participant 11 discoursed:

Magic in our Bemba culture is believed to be of two types, there is good magic and bad magic. Good magic is used for the good of the people and community. The witch doctors, diviners and traditional healers use mystical powers for the good cause. It is this magic, which is sometimes called ‘white’ magic, which is used in treating and healing illnesses, removing misfortunes, exorcism and spelling away evil ‘powers’ or powers of witchcraft.

Participant 20 added that bad magic which was also known as black magic was believed to have been used to cause harm to others or the community and that it’s the witches/wizards and sorcerers that used this power to cause harm to other human beings or/and their possessions. He argued that evil magic involved the belief in and practice of tapping and using the power to bring harm to human beings or their property and that witches/wizards and sorcerers used mystical powers for their selfish evil deeds.

4.2.5.3 Traditional Healing and Medicine

A convincing number of participants accepted that one way in which mystical powers manifested in the world was through traditional medicines. They said that the medicine

men and women prepared, prescribed and administered traditional medicines through the directions from the spirits. In addition, they expressed their belief in the giftedness of the medicine men and women with the supernatural powers to conduct healing of the sick, remove misfortunes, and grant good health to individuals and the community. They expressed the belief in the combination of magic with traditional medicines to yield results that are more effective. To affirm the belief in the presence of mystical powers in traditional medicine, participant 7 stated, “I believe God created magic powers to help us solve our problems. I feel God created nature so that man can benefit from it.” She further opined that God created medicine people and witch doctors and gave them the wisdom to discern natural medicines for people so that they can all enjoy good health. Many Bemba Catholics shared this opinion. Nonetheless, they expressed the view that before the Europeans brought hospitals and their medicines, the Bemba people relied on their traditional medicines and traditional healers and so wondered why they should not then.

Participant 10 added that Bemba people regarded any traditional substances, charms, herbs or objects used by the medicine men and women or witch doctors to heal or solve a problem as traditional medicine. She stated that traditional medicines administered were for healing, protecting and harming. In affirming the above statement, participant 13 narrated:

Infants, children and adults all receive *Inembo* (tattoos) which are cuts in our skins where traditional medicines and herbs are pushed to heal us from certain illnesses and protect us from terrible magic, misfortunes and witchcraft. This is because of a belief that these traditional medicines have intrinsic magical powers to heal and protect from evil magic. Sometimes there is a combination of these herbs with other stuff called *Ifishimba* (traditional concoction) and at other times, the preparation of herbs is accompanied by the invocation of spirits to inhibit them. In most cases, traditional medicines are accompanied by taboos about their use, storage and disposal that must not be messed up, otherwise, consequences may follow.

Additionally, participant 17 argued that medicine men/women, traditional healers and witch doctors used herbs and natural objects such as rare stones, animal body parts or a combination of them, and transformed them into charms which people wore on their bodies or put in and around their goods and possessions to protect them from being stolen or bewitched. She further postulated that the Bemba people had a strong belief in the existence of supernatural powers in traditional medicine.

4.2.5.4 Oaths, Vows and Curses

A good number of the participants asserted that mystical powers manifested in oaths, vows and curses. During FGDs, it was argued that the Bemba people had an undeniably strong belief in the supernatural powers of the spoken word. The assertion made was that Bemba people believe in using supernatural powers to bless or harm other people. A majority of the members of the FGDs argued that to increase the power of a curse and make it spiritually holding, sometimes it was combined with medicines and rituals. They added that there was also a belief that medicines or/and more powerful counter mysterious powers were the ones that could undo the curse especially if the curser died before undoing the curse. To accent the above assertions, participant 11 narrated:

Traditionally, when we are making oaths, we are required to do them in the community's presence and family, and make them over someone alive or dead. Oaths and vows in our tradition are spiritually binding and they have a terrible bearing if messed up. You ought to be careful most of the time with vows and oaths you make, because if they are false, then you are likely to face the wrath of the spirits. We believe that unexplained misfortunes and tragedies some people go through result from the false vows and oaths they made or vows and promises they have broken.

Most of the participants during the FGDs aired a similar view that Bemba people believed that members of the community, such as the elderly, witches and sorcerers, could wish someone bad luck through word and it could happen. They asserted that a curse made by elders of the community was so powerful that they performed some rituals

to undo the curse. Many participants asserted that making oaths and vow entailed agreeing with ancestral spirits, the spirits of the dead and the non-human spirits.

4.3 Accounting for the Bemba Catholics' Belief in Mystical Powers in the 21st Century

In this part, the research endeavours to explain the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology and get a deeper insight into the reasons Bemba Catholics believe in mystical powers to create the best comprehension and appreciation of the belief. Despite their profession of the Catholic faith and the promise to adhere to it and all the catholic teachings and doctrines, Bemba Catholics have continued to despise these Christian tenets and uphold consciously the tenets of ATR such as mystical powers. In trying to explain the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology, priest D stated that Bemba Catholics shared in the totality of the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers with the rest of the tribal mates and traditionalists. This was despite their proclamation of the Catholic faith and teachings, many years of Catholic evangelisation and absorption of the Catholic faith. He noticed that apart from those who were converted to Catholicism from Bemba traditional religious or traditional practices with no religious significance still showed their enduring belief in ATR. However, even some of those who were born and raised in the Catholic Church expressed belief in mystical powers and their manifestation. Participant 4 argued that her belief in mystical powers was embedded in Bemba culture and traditions, which he felt made it difficult for them to abandon such beliefs even when they were Christians. She further asserted that Bemba Catholics did not have their own belief distinct from the rest of the Bemba people but deeply shared in the roots of their traditional, religious and cultural belief system of the cosmology of mystical powers. To affirm how deeply rooted the belief was in the Bemba Catholics, traditional leader G expressed:

The belief in mystical powers is the core belief that explains every phenomenon in the world and all things that happen to us daily. It influences every significant and insignificant daily activity. The belief affects all life aspects, from rituals to social

aspects in our community. We see our daily experiences in the light of mystical powers.

Priest B alleged that Bemba Catholics shared in the Bemba belief in the presence of mystical powers in witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spell, curse and rituals. They regarded them as the representation of the malevolent powers of the spirits. Traditional leader F added that he believed that there were people in society that used malevolent mystical powers to cause harm and death to others and their belongings. He described these people as witches/wizards, sorcerers/sorceresses, witch doctors and other ill-hearted people. Others unanimously expressed both assertions as well. On the other hand, Bemba Catholics shared the belief in the benevolent powers of mystical powers. To affirm this, participant 20 said, “I believe in the presence of mystical powers in divination, traditional medicine, traditional healing, magic, charms and rituals.” Which many believed were the benevolent manifestations of mystical powers. Most participants agreed with these assertions. They further expressed their belief in the existence of good people in society, who use mystical powers benevolently to protect, heal and bless people, land, property and nature. They believe these are the witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men/women, rainmakers, witch-hunters and diviners.

Participant 8 stated that she believed in the ability of mystical powers to take possession of objects, humans and nature and to move from one object to another and a person subject to another. During FGDs, participants expressed the Bemba people’s view of the world and the cause of fortunes and misfortunes in the world and people’s lives. They stated:

We interpret the world around us, life events, social and moral phenomena such as suffering, illness, death, goodness, evil and others as emerging from the supernatural. We also interpret the unpleasant world life events such as suffering, illness, death and others as always having a cause from witchcraft, sorcery, magic and spirits.

Most of the Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders expressed similar sentiments. Most Bemba Catholics expressed their conception of the supernatural as having the ability to

get involved in their affairs with the purpose of blessing or harming. Several of them expressed the view that all-natural, physical, spiritual and social phenomena in the world had a magical cause. To affirm the assertion, participant 17 said, “Mystical powers are behind illnesses, suffering, death and other misfortunes that we going through in this world.” Some Bemba Catholics communicated their belief in the abilities of the spirits to involve themselves and influence their lives. Some even went further to argue that ancestral spirits and the spirits of the dead had the powers to influence their lives and the powers to bless and punish them.

Participants from FGDs and in-depth interviews with the Bemba Catholics expressed their belief in the presence of mystical or magic powers in traditional medicine, herbs and nature. They also expressed their belief that traditional healers possessed mystical or magical powers. They further expressed their belief in protecting and attracting the powers of charms. A participant of an FGD wearing a bracelet that seemed to us like an ordinary bracelet expressed his belief in its power against evil sent to her by the witches, sorcerers and magicians. Many respondents acknowledged their belief or belief of those who tattooed them during childhood in mystical powers behind medicines and rituals performed during the tattooing process. They expressed the belief that tattoos had powers to protect them from bad magic, witchcraft and sorcery. They believed that some sicknesses and misfortunes were the consequences of curses and broken oaths and vows.

The majority of Bemba Catholics expressed their belief that mystical powers were present in oaths, vows and curses. To affirm this impression, traditional leader H who was a medicine man narrated, “Making oaths and vows means agreeing with ancestral spirits, the spirits of the dead and the non-human spirits.” All participants expressed their belief that certain rituals manifested mystical powers. Participant 1 added that mystical powers were present in rituals, especially those that served the well-being of people such as agricultural, personal and professional and health rituals. The belief in mystical powers by Bemba Catholics was seen by many to undermine the efforts of Catholic evangelisation in Mpika district and devalue the Catholic teachings concerning the issues of faith.

4.3.1 Reasons for the Persistence of the Bemba Catholics' Belief in Mystical Powers

To have full a comprehension of the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology, the researcher sought to understand the reasons for the belief of Bemba Catholics. The researcher deduced some themes on the reasons for Bemba Catholics' belief in the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers. The first theme was the Bemba people's conceptualisation of the supernatural. The second theme was the Bemba people's perceptions of causation. The third theme was the cultural and traditional conception of family. The fourth theme was cosmologically induced fear and anxiety. The fifth theme was socio-cultural dynamics. The sixth theme was the alleged inefficiency of the Catholic Church. The seventh theme was the oneness of the Bemba traditional religion with life. The last theme was the non-holistic conversion to Catholicism.

4.3.1.1 The Bemba people's Conceptualisation of the Supernatural

Priest A asserted that there was a huge difference in the understanding of the supernatural between the Catholic Church and the Bemba religious traditions. He alleged that the Bemba people regarded the supernatural as the force behind every phenomenon of their ordinary lives. He further alleged that they applied supernatural reasons to events and circumstances that happen to them. However, the Catholic Church rejected these reasons and promoted instead the church ordinances and the influence of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life. In addition, priest C argued that the Bemba people were aware of the presence of the supernatural world and that it influenced their lives and daily activities. Participant 19 indicated that the Catholic explanations of suffering, sickness and evil did not seem to satisfy them. Participant 15 added that Bemba traditional knowledge explained and gave answers to the phenomenon of misfortunes in the world and their lives and that the supernatural powers were behind both fortunes and misfortunes in a Bemba person's life.

4.3.1.2 Bemba People's Perception of Causation

The Bemba Catholic participants expressed their conviction and that of the entire Bemba people with the ability of witchcraft, sorcery, magic or, in some cases, ancestral spirits to cause illnesses and misfortunes. They also expressed their belief that witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men and women used traditional means to solve people's misfortunes and illnesses. They further asserted that angry spirits and witchcraft forces caused misfortunes. To affirm the above beliefs and assertions, participant 9 asserted that:

There are many bad people, such as witches, who kill innocent people sometimes out of jealousy and some other time out of malice. Witches, bad spirits and unexplained forces cause misfortunes that people suffer. If a woman has been longing for a child and after giving birth to a child, then the woman dies. Can you call that a will of God? Certainly not, surely, some people manipulate certain powers to harm others.

Most participants expressed the belief that evil powers or someone evil caused all that happened in the life of people and the community. Many Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders expressed the view that since the evil spirits controlled bad occurrences therefore it was only logical that the solutions to these problems from this perspective were not prayers, but traditional means such as traditional medicine, witch hunting, charms and magic.

4.3.1.3 Cosmologically induced Fear and Anxiety

The majority of the priests interviewed attested that there was too much fear of the forces of the mystical world in Bemba Catholics, although the fear they exhibited was unfounded. However, it had a deeper influence on those Catholics. Participant 4 supported this statement by saying that the reason he sought the interventions of the witch doctor was the fact that he feared witches, who also feared witch doctors. He also added that the reason some Bemba Catholics fortified themselves with herbs, amulets, and tattoos was to protect themselves from the evil plans and actions of the witches. To

illustrate further the Bemba Catholic's fear and anxiety of the mystical powers, participant 14 narrated:

Some people think that witchcraft and magic do not exist and I do not blame them, but if you have lost a loved one from these practices like me, then you have no choice but to believe that witches exist, it is very scary to know that certain people around you cause harm. Protecting oneself from these threats is the only way to remain safe.

Priest C also affirmed the above statements through his observation of children tattooed with protective charms and wearing amulets and performing rituals summoning ancestral spirits to protect the child from an evil eye. He further postulated that sometimes the fear emerged not only from societal beliefs but also from the belief in the existence of the spirit world, the world of the dead. He asserted that fear of the mystic powers of the ancestors was the reason the Bemba people, for example, named their children after the deceased members of the family to avoid angering the spirits of the dead and appeasing them by bringing their names back.

4.3.1.4 Socio-Cultural Dynamics

Priest B stated that the culture of the local people was strong despite the 120 years of evangelisation. He noted that some cultural and traditional elements are still deeply rooted in the Bemba Catholics and beliefs in supernatural powers as the belief passed on from one generation to another. Priest D seemed to agree with this allegation when he asserted that the Bemba people still held a strong belief in mystical powers, which was manifested in their strong belief in witchcraft, magic and traditional medicines. To affirm these assertions, participant 1 strongly emphasised, "It's difficult to forsake our culture and traditions, we have always believed in the existence of the powers beyond us that influence our daily lives." This view resonated with what many participants stressed that some people used these powers to harm others to protect and bless the people.

Priest D further observed that there were reports of some members of his parish taking part in mystical activities such as witch-hunting and divination because they had no

choice, owing that they were part of the community or social group in which these activities take place and for fear of being suspected instead. Participant 19 supported this point by alleging that the belief in mystical powers was more of a social group or community than an individual belief. She felt that many people only shared and participated in traditions lived by many other members of the community and society to fulfil what he termed as a ‘social obligation.’

4.3.1.5 Oneness of the Bemba Traditional Religion with Life

Priest D shared his concern over the oneness of religion and all aspects of life in Bemba society. He added that the Bemba people had a concept that religion must solve people’s problems and that everything was religious. He argued that that state of reality created a problem in which Bemba people expected solutions and answers for their life problems from the Catholic Church, which hardly came forth. Priest A argued that this traditional-religious view was the contributing factor to the problem of the Bemba Catholics’ constant search for answers and solutions to their problems from traditional means when the church did not provide answers and solutions to their problems. “It, therefore, becomes justifiable that they find these answers and solutions elsewhere,” he said.

Participant 18 argued that the Catholic Church forgot that the Bemba people had well-defined ways of explaining and dealing with life problems. She further argued that this behaviour could be the reason Bemba Catholics easily sneaked into their traditional domain to find solutions to their problems from the witch doctors, medicine men and women, which he felt was very acceptable in Bemba society. Traditional leader I who later described himself as a converted traditional healer highlighted the previous argument by attesting that there was no separation between religion and life in Bemba society. He argued that everything was one, no one lived their life away from religion and that social life, hunting, cultivation, fertility of the land and so on were all religious accomplishments.

4.3.1.6 Alleged Inefficiency of the Catholic Church

All priests stated that they had heard of the reasons some members of their parishes gave about their belief and involvement in mystical powers. One reason was that the Catholic Church lacked effectiveness with the spiritual problems of the people. In addition, they stated that the victims of these practices often accused the church of throwing their cases through the window or simply shunned them. When asked whether that allegation could be true, most priests sounded sceptical about it but they felt that the possibility was there. Participant 15 purported that, witch doctors, diviners, medicine men and women provided solutions to people's problems, which the church could not do. He said:

We Bemba people associate long-time suffering, long-time illnesses, infertility, natural calamities, unexplained death and unexplained others to foul play of the mystical powers, but the Catholic church gives a different explanation that it's God's will. The church does not provide any solution to our problems, but witch doctors, traditional healers and traditional medicines often do.

In affirmation of the above assertion, priest B expressed concerns that only if the church had allowed the charismatic movement to operate freely and handled this dimension of the Christian life then the problem of its members frequenting witch doctors, witch-finders and diviners would have been outdated.

4.3.1.7 Non-Holistic Conversion to Catholicism

Participant 6 argued that the problem of the belief in mystical powers and consequent practices began with the missionary evangelisation and their misunderstanding of the Bemba indigenous religion, traditional beliefs, values and customs. He alleged that the Catholic missionaries imposed western traditions, cultures and values on local people and that that approach was wrong for it created mistrust in the Bemba converts. He suggested that they should have instead made much consideration and fair research about Africa. Participant 12 added that the demonisation of the Bemba indigenous religion, cultures, traditions, customs and indigenous knowledge was the great mistrust the missionaries planted in its Bemba followers. In line with these thoughts, priest A asserted:

I have concluded that the problem of our Bemba Catholics' continuous belief in mystical powers and for some, the practice of the mystical powers related activities such as witchcraft, witch finding, use and practice of African traditional medicines and charms is attributed to poor conversion during the missionary times. If the holistic conversion had taken place, then these issues would not have persisted in our times.

Participant 2 argued that the church was so adamant about not accepting and incorporating the traditional and cultural beliefs of Bemba followers. He argued that the church forgot the tenacious behaviour of the traditional beliefs of the local people and their traditional background. He felt that asking Bemba Catholics to abandon all of their traditional beliefs, even those that formed their identity as a people, such as a belief in mystical powers, not only defied the humanity of the local people but also created pretentious behaviour. These actions created incomplete conversion.

4.4 The Influence of the Belief in Mystical Powers on the Bemba Catholics and its Implication for the Catholic Faith

This part responds to the research question on how the belief in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology influences the Bemba Catholics. It also investigated how these influences affected the Catholic tenets held by the Bemba Catholics who still hold onto the ATR belief in mystical powers. The study also endeavoured to establish the implications of the influences the belief in mystical powers had on the Bemba Catholics on Catholicism in Mpika. The researcher deduced the following themes from the data set. The first theme was ancestor veneration through the practice of child naming and its rituals. The second theme was the consultation with the diviners and witch hunters. The third theme was consultation with witch doctors and traditional healers. The fourth theme was practising traditional healing and medicine. The fifth theme was the use of traditional medicine. The sixth theme is the suspicions and fear of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. The seventh theme was practising witchcraft, sorcery and magic. The eighth theme was practising witchcraft, sorcery and magic. The ninth theme was the use of oaths, vows and

curses. The tenth theme was fear of oaths and vows and curses. The last theme was the performance of mystic-related rituals.

Most participants across the target groups argued that the belief in mystical powers influenced the Bemba Catholics' 'worldview' of life phenomena such as suffering, happiness, death, misfortunes and sickness. However, the majority of participants claimed this influence on worldview was superstitious. Priest C asserted that the belief in mystical powers by the Bemba Catholics led them to practise and engage in superstitious activities such as witchcraft, magic, traditional healing/medicine, cursing and others. Moreover, they regarded this influence as just superstitious behaviours expressed through practising and engaging in mystical activities. Both idealised influences of mystical powers on Bemba Catholics were popular ideas among the participants. The participants regarded the two influences as inseparable and that the influence on the worldview of life phenomena such as suffering, happiness, death, misfortunes and sickness led to expressions such as ancestor veneration, consulting diviners, consulting witch doctors or traditional healers and practising and using of traditional medicines and so on. A typical and detailed influence of the belief in the Bemba traditional religious mystical powers on Bemba Catholics in Mpika representative of the worldview and behavioural characteristics is given below.

4.4.1 Ancestor Veneration through the Practice of Child-naming and its Rituals

Despite being converted to Catholicism, the research has discovered that some Bemba Catholics still hold on to the belief in mystical powers through their manifestation of the behaviour that imparted on how they lived their Catholic faith in the communities. Priest D argued that the belief in the malign and benign characteristics of the ancestral spirits by the Bemba Catholics influences them to name their children after their ancestors, the view majority of participants held. He argued that with the benign characteristics of the mystical powers, there was an assurance of protection, good health, and prosperity to the child named after a given ancestral spirit. However, not picking the name of a malign ancestral spirit for a child, then the child was feared for misfortunes and curses in the future.

The majority of participants attested that the child-naming ritual was an act of ancestor veneration, which they linked to the belief that ancestral spirits had powers to influence a child's future life. Participant 7 postulated that the remembrance of the dead members of the family through child naming and the ceremonies around it were enshrined in Bemba culture and belief about mystical powers. Priest B added that the Bemba people brought back the names of their dead relatives to continue the dead person's spirit in the newborn child. He also added that the belief in the representation of the spirit of the dead relative in a newborn child, bearing the name was a belief in the existence of mystical powers. To show the extent of this practice, priest A stated:

Some Bemba Catholics are adamant about bringing back the names of their dead members of the family. During baptism, we encounter some challenges as far as ancestral names are concerned. The church has a practice that children who have undergone catechism take up the names of saints or biblical names before baptism for their first names. However, this creates a challenge for families that want to hold on to ancestral names with some sort of significance. However, even when parents are convinced to take up the Christian names, which are optional by now, parents, still maintain middle names (*amashina yapa mutoto*) from their ancestors.

To ascertain the linkage between child naming ritual(s) and the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers, most respondents expressed that the notion and activities involved in naming a child such as consulting with the witch-doctor or diviner and ritualistic activities to summon the guest spirits were evidence enough to refer to it as a mystical activity. Participant 20 added, "There is a belief in our tradition that ancestors, through dreams and divination, ask to be reincarnated in a newborn member of the family or else the family faces the rough of the ancestral spirits." Apart from the influence of practising the adoption of ancestral names as per tradition and culture, some said that very often, Bemba Catholics held this tradition out of fear of the mysterious consequences if they did not. The respondents from all samples spoke of the existence of many rumours in their communities about the mysterious punishment of families and children by their ancestors for not obeying their demand of maintaining their names.

4.4.2 Consultation with the Diviners and Witch Hunters

Despite many years of Catholic evangelisation some Bemba Catholics still consult with diviners and witch hunters, this may imply that the catholic faith has not yet sunken into the hearts of some Bemba Catholics. Most of the participants shared the idea that the belief in mystical powers influenced the Bemba Catholics of the Mpika district. Many respondents shared the view that the belief in mystical powers influenced many Bemba Catholics to indulge in activities that reflected and strengthened their beliefs. Many argued that believing in mystical powers created in them the fear of the mystical powers and the desire to know their effects on their lives. In this vein, priest C narrated:

Some Bemba Catholics from this parish are reported to have visited the diviners for consultations, especially in times of prolonged and unexplained sicknesses, death perceived as ‘mysterious’, and calamities following their families. I attribute this behaviour to their belief in witchcraft and magic powers. Despite the retributions from the church of these sinful behaviours, people do not seem to refrain from them. I must admit however that, these practices are done in privacy, the oral reports received are mostly regarded as hearsays except where matters reach the courts and they record such cases as in cases of witch-hunting and witchcraft suspicions, Otherwise it is a tricky situation.

Several participants shared the same view with the previous interviewee that some Bemba Catholics were believed to consult with the diviners. However, some respondents argued that the Bemba Catholic’s involvement with divination and witch-hunting ended not only at consultation but also that some practised divination. A Unanimous number of the participants expressed high levels of superstition among Bemba people, which they said led to diviner-seeking behaviours. Participant 5 narrates, “Some of our fellow Catholics have been suspected and entangled in the witch-hunt, the old people and the young with unexplained riches or explicit desires for riches and power are culprits of these suspicions.” Some respondents however felt that witch-hunting did not end with bringing in the witch-finder to the community or family, which they said did not happen

very often of late but through pointing fingers and suspecting each other of practising witchcraft, magic and occult rites. The behaviour many said divided families and communities.

Several participants expressed a similar view that having a belief in mystical powers influenced them to seek divination. To affirm the above assertion, participant 13 gave a particular experience of how her belief in mystical powers influenced her to consult with a diviner. She narrated:

I was once forced to consult diviners and witch doctors because I needed answers to my problems. I sought answers to my problems for a long time from one place to another, church to church, but to no avail. Even if I could not find the solution to my problems, at least I should have the answers to my questions of why I am going through these misfortunes and what the source of my problems is! Finally, through divination and consultation with the witch doctors, I feel I got the answers now.

Priest D opined that the belief in the supernatural powers of Bemba Catholics made them believe that the diviners and witch hunters had powers to solve their problems and provide answers to their questions; this led them to seek help, protection and answers from them.

4.4.3 Consultation with Witchdoctors and Traditional Healers

Regardless of knowing very well that the Catholic Church prohibits its members from consulting with witch doctors and traditional healers some Bemba Catholics still do. In this vein, the participants unanimously responded that the belief in mystical powers by Bemba Catholics influenced them to consult with traditional healers and witch doctors. Priest A observed that Bemba Catholics undoubtedly believed in the healing power of God but believed more in his healing powers endowed upon traditional healers, and in healing methods mystically disclosed to them alone. In line with the above assertions, participant 5 narrated:

They are illnesses and health problems that are unsolvable by modern medicines, doctors and prayers. The illnesses and health conditions that are of the doing of humans such as witches and sorcerers are untreatable by modern and scientific means the church wants us to use. We have many cases where modern medicines cannot solve a health issue, later on, prayer while witch doctors and traditional healers with their traditional healing methods solve it instantaneously, so we consult traditional healers because of their effectiveness.

Participant 18 argued that traditional healing had always been part of their culture and tradition and that it was always going to remain so. When asked whether they found their involvement in the consultation with witch doctors and traditional healers contradicting their Catholic faith and teachings, many said that consulting traditional healers and using traditional healing methods did not go in contrary to God's law but in tune with Mother Nature. To support the above point, participant 7 contended, "It's said in our culture as Bemba people that, *kwimba kati kusansha nales.*" This is translated, as 'God must be involved in the digging of natural herbs' signifying that herbs have God's blessings. Participant 10 aligned her argument with the previous interviewee as she emphasised the point that God gave traditional medicines to traditional healers and humans to protect. She emphasised that they were not evil.

4.4.4 Practice of Traditional Healing and Medicine

Although the Catholic Church has claimed to provide healing through its sacraments for its faithful the Bemba Catholics still hold on to traditional ways of healing. For instance, participant 20 who later revealed that he was a traditional medicine practitioner in confidence explained how important traditional medicine was to the Bemba people and how some Bemba Catholics secretly visited him to collect these medicines and consult on various issues. He also emphasised how justifiable the practice was and how it was part of the culture. He narrated:

Many fellow Bemba Catholics come for help of different sorts. The most common issues that people bring to me for help are infertility, mental illnesses and marital related. I provide herbs

and healing depending on the problem and in consultation with the spirits. I do not find practising traditional healing and medicine as a sin but as a service to people. The spirits of my ancestors have chosen me to be of service to my people, just as a modern doctor is to people.

He further noticed that some Bemba Catholics actively practised traditional medicine, although in hiding for fear of the church's retribution. Many participants expressed the same view that some Bemba Catholics practised traditional healing and medicine, though in secret.

4.4.5 Use of Traditional Medicine

Many participants admitted that many Bemba Catholics use traditional medicine despite denouncing it publicly and professing faith in the healing power of God. For instance, participant 15 acknowledged his use of traditional medicine, but like many other interviewees, he declined to have consulted with the witch doctor and traditional healers or medicine men and women. However, he emphasised the presence of mystical powers in the herbs. He narrated:

I do not consult with traditional healers or witch doctors, but I use traditional medicines and I feel they are very effective for there is power in these herbs. It seems the entire world is realising the importance of reconnecting with Mother Nature, to be one with her and benefit from her mysterious wonders of its supernatural healing power. I do not condemn members of the church who consult with the traditional healers, I only condemn the use of *Ifishimba* (concoctions) which is the mixture of herbs and rituals that summon spirits to inhabit those herbs and rare objects and animal or human body parts. Otherwise, traditional medicine and traditional healers are a cultural heritage and knowledge that we must preserve dearly for future generations.

A convincing number of participants expressed that many Bemba Catholics involved themselves in using traditional medicines because they believed that those traditional medicines possessed mystical powers to heal illnesses caused by evil people. To affirm

these assertions, participant 3 stated that Bemba people believed that some sicknesses emerged from evil spirits and witches. Hence, this created a belief that the solution to these sicknesses and health conditions was traditional medicine. In affirmation of the above assertions, participant 8 related, “We Bemba Catholics believe in God’s healing powers through prayer and his church but we believe as well that he heals us through nature and herbs.” Some participants expressed their belief that God enshrined mystical powers in traditional medicines.

Participant 3 adamantly asserted, “I find traditional medicines to be more effective with sicknesses and health conditions caused by the evil powers than hospitals or prayers from the priests.” Besides, participant 11 postulated that a huge number of the Bemba Catholics used herbal medicines either through consultation with the witch doctors or medicine men and women or through self-subscription. Most of the participants aired a related view that there was a belief in the presence of mystical powers in herbs and nature. In addition, most of the participants opined that the belief that the traditional healers possessed mystical powers influenced the Bemba Catholics into using traditional medicine. The use of traditional medicines was indicative of how much faith Bemba Catholics had lost in the healing sacraments of the church.

4.4.6 Suspicions and Fear of Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

It was a common response across all the target groups that the belief in mystical powers led Bemba Catholics to suspect witches, sorcerers and magical practices in their communities. Priest A stated that he had observed in his many years of service in his Mpika rural parish that Bemba Catholics took misfortunes, suffering and death as acts of ‘*Ubuloshi* or *Ubwanga*’ (witchcraft, sorcery and magic). He further observed that the belief in supernatural powers by the entire Bemba tribe, Bemba Catholics inclusive, was very strong and it did not seem to slow down. While priest A observed that Bemba Catholics still held a strong belief in the existence of witchcraft, sorcery and magic, which he felt, influenced their behaviour of consulting diviners and use of charms to protect themselves from the harm believed to be caused by the witches and sorcerers.

This caused many suspicions in the community. Correspondingly, Participant 17 highlighted:

We have to protect family, possessions and ourselves from witchcraft, sorcery and magic. There are a lot of evil men and women who harm innocent people out of jealousy of their prosperity. People here even fear educating their children or leading a decent life to avoid attracting evil people to them. Just from infancy, we are mortified through tattooing and wearing charms and amulets just to protect ourselves.

Participant 19 affirmed all the above assertions and observations as she declared his use of some protective charms and fetish to protect his retail business from witches and thieves who used magic to mysteriously steal or curse businesses. She also acknowledged that she used protective charms to protect his house, property and family from harm by the witches, wizards and sorcerers. He believed that doing that made him and his family feel safer, go by their daily business-resting assured of their protection. Participant 2 hypothesised that the above disclosures suggested that the practice of using protective charms and pointing fingers at the witch or wizard in a community only confirmed how suspicious of witchcraft, sorcery and magic people were. Priest B affirmed the above hypothesis by relating unaccountable moments he received complaints and reports about witches and sorcerers terrorizing the village.

4.4.7 Tattooing and use of Charms

Even though many Bemba Catholics confessed their faith in the protection of Angels and Jesus against evil spirits, several participants confirmed to have once had tattoos, especially as infants for protection. To affirm this assertion, participant 5 said, “During infancy, childhood and adulthood tattoos ‘Inembo’ are cut in our skins to heal us from certain illnesses and to protect us from bad magic, bad luck and witchcraft.” She further stated that Bemba people believed that those tattoos protected them from bad magic, witchcraft and sorcery. While participant 9 narrated, “I am not afraid of witchcraft, sorcery or magic because they fortified me as a baby through ‘Inembo’, charms and curses cannot work on me.”

Participants from Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders believed some Bemba Catholics used charms in one or two circumstances to either better their lives or affect other people's lives. The participants made a general impression that charms were the most used items of magical powers that were mainly used for good fortune in life. To affirm the above assertions, participant 14 asserted that:

We have observed and witnessed some of our fellow Bemba Catholic marketers put charms under their tables either to attract more customers to their stands or to protect them from losing their goods mysteriously. Some shop owners use '*Ilomba*' a snake-like magical creature that magically steals from others and charms to attract customers to their businesses.

Bemba Catholic participants reported that some Catholic men, women, girls and boys use charms most worn, smeared or sprayed on the body, put in food and sometimes they put on amulets to achieve their desires. They further typified that married women used charms to make their husbands love them more or stop certain behaviours such as unfaithfulness, overdrinking, and coming late at night while men used charms to protect their wives from other men. Boys used charms to attract girls and the girls likewise. Both men and women used charms in many events of life, such as promotion at the workplace, winning competitions, destroying marriages they were jealous of and many other acts.

4.4.8 Practice of Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

Like many other Catholic priests and Bemba Catholic participants, priest D narrated his experience with the influence of believing in mystical powers by his Bemba parishioners during his years as a priest of a rural parish. He emphasised the cases of suspicion and implications of some members of witchcraft practice. He narrated:

There are many suspicions about some of our Bemba Catholics' involvement with witch hunting, suspicions of witches or sorcerers and some of our Bemba Catholic members are implicated in the practice of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. Some of these cases go as far as local courts. However, I must

admit that these cases are not as rampant as they used to be in the past in our neighbouring rural communities.

The majority of Bemba Catholics' of the FGDs expressed how deep-rooted the belief in destructive powers of mystical powers was. Some felt that some Bemba Catholics practised witchcraft, sorcery and magic to harm innocent people. Additionally, participant 6 narrated:

I do truly believe that there are some evil people, who cannot bear to see others happy or prosper in society, they use magic and witchcraft to harm innocent people's lives including their goods and property and these people are even close to us, some are even members of our church. They are the enemies of progress. For example, the hammer mill I bought after my permission could hardly work in this area but it worked perfectly well, from where I lived before and it works well when taken outside this area. It seems some people do not want to see me develop.

Priest A opined that many Bemba Catholics stayed in fear and resorted to the use of charms to protect themselves and their property because of their belief that there are evil people in society who do others harm. He further asserted that where Bemba Catholics believed that magic could better their lives then they resorted to visiting witch doctors to collect lucky charms for success in specific areas of their lives, such charms as riches, marriage, sports and so on.

4.4.9 Use of Oaths and Vows, and Curses

Priest A indicated that from time to time, the charismatic movement (a Catholic prayer group) addresses cases of curses, oaths, and vows that need undoing. He further added that many of the visitors that go there express issues of broken oaths and vows made to their ancestors and relatives before they died and that they felt as if they were living the consequences of the broken vows and oaths, especially when things were going bad in their lives. He also confirmed that many requests made to the charismatic movement for deliverance were bondages from evil spirits and curses.

Participant 1 ascertained these assertions made by the priest by saying that Bemba traditions explained some sicknesses and misfortunes as consequences of curses and broken oaths and vows. She further said, “It’s believed in our culture that there are mysterious powers in the word used to bless or curse someone. Many people curse others, parents curse their children and some make vows and oaths.” To affirm the above assertion, participant 13 said, “If someone wished you something bad, and it came to pass, then that person could be summoned upon and be asked to remove that curse.” Besides, most participants from the Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders emphasised that elderly people made curses that were more dangerous. Participant 7 also said, “In our culture oaths and vows are considered being spiritually binding.” To which participant 10 added, “Usually we make oaths and vows when we are making promises, mainly to assure people we are telling the truth.” Most of the Bemba Catholic participants admitted their beliefs and the occasional use of vows, oaths and curses.

4.4.10 Fear of Oaths and Vows, and Curses

Priest C felt that the belief in mystical powers within the spoken word of oath and vow created fear and anxiety in the Bemba people to the point of justifying their fear and anxiety. He further added that sometimes there were cases of accusations of people cursing, making evil oaths and vows in the community. However, priest B felt that there was a positive side to the influence of these beliefs, such as that of saving a community from deceitfulness because people could not afford the punitive consequences of false vows and oaths. He argued that it in return, promoted virtues such as truthfulness and faithfulness. He also noted that the employment of oaths and vows helped settle disputes in the community.

On the other hand, most Bemba Catholic participants expressed the belief that Bemba people used the curse to harm other people. They also stated that the fear of curses, oaths and vows seemed to have come from the belief in the presence of mystical powers in them. Most of the Bemba Catholics interviewed expressed fear of elderly people, witches and sorcerers that they believed wished people bad luck through the spoken word. Some participants asserted that making oaths and vows entailed agreeing with ancestral spirits

and other spirits, which had fatal consequences on the person pronouncing them. Participant 6 narrated the fears created by the belief in the mystical elements of the spoken word, he stated, “Curses, vows and oaths have terrible consequences, which is why people protect themselves from these consequences by fortifying and protecting themselves with charms, amulets and tattoos against those made against them.”

4.4.11 Performance of Mystical Related Traditional Rituals

Besides their performance of Catholic rituals at mass, Bemba Catholics still go and perform mystic traditional rituals. All participants across all samples expressed the belief that Bemba Catholics were involved in ritual performances of some sort. Some alleged that some Bemba Catholic farmers were involved in farming rituals where they planted charms and fetishes to (magically protect) their fields from magic stealing by the use of the magical creatures *Amalomba* or magic believed to be sent to magically steal other people’s goods. They were believed to perform agricultural-related rituals such as planting rituals, first fruit rituals and taboos and harvest rituals. To affirm these claims, participant 19 narrated:

Some Catholic farmers in this community perform some rituals in their fields. Before they plant their seed, they spray and plant charms and fetishes and hang other quack objects accompanied by some rituals performed by a witch doctor or the owners of the field. The same thing also happens before eating the first fruit and harvesting is done. Sometimes spells are made to prevent magical stealing.

Participant 16 stated that some Bemba Catholics performed rituals that involved pregnancy, birth, child naming, marriage, childbearing and death. While participant 8 added that these rituals were performed for blessing and protecting the people and elements involved from witches, sorcerers magic and spell using magic. In agreeing with this statement, traditional leader J stated:

Some Bemba Catholics are believed to have performed some rituals to bear a child, to get married, to prevent an evil eye on the unborn child, to prevent problems during childbirth and

when naming a child. Some of them plant charms and other traditional medicines in their new homes, barns and other goods. Some perform rituals during birth, marriage and death. We heard and seen some invite witch doctors to perform rituals at the beginning of every new endeavour they embark on and others are simply suspected because of their success.

To affirm the above statements, participant 14 narrated, “During my first pregnancy some rituals were performed, tattoos made and herbs taken to prevent magical miscarriage, prevent giving birth to a physically disabled child or stillborn.” Participants asserted that these actions were due to their belief that some bad people, mostly relatives who did not wish them well and planned evil things about them and their progress.

Some participants alleged that some Bemba Catholic professionals were also believed to perform certain mystical related rituals to secure promotions, protect their positions or jobs, to enhance their performance or sales in a business as merchants. Participant 3 claimed, “Some Bemba Catholic teachers, nurses, soldiers, clergy and rest and those in skill-based professions such as farming, carpentry, fishing, trade perform some sort of rituals where magical charms are involved.” In affirming these allegations, participant 15 asserted:

There have been some cases of some Bemba Catholic professionals bathing in traditional medicines outside their offices or business premises or farms, inviting a witch doctor to the offices to perform some rituals and inviting elders of the family to perform a ritual on a newly acquired job or endeavour or acquisition.

The majority of participants conveyed the belief that some Bemba Catholics were involved in performing rituals around the health of individuals and families. They engaged themselves in performing rituals that involved the invocation of mystical powers for protection, blessing and healing purposes. Some participants were very convinced that there were rituals believed to prolong life, dodge death and prevent death from happening and they believed that there were people in their community who were suspected of prolonging their lives using these rituals. To confirm these allegations and beliefs,

participant 4 narrated, “Some old people and young people are believed to possess magic snakelike creatures *Amalomba* that were materially and magically created out of some mystical rituals to prolong the owner’s life among functions.” Most of the participants agreed to share the same belief and some of them even claimed to have seen these creatures during a witch-hunt. These behaviours conflict with the catholic faith that has been taught to the Bemba Catholics since the coming of the missionaries. The continued influence of the belief in mystical powers is an indication of how strong these traditional beliefs are on the local Catholics and their effects on their new faith.

4.5 The Local Catholic Church’s Response to the Bemba Catholics’ Belief in Bemba Mystical Powers

The following themes emerged from the research question of how the Catholic Church responded to Bemba catholics’ belief in Bemba traditional religious mystical powers. The first theme was sensitization on the dangers of the belief and practice of mystical powers. The second was suspension from partaking in the sacraments and church activities. The third was inculturation. The last theme is dialogue.

4.5.1 Sensitization of the Dangers of the Belief and Practice of Mystical Powers

The participants across the samples stated that the church discouraged its members from partaking in traditional practices such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic and traditional medicines. Priest D emphasised that the church recognised the seriousness of the Bemba Catholics’ relentless tendencies of believing and practising activities related to mystical powers. However, the church was ready to combat this behaviour. He stated:

We acknowledge that our members are very much attached to the belief in the presence of mystical energies, hence lured into entertaining practices such as divination, witchcraft, witch-hunting and the use of traditional medicine. Nevertheless, the church is up to the task of discouraging such behaviours by using all available media from homilies, secular, radio programmes, social media and others.

This claim seems to find unanimous support by Bemba Catholics in the FGDs who expressed that the church was doing everything possible to discourage the behaviour of the church members from engaging in mystical activities by sensitising them about the dangers of such activities. They stated, “The church is very strong at discouraging our belief in mystical powers and later on our involvement in traditional practices that manifest these powers.” This is in line with other Bemba Catholics in one-to-one interviews who stated that the church discouraged them from the belief and practice of elements of mystical powers such as witchcraft, sorcery and magic for their adverse results in enmity and confusion amongst believers and the community at large.

4.5.2 Suspension from Partaking in Sacraments and Church Activities

A few Bemba Catholic participants cited rare incidences where some fellow members of the local church received prohibitions from some sacraments and church activities due to suspicions that they participated in elements of mystical powers such as witchcraft, witch-hunting and divination and others. However, some argued that that only happened in extreme circumstances. Several Bemba Catholics opined that this church’s response was more about teaching the members to refrain from such activities than punishing them. However, participant 15 narrated; “The church regards the belief and practice of divination, traditional healing and witch-hunting as evil activities. I feel this disrespects our traditions and cultures.” Moreover, several Bemba Catholics expressed a similar view that the church seemed to lack understanding of how important it was to the Bemba people to know what caused their suffering, death and other problems. He added, “After the death of my son, as a family, we visited a diviner to find out what caused the death of our healthy son, so when church leaders got wind of this, they removed us from leadership positions we held and the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.” When asked about these allegations, some priests affirmed it although denied its frequent use as a disciplinary method. Most priests interviewed expressed the need to create sanity and order in the church by reinforcing its teachings’ stance on its members’ indulgence in beliefs and practices that did not reflect the Catholic faith and teachings.

4.5.3 Inculturation

While some priests expressed stiffer measures for dealing with their members who believed and practised in the manifestations of mystical powers, others championed more mutual approaches to deal with the problem, such as inculturation and dialogue. Several Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders confirmed that the local church had been engaging in inculturation, though it had a long way to go. Certain Bemba Catholics and priests complained about the selectiveness of the church with the inculturation of the Bemba cultural and religious elements in Catholicism. The priests who were pro-inculturation argued:

The belief in mystical powers by some of our members is a big problem. We pay little attention to it because it does not mean much to us. Yet, it is a big problem faced in our pastoral activities. The belief is deeply rooted in our people, hence making it difficult for them to let go. A mutual understanding and acceptance of their indigenous beliefs can be of help in curbing the problem. It is common sense that the Bemba members of our church, like any other African members of our church, find it conflicting that the church believes in supernatural powers such as the holy spirits and embraces the interceding and influencing powers of the saints. However, the church denies their belief in mystical powers' ability to influence their lives and the position of the ancestors to intercede for them and label them as evil. [Consolidated interview with priests]

However, priest C argued, “Some of the local beliefs such as constructive concepts about God, nature, oneness of nature and humans have been inculturated into our belief system.” Priest B narrated, “Bemba traditional music, dance and offertory celebrations have been adopted in our liturgy to explain some Catholic faith and beliefs.” Although he quickly pointed out that, the Church had incorporated no beliefs of mystical powers in the Catholic faith and that he believed that the church in Africa was still a long way from achieving that.

4.5.4 Dialogue

Some Bemba Catholics and most Catholic priests interviewed asserted that the church had been engaging in dialogue with traditionalists and hardly with its members, who were the real victims of the belief and practice. However, this was a preferred approach by most priests in handling the belief in mystical powers by some Bemba Catholics, the belief that later influenced them to indulge and practise in the believed manifestations of those powers. Most participants expressed the need for mutual understanding from both the church and the members to find the best solution on how to end the problem of dual religiosity. To affirm the above allegations, priest D claimed:

Although the church is now engaging in dialogues with different beliefs outside the Church, it gave little attention to people within the church that may have conflicting beliefs. The best example is this issue of church members holding onto both the church beliefs and their traditional beliefs, in this case, the belief in supernatural powers. The church is doing less to enforce dialogue within itself than outside, but I think we are going somewhere.

Several Bemba Catholics expressed the view that the dialogue propagated by the Church was only in its interest to champion its belief and undermine the Bemba people's traditional beliefs they have cherished for years. Participant 8 acknowledged the progress made by the church as far as the handling of traditional beliefs of local Catholics was concerned. Like many other participants, she acknowledged the efforts made by the Catholic Church over time in dialogue, she said, "Today's Catholic Church exhibits some desirable levels of tolerance of its members' engagement in traditional beliefs and practices which she 'the church' gladly labelled as pagan since the coming of the missionaries to Africa." However, some other participants were still sceptical about the intention of that tolerance expressed through theological languages, such as dialogue and inculturation. Many of these participants argued that these efforts would bring about syncretism and total absorption of the Bemba traditional religion and heritage. Besides, some priests and Bemba Catholics claimed that the church was not doing enough as far as

tolerance and dialogue were concerned; they suggested that the church needed to do more by engaging first its members in talks about issues of conflicting beliefs.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the data yielded by the research field findings guided by the research questions. The chapter has responded to how the Bemba people account for the existence of mystical powers. It has also reported the influence the belief in mystical powers has on the Bemba Catholics. The chapter has provided reasons Bemba Catholics believe in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology. It has further provided the local Catholic Church's response to its members' continued belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology. The next chapter discusses and analyses the data presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

The previous chapter has presented the field findings of this research. This chapter discusses the research findings presented in the previous chapter. It provides a detailed analysis of the data gathered and presented. The research deployed thematic framework analysis in the discussion of the findings and development of themes from the data set. Hence, the formulated themes aided the presentation of the discussion through the guidance of the research objectives which were, firstly to explore the beliefs in mystical powers of Bemba cosmology present in the 21st century Mpika district. Secondly to account for the persistence of the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology in the 21st century Mpika district. Thirdly to investigate the influence the belief in mystical powers has on the Bemba Catholics of Mpika district and its implication for the Catholic faith. Lastly to examine the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholic's belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba traditional religious cosmology in Mpika district

5.2 The Beliefs in Mystical Powers of Bemba Cosmology Present in Mpika District

The research has demonstrated that mystical powers in Bemba society even today in the twenty-first century have a deeper religious notion of the world and things that happen in it, daily. Despite the modernity and secularisation in Mpika district ATR still seemed to influence the Bemba people. Despite the many years of Christian proselytising the ATR still hold vivacity among the modern Bemba people. The study has availed that beliefs, rituals, experiences, and emotional, ethical and social aspects all surround the Bemba society. The world of mystical powers is a cultural domain of the Bemba people's daily experiences. Bemba people believe in powers that go as far as the universe and that these impersonal powers control all human events. This was demonstrated through one priest's elucidation that the Bemba ideology of mystical powers entailed a religious belief in supernatural powers that encompassed the entire world and things that regularly

happened in it. Priest A who asserted that the world of Bemba people's daily experiences was culturally a world of mystical powers supported this. The following traditional leader F's assertion confirmed this, "We Bemba people believe in powers that go as far as the universe and that these impersonal powers control all human events. We also believe that these powers have good and bad natures." Similarly, Gehman (2005) described mystical powers as impersonal supernatural powers that pervade the universe, as a force that operates behind all human activities in the world and as a force that acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil. In addition, he stated that these powers influenced the daily lives of people in the believing community.

Bemba people believe that mystical powers have benevolent and malevolent natures. They also believe in the ability of mystical powers to take possession of objects, humans and nature. They believe these powers can be moved from one object to another and from person to person. Mbiti (1999) acknowledged the efficiency and the stability of inhibited mystical powers in their divergence forms of object to object and person to person. Besides, he observed that the Bantu people shared a belief that some objects and persons are more powerful than others or more endowed with mystical powers. This merges the finding that Bemba people believe there are people in society who possess these powers and they influence everything else.

5.2.1 The Presence of Evil in the World

The findings of this investigation show that in the Bemba traditions and worldview, the existence of evil in the world proves the existence of mystical powers. Bemba people attach sufferings, misfortunes and death to supernatural causes, creating a metaphysical conception of evil, suffering and death rather than a physical conception. The expression of the view that evil in the world was the reason behind the belief in the existence of mystical powers in the Bemba tradition by all participants from in-depth interviews and FGDs proved this. For instance, participant 6 stipulated that the existence of evil in the world made him believe in the existence of external forces that brought evil and suffering to the world. While participant 12 opined that looking at the evils committed and present in her community and the world, she could surely say that there were evildoers behind

them. These assertions were précised in priest C's view that emphasised the philosophy of causality that he felt Bemba people attached to misfortunes of life and how this philosophy likely influenced their behaviour towards other people in the community.

Hinfelaar's (2007) observation that the belief in mystical powers revolved out to be the way of elucidating much of the Bemba people's sufferings and misfortunes sat well with these findings. The Bemba traditional religion explained evil in the world as the result of encounters between evil and good forces, which make use of humans as their combat zone (Oger, 1991). Given these literary and research results, the research has argued that the fact that there is evil in the world creates a causal-effect worldview in Bemba people; that there is a cause to evil, probably a force outside human capacity, and that this cause must be the enemy of goodness,

5.2.2 Unseen World as the Source of Mystical Powers

The findings from this study have disclosed that Bemba people share religious cosmology amongst themselves that expresses the belief in the existence of the unseen world and that it is the source of mystical powers. Many participants expressed the belief that the spiritual world comprised *Imipashi* 'the spirits of both dead humans and non-humans.' For a case in point, participant 9 asserted that Bemba people believed in the presence of the unseen world, otherwise known as the spiritual world. To which traditional leader J added that Bemba people believed that some people such as witch doctors, witch-finders, witches and sorcerers had access to the physically unseen world and tapped into the supernatural powers. He also added that was because people believed that the spiritual world was the source of the supernatural powers. There was a mere division between the seen (physical world) and the unseen domains and the existence of the spirits and humans were lived in the wholeness between the two realities (Mbiti, 1969). The Bemba people further believe that both worlds of humans and spirits are in relentless interaction with each other. There was a belief in the existence of the unseen world among the Bemba people also revealed this reality of the existence of spirits and that personalities in both realms interact with each other (Fuller, 2001)

5.2.3 Communication with the Unseen World

The research has demonstrated that Bemba people believe in the existence of some sort of communication between the seen world and the unseen world. They believe that there are people in society who act as intermediaries between the people and the mystic world. Among those people are the witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men and women.

Many participants from one-to-one interviews and FGDs expressed this belief. One such case scenario is where participant 14 acknowledged that the belief in the ability of witch doctors and medicine men and women to communicate with the spirits of ancestors and inhuman spirits was very strong in Bemba tradition. She added by citing legendary stories and folktales of how the ancestors communicated with the long-deceased members of the community for everything from asking for protection, fertility of the land, rains and prevention of diseases. Traditional leader G affirmed this narrative by asserting those witch doctors, medicine men and women were the best examples of individuals in their society who communicated with the spirit world. Indeed ATR had representatives who communicated with gods and spirits on behalf of individuals and the community (Magesa, 1998). According to Fuller (2001), the individual members of the African traditional religion also could connect with the invisible world. This relates to the research's discovery that some ordinary Bemba people also passage into the unseen realm during dreams, visions, or trances and at near death. The communication between the two worlds means requesting supernatural powers, revelations, protection and fertility of the land, rains and prevention of diseases. According to Mbiti (1999, the communication between the seen and the unseen worlds took many forms, such as prayers, incantations, sacred objects and incense.

5.2.4 Spirits as the Possessors and Dispensers of Mystical Powers

5.2.4.1 Human and Non-human Spirits

The research has established that Bemba people believe that there are two types of spirit beings: which are the ancestral spirits/spirits of the dead and the non-human spirit beings. Many participants across all the samples acknowledged this. For example, according to

traditional leader H, Bemba religious traditions accounted for two types of spirit beings, which are the ancestral spirits and spirits of the dead, and the non-human spirit beings. Mbiti (1999) promulgated the two broad categories of the spirit world in African cosmology, which are non-human spirits and the spirits of the dead. Bemba people believe these spirits possess and dispense mystical powers experienced by the Bemba people. Mwewa (1977) indicated a related view that traditional Bemba people believed in *Imipashi* (spirits beings) which were believed to be so powerful and dispensed magic powers to some members of the community. They believe that the reality and destiny of the people are profoundly rooted in the spirit world and the spirit beings govern all social and spiritual phenomena through their actions.

5.2.4.2 Benevolent and Malevolent Spirits

The results of this study have indicated that Bemba people believe that all spirit beings keep certain neutral, impersonal powers. That is to mean they possess both good and bad qualities that allow them to do either good or harm. Bemba people believe that there are two types of spirit beings, good spirits and bad spirits. However, it is not clear whether there are spirits that are naturally good or evil, or whose identity depends on the prevalent particular quality. Traditional leader F who identified himself as a medicine man said that Bemba people believed bad spirits possessed and harmed people while good spirits provided and protected people, evidencing this discovery. He further stated that the bad spirits were manipulated or employed by bad people in society such as the witches, sorcerers and wizards while the good spirits did good to people. These assertions were encapsulated in the assertions of traditional leader I that the Bemba people believed witch-doctors, rainmakers and medicine men and women used good magic for the good of the people. According to Magesa (1997), all spirit beings possessed certain mysterious powers and some people used them on others for good or harm. Bemba people on one hand have a resilient belief in a phenomenon where people believed to be witches, sorcerers and wizards manipulate and employ bad spirits to influence life in the community. Mlenga (2004) postulated comparable findings of the realm of the

supernatural operating mystical powers, which humans were then deployed in or as magic, witchcraft, sorcery and many other ways to influence the course of human life.

Bemba people believe the environment, nature and other resources inhibit spirits, hence regard them in higher esteem. They also believe that nature such as trees, rocks, mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, and animals shelter supernatural powers. In addition, they believe these powers inhibit human beings, objects, charms and amulets. According to Mbiti (1999), in the ATR thought, spirits dwelt or inhabited certain trees, plants, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, animals, human beings, objects, charms, amulets and so forth.

5.2.4.3 Spirits of Ancestors and the Dead

Research has shown that Bemba people believe that the spirits of their dead relatives survive physical death, remain alive and thereafter become spiritual and immortal. Many participants expressed their belief that ancestral spirits had the power to protect them from misfortunes such as famine, droughts, disease and witchcraft. For instance, Participant 10 observed that Bemba people believed that good health, prosperity and success in life came about because of their obedience to and veneration of the ancestral spirits and other spirit beings. Bemba people believe misfortunes such as sickness, suffering and untimely death result from disobedience and failure to respect the spirits. These beliefs were summarised in the words of participant 16 who said, “We Bemba people believe that the spirits of their dead relatives survive physical death and remain alive and that they become spiritual and immortal beings.” He asserted that the ancestral spirits were also believed to have powers to cause misfortunes to people and the community when they got offended or people disobeyed traditions and customs of society of their society. The spirits in ATR thought the deceased transformed into an ancestor taking up a position in the spiritual hierarchy of the ancestors. The ancestral spirits had a dual obligation of protecting their people from problems such as famine, droughts, disease and witchcraft but also punishing people when they live parallel to traditional norms and customs (Murphree, 1969). This corroborates the BTR belief in ancestral

spirits' possession of supernatural powers and does acknowledge their ability to do either good or bad.

Bemba people believe that good health, prosperity and success in life come from their obedience to and veneration of the ancestral spirits and other spirit beings. Conversely, misfortunes such as sickness, suffering and untimely death are results of disobedience and failure to venerate the spirits. Traditional Bantu people believed that subordination and veneration of their ancestral spirits brought about good health, prosperity and success in life while insubordination and disdain caused misfortunes in people's lives (Amanze, 2002).

5.2.5 Manifestation of Mystical Powers in Bemba Cosmology

Research has discovered that Bemba people believe in the manifestation of mystical powers in the world of the living. Participants from across the target groups universally affirmed that mystical powers manifest through divination, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, traditional medicine, charms, oaths, vows and curses.

5.2.5.1 Divination and Diviners

The study has shown that Bemba people believe mystical powers manifest through *Ulubuko* 'divination' as one of the many ways there is. They describe divination as a way of finding out about many things hidden from an ordinary eye, such as spiritual and magical. They believe that through divination, revelations such as ancestral spirits that have re-embodied in a child the cause of death, sickness or other misfortunes, which are mostly attributed to witches and wizards, or sorcerers are made. They believe divination aids in providing a remedy, finding lost items and planning or foretelling the future.

Participants from all target groups ascribed to the belief in the manifestation of mystical powers through divination. This was confirmed in the assertions of priest C that divination was one way in which supernatural powers were shown and it was used to find out about many things hidden from ordinary eyes but clear in the spirit. Participant 3 who yet described the roles of a diviner in society supported this, saying that through

divination the diviners or witch doctors provided medicine, foretold the future, found lost things, interpreted dreams, consulted spirits for revelation and so on. the role of diviners is to interpret dreams, contact spirits for knowledge or intermediate a spirit, provide medicine, foretell futures, consult with spirits and so on (Fuller, 2001).

The research has also reported that the position of the diviners in Bemba society is that of the official interpreters of the ‘will of the ancestral spirits’ and intermediaries between people and the spirit world. Diviners were the interpreters of mystical messages and intermediaries of the people to ancestral spirits (Mbiti, 1969). He introduced medicine men/ women and traditional healers as diviners in the Bantu society in that they diagnose sicknesses, foresees and prescribe medicines. The findings above determined the reality that mystical powers were generally believed to manifest through divination in Africa. Besides, Africans believe divination to be a noble and good use of mystical powers.

5.2.5.2 Witchcraft/Sorcery and Magic

The results of this investigation have shown that Bemba traditions regard *Ubuloshi/Ubwanga* ‘witchcraft, sorcery and magic’ as manifestations of mystical powers. Bemba people shared a strong belief that some people in the society can access mystical powers and use them to manipulate and destroy other people’s property, or even to kill others. They described witchcraft as any use of magical spells, curses and poison to cause accidents, death and misfortunes for others. They believed that witches use medicines and similar substances to cause harm, whereas sorcerers use magic to cause harm to the individual members of the community, families, property and the entire community.

Several participants in the samples overwhelmingly described witchcraft, sorcery and magic as manifestations of mystical powers in Bemba society. They described the belief of the Bemba people in the supernatural as completed and unpackaged through the magic exhibited in witchcraft and sorcery. For instance, priest B asserted that it was a Bemba belief that some amongst them in the community could access mystical powers and use them to manipulate and destroy other people’s property or even kill others. Participant 5 added that often the evil people used magical spells, curses and poison to cause accidents,

death and misfortunes for others and sometimes this was extended to their offenders' possessions. Participant 20 affirmed the above assertions that bad magic, which was also known as black magic, was believed to have been used to cause harm to others or the community recapitulated these findings. The witches/wizards and sorcerers were believed to use this power. According to Garvey (1974), Bemba people had a belief that some people had the ability and knowledge to tap into, control and use mystical forces to destroy the products of others, or to damage or even kill.

The Bemba people believe that magic has two forms good and bad magic. They believe in using good magic for the good of the people and community. Many participants expressed the view that there were two forms of magic. However, participant 11 gave a clear discourse on magic on the question of how mystical powers manifest in society, he said; "We believe the magic in our Bemba culture to be of two types, good magic and bad magic, good magic is for the good of the people and community." He added that the witch doctors, diviners and traditional healers used mystical powers for the good cause, to treat and heal illnesses, and to remove misfortune. Oger's (1991) study indicated that Bemba people believed in the existence of two types of magic, white and black magic. These two types of magic relate directly to good and bad magic respectively. The witch doctors, diviners and traditional healers were believed to use white or good magic for the good cause.

White or good magic is believed to treat and heal illnesses, remove misfortunes, and is employed in exorcism and spelling off powers of witchcraft. This use of white magic was emphasised by Mouton et al. (2015) who stressed the acceptance and esteem white magic receives in African societies and its believed purpose in counteracting misfortunes, and in warding off, diluting and destroying evil power or witchcraft. On the other hand, Mbiti (1991) described black magic as a belief in and practice of tapping and using the power to bring harm to human beings or their property. This study found the belief in black magic more popular among the Bemba people than the belief in white magic because their perception of evil outweighed that of goodness.

5.2.5.3 Traditional Medicine, Witchdoctors and Medicine Men/Women

The research has demonstrated that the Bemba people believed that the witch doctors, medicine men and women, through their administration of traditional medicines, indulge in tapping into mystical powers to use for various reasons. In Bemba tradition, these individuals prepared, prescribed and administered traditional medicines through the directions of the spirits. Bemba people believed the traditional healers were endowed with supernatural powers to enable them to heal the sick, remove misfortunes and grant good health to individuals and communities. Traditional medicines were administered orally, rubbing into cuts on the body, washing the body, worn and keeping around. Sometimes, there was a combination of traditional medicine and magic to make the traditional medicines much stronger and more effective. Such beliefs in witch doctors, medicine men, and women's ability to tap into the mystical powers and that of the magic powers combined with traditional medicine strengthen their conviction that there were mystical powers in traditional medicine. The Bemba people also believe that God created nature from which most traditional medicines came so that people could benefit from it. God created medicine for men, women and witch doctors and gave them the wisdom to discern natural medicines so that they could help the people.

The above findings were demonstrated by overwhelming assertions made by majority members from FGDs and one-to-one interviews. To illustrate this, participant 7 stated, "I believe God created magic powers to help us solve our problems. I feel God created nature so that man can benefit from it." Participant 10 added that Bemba people regarded any traditional substances, charms, herbs or objects used by the medicine men and women or witch doctors to heal or solve a problem as traditional medicine. The assertions that were appraised by participant 13 who accounted that Infants, children and adulthoods all received *Inembo* (tattoos), for healing and from certain illnesses and terrible magic, misfortunes and witchcraft. She added that that was because of a belief that those traditional medicines had intrinsic magical powers to heal and protect from evil magic. The Bemba people believed that God created magic powers in traditional medicines for them to use to solve their problems. Traditional medicine is substances, charms, herbs or

other objects used by the medicine men and women to bring about the desired effect (Oger, 1991).

This investigation has made a novel discovery that in the practice of traditional medicines not only is medicine combined with magic but seldom, herbs combined with other requirements such as rare stones, animal and human body parts, personal stuff or offenders and so on. Bemba tradition refers to them as *Ifishimba* (literary described as concoction). Sometimes the rituals to petition the spirits to come and inhabit the traditional medicines are performed. As a result, traditional medicines go with taboos about their usage, storage and disposal that ought to be followed with caution to avoid consequences.

5.2.5.4 Tattoos and charms

The research has demonstrated that mystical powers manifested in charms and tattoos. Bemba people had a belief in the intrinsic presence of supernatural powers in traditional medicines used in tattoos and charms. Hence, they carried out activities such as *Inembo* on infants, children and adults to heal certain sicknesses and to protect them from bad magic, curses and witchcraft.

A good number of the respondents affirmed their belief in the manifestation of mystical powers in oaths, vows and curses. To exemplify this, participant 10 argued that Bemba people used any traditional substances, charms, herbs or objects to heal or solve a problem provided and as instructed by traditional healers. Which was supported by participant 17 with her argument that medicine men/women, traditional healers and witch-doctors used herbs and natural objects such as rare stones, animal body parts or a combination of them, and transformed them into charms. These are what people then wore on their bodies or put in and around their goods and possessions to protect them from being stolen or bewitched. People who wore objects or herbs around them or put them in their possessions for protection and preservation believed they contained magic powers. In Fuller's (2001) opinion, the Bemba people felt protected by traditional medicines. The Bemba concept of charm was familiar with what was described by Arinze

(1970: 20), a charm was “Any formula, act or object supposed to have the magical power to ward off danger or to bring good luck.” Also, the Bemba people’s conceptualisation of tattoos and charms was similar to Parrinder’s (1949) assertion that in ATR tattoos’ and charms’ were believed to inhibit magic powers. He stated each medicine was believed to contain power or breath of life and might inhibit a spiritual being, a minor god or an impersonal force.

5.2.5.5 Oaths, Vows and Curses

This study has discovered that the Bemba people had a strong belief in the supernatural power of the spoken word. They believed supernatural powers were present in a spoken word that was used to bless or harm other people. A good number of the participants asserted the manifestation of mystical powers in oaths, vows and curses. For instance, participant 11 said that oaths and vows in the Bemba tradition were spiritually binding and had a terrible bearing if messed up. People needed to be careful most of the time with vows and oaths they made because they were likely to face the wrath of the spirits if they did not. Bemba Catholics’ FGDs that argued that Bemba people had an undeniably strong belief in the supernatural powers of a spoken word supported this. The assertion made was that the Bemba people believed in the use of supernatural powers to bless or harm other people. According to Mbiti (1999), Africans believed that there was a mysterious power in the spoken word and this power was benevolent or malevolent. The supernatural power of the spoken word manifested in oaths, vows and curses.

The research has also provided evidence that members of the community, such as the elderly, witches and sorcerers, have more cursing powers. The curses they made very often-needed rituals to be undone. They combined sometimes medicines and rituals to increase cursing powers or/and make them spiritually linking. This finding was familiar with Magesa’s (1998) assertion that sometimes, there was a combination of cursing with medicines and rituals to make the cursing stronger. This meant that undoing curses of this nature required the use of medicines or counter-mystical powers that were more powerful. Bernadi (1959) emphasised that African tradition warned people making vows and curses to be mindful of their punitive consequences. He, however, argued that oaths

and vows often accompanied promises to confirm or give the assurance of the truth in them. He, however, emphasised the positive aspect of vows and oaths by alluding that African people believed that vows and oaths protected a community from deceitfulness, encourage truthfulness and faithfulness and resolve disputes. This concurred with the Bemba people's explanation of the use of oaths and vows as tools for maintaining and promoting peace, truth, and resolving conflicts.

5.3 Accounting for the Bemba Catholics' Belief in the Mystical Powers in the 21st Century Mpika District

The research has substantiated a description of the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology in today's Mpika district and given an explanation they gave to their belief. The results have indicated that Bemba Catholics share in the Bemba religious cosmology of mystical powers with the rest of the Bemba people and traditionalists. This is despite their proclamation of the Catholic faith and teachings and the many years of Catholic evangelisation and absorption of the Catholic faith. Even some of the born and raised Catholics expressed their belief in mystical powers.

These findings were verified by priest D who asserted that Bemba Catholics shared in the totality of the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers with the rest of the tribal mates and traditionalists. He noticed that apart from those who were converted to Catholicism from Bemba traditional religious or traditional practices with no religious significance still showed their enduring belief in the BTR cosmology of mystical power. Traditional leader G consolidated these assertions by stating that the belief in mystical powers was the core belief that explained every phenomenon in the world of the Bemba people and all things that happen to them daily. He emphasised that the belief influenced every 'significant and insignificant daily activity. This meant that they saw their daily experiences in the light of mystical powers. To this effect, some Bemba Catholics claimed that this was the reason it was difficult to abandon such a belief even when they were Christians.

Hinfelaar (2007) asserted that Zambian Catholics believed and practised the ATR elements, of course, for various reasons. However, he showed that these Catholic Christians did that because, in some areas, they perceived these elements to be more effective than Christianity. To this effect, Hinfelaar intended to emphasise the fact that Bemba Catholics did not have a unique belief in mystical powers, but simply shared in the Bemba belief of their traditional religious cosmological reality. According to Garvey (1974), Bemba Catholics were aware of the presence of the supernatural world. Bemba Catholics believed that these powers in the world affected their lives. Yet again, it influenced every significant and insignificant per diem activity.

The study has further shown that Bemba Catholics believe in the presence of mystical powers in witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spell, curse and rituals. They believed that there are people in society that used malevolent mystical powers to cause harm and death to others and their belongings. They believed such people were the personification of evil. They were witches/wizards, sorcerers/sorceresses, bad witch doctors and other ill-hearted people. They also believed in the presence of mystical powers in divination, traditional medicine, traditional healing, magic, charms and rituals. They believed that there were good people in society who used mystical powers benevolently to protect, heal and bless people, land, property and nature. They identified these people as witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men/women, rainmakers, witch-hunters and diviners.

This was proven in one priest's allegations that Bemba Catholics shared in the Bemba belief in the presence of mystical powers in witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spell, curse and rituals. Traditional leader F said that he believed that there were people in society that used malevolent mystical powers to cause harm and death to others and their belongings. To affirm the above assertions, one Bemba Catholic declared, "I believe in the presence of mystical powers in divination, traditional medicine, traditional healing, magic, charms and rituals." According to Ogez (1991), Bemba Catholics believed in mystical powers and that fear of their wrath led them to practise rituals and activities that manifested mystical powers such as witch-hunting, magic, sorcery, witchcraft and others. It could be noted that the behaviour revealed by both studies has not changed.

This inquiry has learned that Bemba Catholics believe in the capability of mystical powers to influence the daily lives of people. They believe in the ability of mystical powers to take possession of objects, humans and nature and that they are moved from one object to another and subject person to another. The research has discovered that Bemba Catholics share in the Bemba traditional conceptualisation of the supernatural and perceptions about causation. These worldviews enable them to interpret the world around them, life events and social and moral phenomena such as suffering, illness, death, goodness, evil and so on. They interpret the unpleasant world life events such as suffering, illness, death and others as always having a cause from witchcraft, sorcery, magic and spirits. Bemba Catholics believed and feared occult powers used by witches and sorcerers, which influenced their behaviour of self-fortifying, fortifying children and securing houses, property and fields with charms and rituals (Ogez, 1991). This indicates the nature of the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers and its deep-rootedness in these Catholics.

The research has further established that Bemba Catholics view suffering, sickness, death and evil as the doing of the mystical powers. The powers they believe are beyond them. Bemba Catholics' conceive of the supernatural as having the ability to involve themselves in the affairs of the people with the purpose of blessing or harming them. It has further shown that Bemba people conceive of any natural, physical, spiritual and social phenomena in the world as having a magical cause. Their worldview of the common phenomena such as illnesses, suffering, death and other misfortunes is that mystical powers are behind them. Bemba Catholics also believe in the abilities of the spirits to involve themselves in human affairs and influence their lives. They believe that ancestral spirits and the spirits of the dead have the power to influence their lives, bless and punish a child's future life. They believe ancestors demand their reincarnation in newborn babies, demands believed to be made through dreams and divination. Mwewa (1977) accounted for how deeply rooted the belief in spirits was among the Bemba Christians. He observed that many Bemba Christians shared in the Bemba traditional belief of how mystical powers, the spirit world and spirit beings influence the course of their lives. From the above findings, the research has deduced that the belief in mystical

realities governs the social, physical and spiritual phenomena of the Bemba people, whether Christian or traditionalist.

The results of this study have indicated that Bemba Catholics believe in the presence of mystical or magic powers in traditional medicine, herbs and nature. They also believe that traditional healers possess mystical or magic powers. Bemba Catholics believe that charms have powers ranging from protecting to attracting intended objects. They believe charms and amulets are a measure against evil sent by the witches, sorcerers and magicians. They also believe that tattoos have powers to protect them from bad magic, witchcraft and sorcery. The Bemba Catholics believe that some sicknesses and misfortunes are direct consequences of curses and broken oaths and vows. They believe that making oaths and vows means agreeing with ancestral spirits, the spirits of the dead and the non-human spirits. They believe certain rituals are manifestations of mystical powers. Bemba Catholics believe mystical powers are present in rituals, especially those that serve human welfare such as agriculture, personal and health rituals.

Participants from FGDs and in-depth interviews with the Bemba Catholics confirmed these findings by expressing their belief in the presence of mystical or magic powers in traditional medicine, herbs and nature. They also expressed their belief that traditional healers possess mystical or magic powers. They further expressed their belief in protecting and attracting the powers of charms. For a case in point, an FGD member who was wearing a bracelet that seemed ordinary expressed his belief in 'its power against evil' sent to her by the witches, sorcerers and magicians. Many respondents acknowledged their belief or the belief of those who tattooed them during childhood in mystical powers behind medicines and rituals performed during the tattooing process. Bemba Catholics believed in mystical powers, the belief which often manifested in moments of hardship such as the inability to conceive of a child, prolonged illnesses, poverty, family tension and many others (Oger, 1991). It is, therefore, claimed that these moments could have led them to use charms, traditional medicines and magic, make suspicions about others practising witchcraft, sorcery and magic and consult with witch doctors and diviners.

The study has also demonstrated that Bemba Catholics share in the belief in the presence of mystical powers in oaths and vows of the Bemba ontology. It has also shown that Bemba Catholics believe in presence of mystical powers in rituals. Most Bemba Catholics expressed their belief that mystical powers were present in oaths, vows and curses. To affirm this impression, one traditional leader, who was a medicine man, said that making oaths and vows meant agreeing with ancestral spirits, the spirits of the dead and the non-human spirits. Mystical powers were believed to be present in rituals, especially those that served the well-being of people such as agricultural, personal, professional and health rituals. According to Mbiti (1999), making oaths and vows was a religious act that meant entering a covenant with the spirits. He further hypothesised that Africans engage themselves in mystical related rituals for protection and prevention. This signifies that rituals are at the centre of the Bemba people and Africans. Arguably, indicating that rituals were a cultural and social phenomenon for the Bemba people.

5.3.1 Reasons for the Persistence of the Bemba Catholics' Belief in Mystical Powers

The research has discovered that despite the Bemba Catholics' proclamation of the Catholic faith, adherence to its teachings and over a century of Roman Catholic presence, proselytising, and evangelising in the Bemba land, some Bemba Catholics still believe in the mystical powers of the BTR. The results of this investigation have hence provided the following reasons for this phenomenon.

5.3.1.1 The Bemba People's Conceptualisation of the Supernatural

The research has discovered that the Bemba traditional understanding of the supernatural is that there is a relationship between the mystical world and their world. Therefore, they apply supernatural reasons to events and circumstances that happen to them. However, the Catholic Church does not seem to resonate with their belief. This causes a bridge between them. These findings were upheld in the argument of priest A who said that there was an enormous difference in the understanding of the supernatural between the Catholic Church and the Bemba religious traditions. He alleged that the Bemba people regarded the supernatural as the force behind every phenomenon of their ordinary lives.

He further alleged that the Bemba people applied supernatural reasons to events and circumstances that happened to them. Priest C who argued that Bemba people were aware of the presence of the supernatural world and that this supernatural world influenced their lives and daily activities supported the above argument.

To Garvey (1994) this scenario was brought due to the early missionaries and indigenous priests' rejection to the large extent of the supernatural reasons that the Bemba people applied to events and circumstances as primitive and irrational. Hence, Bemba Catholics adopted the Bemba traditional conceptualisation of reality, which always pointed to the supernatural. To Garvey (1974) Bemba people knew there was a supernatural world present and that it did not only profoundly affect their lives but also influenced every significant daily activity. This undoubtedly indicates one of the major factors that have contributed to the Bemba Catholics' continued belief in mystical powers. Bemba traditional knowledge explains and provides answers to the phenomena of misfortunes, illness, suffering and death, which the Catholic Church does not seem to satisfy. It is in this vein that Oger (1991) argued that both Catholic theological and scientific explanations of daily phenomena such as suffering, sickness and evil did not seem to satisfy the spiritual African. Due to the provided evidence above, the research has concluded that the Bemba traditional conceptualisation of the supernatural is responsible for a Bemba Catholic's pursuit of the mystic.

5.3.1.2 Bemba people's Perceptions about Causation

Research has determined that the Bemba people have their cosmological explanations of natural, physical, spiritual and social phenomena in the world. Mystical powers cause common phenomena, such as illnesses, suffering, death and other misfortunes. This has been proven in the conviction of the Bemba Catholic participants from both in-depth interviews and FGDs who expressed that there were some people in society with the ability to manipulate mystical powers in witchcraft, sorcery and magic to cause illnesses and misfortunes. They also expressed their belief that witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men and women use traditional means to solve people's misfortunes and illnesses. The majority of participants expressed the belief that evil powers or someone

evil because of all that happens in the life of people and the community. These findings were summarised in the assertions of participant 9 that there were bad people such as witches, who killed innocent people out of jealousy and malice. Witches possessed bad spirits and unexplained forces that they used to cause misfortunes that people suffered. Garvey (1974) pointed out the fact that Bemba people believed mystical powers manifested through witchcraft, sorcery or magic and, in some cases, ancestral spirits caused many illnesses and misfortunes. Consequently, this perception of nothing happens without a cause leads Bemba people to deploy traditional means to solve their problems.

5.3.1.3 Fear and Anxiety

The Bemba Catholics exhibited a lot of fear of the forces of the mystical world and this deeply influenced their behaviour. This fear led them to seek interventions from the witch doctors, diviners and seers. Most of the priests interviewed attested that there was too much fear of the forces of the mystical world in Bemba Catholics, although the fear they exhibited was unfounded. However, it had a deeper influence on those that believed in them.

Participant 4 proved these findings by stating that the reason she sought the interventions of the witch doctor was the fact that he feared witches who also feared witch doctors. She also added that the reason some Bemba Catholics fortified themselves with herbs, amulets, and tattoos was to protect themselves from the evil plans and actions of the witches. It was the fear Bemba Catholics associated with the roughness of the mysterious powers that caused many of them to believe and practise rituals related to this belief (Ogez, 1991). The fear of the spirit world by Africans is overwhelming despite several generations of Christianity and this fear continued to be an appalling force in the lives of some African Christians. Many African Christians confirm the continued control of ATR perspectives in their post-conversion life (Bhebhe, 2013). This signifies that the fear and anxiety exhibited by the Bemba Catholics of the mystical powers are generated from their typical personal and external experiences of evil in society, the research has found. The same fear and anxiety lead the Bemba Catholics to beseech protection from those perceived to possess counteractive powers.

5.3.1.4 Socio-religious and Cultural Dynamics

The findings of the study indicate that Bemba Catholics believe and practise manifestations of mystical powers for social, religious and cultural reasons. The BTR and culture of Bemba people have been very strong, unable to disappear for the past century of the Catholic faith and evangelisation in Bemba land. The belief in mystical powers is deeply rooted in the Bemba people, passed on from one generation to another. Priest B ascertained these findings by stating that the culture of the local people was strong despite the 120 years of evangelisation. He noted that some cultural and traditional religious elements were still deeply rooted in the Bemba Catholics and a belief in supernatural powers was one of those passed on from one generation to another. Priest D agreed with this allegation when he asserted that the Bemba people still held a strong belief in mystical powers, which was manifested in their strong belief in witchcraft, magic and traditional medicines.

To affirm further these assertions, participant 1 strongly emphasised, “It is difficult to forsake our culture and traditions, we have always believed in the existence of the powers beyond us that influence our daily lives.” Garvey (1974) asserted that some Bemba Catholics were involved in the belief and practice of mystical powers because it was their culture and socially accepted in their society. This indicates how difficult it is for Bemba Catholics to forsake their belief in mystical powers because it is rooted in their culture, religious traditions and social activities. In addition, Bemba people believe that their society is constructed in that manner.

The study has reported that some Bemba Catholics’ participation in mystical activities, such as witch-hunting and divination, results from the community influence and societal pressure in which these activities take place. The belief in mystical powers is more about the family and communal, unlike individual decisions. Those Bemba Catholics who would want to abandon ATR elements failed to do so due to pressure from relatives or society (Garvey, 1974). These findings entail that the belief in mystical powers and practice of mystical activities are beyond an individual in Bemba society. It is instead a socio-cultural tradition many people feel obliged to take part in.

The results of this investigation further show that the Bemba traditional religious activities are one with all aspects of life. There is no separation between religion and life in Bemba society. The research has discovered that in Bemba society, everything is one; no one lives his or her life away from religion. Social life, hunting, cultivation, fertility of the land and others are all religious accomplishments. Religion in this society plays an important role in solving people's problems and provides answers to their questions about life. This unveils the reality of Africans being purely religious in all things because in every African society; traditions, cultures, social, economic, moral and spiritual activities are one with religion bridging the fact that life experiences, rituals, emotional, moral and spiritual activities are all intertwined (Mbiti, 1991). Arguably, this traditional-religious view is the contributing factor to the Bemba Catholics' constant search for answers and solutions to their problems from traditional means when the church does not provide answers and solutions to their problems.

5.3.1.5 Purported Inefficiency of the Catholic Church

The results of this study have evidenced the lack of effectiveness of the Catholic Church in dealing with the spiritual problems of the Catholic members as a reason some Bemba Catholics believed and practised mystic activities as purported by the majority of participants. Most participants alleged that the Catholic Church threw away or shunned cases considered spiritual by some Bemba Catholics. They argued that Bemba Catholics felt that witch doctors, diviners, medicine men and women provided solutions to their problems, which the church turned its back on.

Priests stated that they have heard of the reasons some members of their parishes give about their belief and involvement in mystical powers. One reason was that the Catholic Church lacked effectiveness in the spiritual problems of its members. In addition, they stated that the victims of these practices often accused the church of throwing their cases through the window or simply shunning them. Participant 15 summarised these findings as he said that the church did not provide any solution to their problems, but witch doctors, traditional healers and traditional medicines often did. The research has argued that the fact that everything is religious in Bemba society has created a state of reality that

has generated a problem in which Bemba people expect solutions and answers to all their life problems from the Catholic Church, which hardly come forth. Whenever Bemba people faced issues of infertility, poverty, family tension and other complex issues, they asked *Ing'anga* for solutions (Oger, 1991). Zambian Catholics (Bemba Catholics inclusive) practised the ATR elements because they felt that in some areas ATR elements were more effective than Christianity (Hinfelaar, 2007). The implication of this alleged inefficiency is surmised in Ramashapa's (1996:358) argument that the church in Africa is deemed incompetent in responding to African people's sufferings and misfortunes and as a consequence, "Members leave in their thousands those churches that do not take seriously and address the threat posed by witchcraft" he asserted. This phenomenon further coerces Bemba Catholics into an endless search for answers and solutions to their problems. In cases where the church cannot provide answers and solutions to their problems, they instead resort to finding these answers and solutions from their traditional knowledge.

5.3.1.6 Non-Holistic Conversion to Catholicism

The results of the research have pointed out that the non-holistic conversion to Catholicism is one reason some Bemba Catholics continue believing in mystical powers and are consequently influenced into practising mystic activities. The research has discovered that the missionaries misunderstood the Bemba traditional beliefs, values and customs and called everything about them pagan. It demonstrated that the White Fathers imposed their western traditions, cultures and values on the Bemba people, which many participants believed to have created a vacuum in Bemba people's lives and loss of cultural identity. The research has therefore argued that this vacuum may have created a reaction formation, which would explain the Bemba Catholics' falling in love with their cultural traditions more than ever before, yet still living them in secret. Participant 2 argued that the Catholic Church was so adamant about not accepting and incorporating the traditional and cultural beliefs of Bemba followers. His other argument was that the church forgot the tenacious behaviour of the traditional beliefs of the local people and their traditional background. He felt that asking Bemba Catholics to abandon all of their

traditional beliefs, even those that formed their identity as a people, such as a belief in mystical powers, not only defiled the humanity of the local people but also created pretentious behaviour. These are arguments ascertained the argument made by this research.

Moreover, these findings were reconciled with priest A's conclusion that the problem of Bemba Catholics' continuous belief in mystical powers was attributed to poor conversion during the missionary times. He argued if the holistic conversion had taken place, then the issue of duo-religiosity would not have persisted in contemporary times. Indeed these actions created incomplete conversion in the Bemba Catholics. Bascom and Herskovits (cited in Sourou 2014) related to these findings through their assertion that despite the intensity of Christian missionary efforts of evangelisation and conversions all over Africa, the African traditional worldview has remained resilient. They postulated that the demonisation of the African cultures, traditions, customs and indigenous knowledge must have been the great mistrust the missionaries planted in their local followers. Consequently, this mistrust of both Bemba Catholics and other African Christians occasioned pretence and inquisitiveness about the indigenous beliefs.

This process may never have happened, based the judgement on the evidence of continuous holding onto traditional beliefs by Bemba Catholics as attested to by most participants. These findings further give way to a theory that holistic conversion did not take place in Bemba converts and their descendants, otherwise, the issue would have not persisted. The research has argued that the conversion of the Bemba Catholics to Catholicism lacked 'change' of behaviour a fundamental measure of complete conversion. According to Paloutzian (2014), conversion is the transformative process that takes up variable amounts of time, ranging from a few moments to several years, while the distinctiveness of change is the central identifying element in this process. This research has noted how the conversion has played a role in the Bemba Catholics' tendency of holding onto the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers. Grounded on Horton's (1971) theory about African conversion to Christianity it could be said that it

was the influence of the social change brought about by colonialism and modernity caused their conversion than a deeper religious conviction that.

The research has further discovered that the tenacity of the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers is the result of the Catholic Church's inflexible attitude in accepting and incorporating the traditional and cultural beliefs of Bemba followers into her doctrines and practices. It has been further learnt that the early catholic missionaries are alleged to have been forcing Bemba Catholics to abandon all of their traditional beliefs including those that shaped their identity as a people, such as a belief in mystical powers. The research has argued that these actions by missionaries disregarded the humanity of the Bemba people and that might have produced a non-holistic conversion. Arguably, there was very little attempt to understand the African culture and practices by early missionaries in their contact with the local people. Hence, that could be the reason why Africans still hold onto some ATR beliefs (Behringer, 2004). Additionally, missionaries began classifying everything as pagan and forbade the practices without giving the people a biblical functional substitute. They paid less attention to addressing the underlying worldview assumptions and values that were in direct opposition to the Bible. He further argues that their action resulted in many of the prohibited activities to continue happening in the background and secret (Te Haar, 2007).

5.4 The Influence of the Belief in Mystical Powers on Bemba Catholics and its Implication for the Catholic Faith

The findings of the study have established that the Bemba Catholics' belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology has two levels of influence. These levels of influence are predominantly about Bemba people's perception and response to reality. The researcher has categorically coined these influences as perceptual (worldview) and behavioural. The research has discovered that these two-levelled influences of the belief in mystical powers are often intertwined realities that share a symbiotic relationship between them. These effects have a gross effect on the Catholic faith, identity, spirituality, teachings and doctrines as tenets of the Bemba Catholics. The perceptual

(worldview) influence very often leads to behavioural expression. Hinfelaar (2004) argued that the Bemba Catholics had an overwhelming inclination to their traditional worldview, a particular view of human life realities. He believed this worldview sprouted from their belief in impersonal powers and spiritual realms. He observed that even when these Catholics professed Catholicism, their perception of reality led them in some circumstances to turn to manifestations of mystical powers as ‘behavioural expressions’ of their belief and view of reality. For Ogez (1991) the belief in supernatural powers by Bemba Catholics influences their worldview. This worldview further influences their behaviour of engaging in the manifestations of mystical powers.

5.4.1 Perceptual (Worldview) Influence

The research findings have shown that the belief in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology by the Bemba Catholics influences their perception of reality. The influence on perception manifests in the Bemba Catholic’s conceptualisation of the supernatural and perceptions about causation. These, influence their interpretation of the world around them, life events and social and moral phenomena such as suffering, illness, death, goodness, evil and others. In consequence, this creates a superstitious perception that exhibits characteristics of sticking to suspicious ways of seeing the world and interpreting the unpleasant world life events such as suffering, illness, death and others as always having a cause from witchcraft, sorcery, magic and spirits. Notwithstanding the Catholic Church's teachings that the sources of misfortunes and other evils are natural and human error, the Bemba Catholics still find the explanations given by their indigenous knowledge more appealing even in these modern times.

5.4.1.1 Conceptualisation of Misfortunes and Fortunes

The research has discovered that the belief in mystical powers influences the way Bemba Catholics conceptualise misfortunes, fortunes and other life phenomena. They consider the supernatural to be behind every misfortune and fortune in the life of an individual, family or community. The research has learnt that the Bemba people view suffering,

sickness, death, evil and fertility, success and good health as the doing of the mystical powers. The powers they believe are beyond them.

Bemba people regarded the supernatural as the force behind every phenomenon of their ordinary lives proving these findings. They applied supernatural reasons to events and circumstances that happen to them. Bemba traditional knowledge explained and gave answers to the phenomenon of misfortunes in the world and their lives and that the supernatural powers were behind both fortunes and misfortunes in a Bemba person's life. Africans' awareness of the spirit world that it, and this reality according to Mbiti (1991:81) "Affects their [Africans] outlook and experiences in life for better and for worse." in every African society, misfortunes had a cause. According to Achola (2005:10), "It is believed that every misfortune is caused by humans or spirits." Therefore, reinforces the idea expressed by the research participants that Bemba people's conception of the supernatural is that, which gets involved in people's affairs with the purposes of blessing or harming.

Bemba Catholics rely on Bemba traditional knowledge to explain and give answers to the occurrences such as misfortunes, illness, suffering and death; hence, their worldview is equally affected. Van Dyk (2001:61) attributed this to their awareness of the spiritual world, "Knowledge about their meso-cosmos is especially important for understanding the behaviour of Africans because nearly all forms of illness, disease, conflict, suffering, misfortunes, accidents and death are ascribed to this level." He described the Meso-level as, "The intermediate universe, that is the universe between the macro-cosmos and the micro-cosmos, and it is inhabited by genies, evil spirits, witches and sorcerers." With the above assertion, Van Dyke contributes to the established perception of many Bemba Catholic respondents of reality and how this perception influences the way they look at reality. Not only is this about the knowledge of the meso-cosmos but also about the belief in its existence, its inhabitants and the power of its inhabitants to influence the course of human life.

5.4.1.2 Perception of Causation

The belief in mystical powers influences the way Bemba Catholics view misfortunes and other life phenomena. It has been determined that Bemba people cannot conceive of any natural, physical, spiritual and social phenomena in the world without attributing it to a magical cause. Their perception of the common phenomena such as illnesses, suffering, death and other misfortunes is that mystical powers are behind them through magic, sorcery and witchcraft.

The Bemba Catholic participants from both in-depth interviews and FGDs expressed their conviction and that of the entire Bemba people of the ability of witchcraft, sorcery, magic, or in some cases, ancestral spirits to cause illnesses and misfortunes. They also expressed their belief that witch doctors, traditional healers, medicine men and women use traditional means to solve people's misfortunes and illnesses. Many participants affirmed the above findings by asserting that there were many bad people such as witches, who kill innocent people out of jealousy and malice and that witches, bad spirits and unexplained forces caused misfortunes that people suffer. This owes to the fact that Bemba people shared among themselves a worldview that mystical powers manifest themselves through witchcraft, sorcery or magic and ancestral spirits (Garvey, 1974). The sole purpose of these manifestations is to cause problems and misfortunes for people. Without a doubt, this perception leads the Bemba Catholics to be convinced that the solutions to their problems are traditional means such as traditional medicine, witch hunting, charms and magic. This has a bearing on African perception of reality, "Everything is caused by some other person in a direct way or through mystical forces" (Nyabwari and Kagema, 2014:11).

Many participants alleged that people such as sorcerers, sorceresses, witches and wizards in communities are believed to cause serious diseases such as stroke, tuberculosis, AIDS, Covid-19 and many other illnesses that are incurable by modern medicines and technology. In Manala's view (2004:1494), these bad people caused much harm and illnesses to a victim by simply, "Pointing a finger at their victims, through food

poisoning, [and] by mixing some magical potions with the soil on which their victims' footprints are made to inflict pain on them.”

The research has further discovered that Bemba Catholics have a very strong causal perception of issues such as infertility, mental illnesses and marital-related issues that led them to seek the help of traditional healers and traditional medicines. The research has observed that this perception influences the Bemba Catholics to use, suspect and practise the manifests of mystical powers. However, Achola (2005:10) argues that, to causation, “There might be exceptions when it comes to global catastrophes, but personal or family problems are always caused by someone.” He further argued, “An offender is someone known because these powers don’t function anonymously.” These arguments signify that the belief in mystical powers might create deeper perceptions of reality that, in turn, might create more outcomes that are behavioural in nature.

5.4.2 Behavioural Influence: Expression and Practice

The research has discovered that the belief in mystical powers by some Bemba Catholics of the Mpika district is believed to influence their behaviours, such as suspecting, using and practising witchcraft, divination, magic, traditional medicine, vows and oaths. It also influences them to get involved in, venerating and revering the spirits of the ancestors and long-dead members of the lineage through child naming consultation with the diviners, witch hunters, traditional healers and the practice of traditional medicine and the performance of mystical rituals. The practice of the mystic-related rituals ranges from agriculture, personal, profession and health. These behaviours are evident expressions of a deeper belief in mystical powers.

5.4.2.1 Veneration and Reverence of Ancestors and Dead through Child Naming

The results of this investigation have indicated that some Bemba Catholics venerate and revere the spirits of the ancestors and long-dead members of the lineage through child naming. Fear exists amongst them that the family that does not heed the demands of the ancestral spirits or the spirits of the long-dead members of the family risk facing punishment from them.

These findings were demonstrated by Bemba Catholic participants who indicated their belief in revelations of the ancestors' demands for reincarnation through dreams and divination. Most participants who attested that the 'child-naming ritual' was an act of ancestor veneration affirmed these findings. For instance, priest B said that the Bemba people brought back the names of their dead relatives to continue the dead person's spirit in the newborn child. He further stated that Bemba Catholics held this tradition out of fear of the mysterious consequences if they did not. The respondents from all samples confirmed the existence of many rumours in their communities about the mysterious punishment of families and children by their ancestors for not obeying their demand of maintaining their names, resorting to venerating and reverencing them through obedience to their demands.

Some Bemba Catholics still practised child naming and some rituals surrounding it in reverence and veneration of the ancestral spirits. Some of them who were involved in this practice often performed the ritual out of fear of the mysterious consequences of not following the directives of the ancestral spirits and spirits of the dead (Oger, 1991). The naming of children the names of the deceased and ancestors especially the indigenous names does not sit well with the teaching of the Catholic Church of naming children after the bible figures and saints of the church. The research has noted a conflict generated by these two systems. However, the Bemba Catholics indicated less consideration for the conflict that arose but focused on the benefits that this behaviour brought to their families and community such as honour given to the dead and the preservation of the name with the lineage.

5.4.2.2 Consultation with the Diviners and Witch Hunters

The results of this inquiry have indicated that some Bemba Catholics have been visiting diviners for *Ulubuko* 'consultation' and witch hunters '*Bamucapi*' for a witch hunt. This was confirmed by the view from most respondents that the belief in mystical powers influenced many Bemba Catholics to indulge in activities that reflected and merged their beliefs. The case scenarios surrounding this phenomenon have been during the times of prolonged and unexplained sicknesses, death perceived to be 'mysterious', and calamities

befalling families. For instance, Priest C said that some Bemba Catholics from his parish were reported to have visited the diviners for consultations, especially in times of prolonged and unexplained sicknesses, death perceived as ‘mysterious’, and calamities following their families. He argued that there was an unwavering desire of Bemba Catholics to seek divination and purge the evil from their community. Despite the retributions from the church, Bemba Catholics do not seem to refrain from the beliefs and activities related to mystical powers.

Ogez (1991) found out that some Bemba Catholics visited diviners for consultations about the causes of happenings, such as unexplained prolonged sicknesses, deaths and continuous calamities following a family or community. Besides, Hinfelaar (2007) asserted that traditional societies consider divination and witch-hunting as very significant businesses for their assumed powers to purge the cause of people’s misery and misfortunes. In Maimela’s view, (1985:68) fear and anxiety exhibited across Africa made them victims of a belief in evil spirits and malicious persons, especially witches and sorcerers. No wonder, he stated, “Most Africans express an intense revulsion against all forms of diabolical evil embodied in witchcraft.” This is certainly done through divination and witch-hunt to find out the cause and do away with these evil acts. This sits well with the hate and needs to purge witchcraft, sorcery and magic from family and community expressed by many participants of this study. The research has categorically established that some Bemba Catholics are influenced by their belief in mystical powers to consult diviners and witch hunters about their problems. However, it has been found that this behaviour is contrary to what the Catholic Church teaches. Hence, this creates a conflict between the church and the Bemba Catholics who practised these activities and had a conviction of their positive results such as owning knowledge of what is hidden from their bare eyes, knowing the culprit and eventually avenging and exposing the evil cause in within family circles and community.

5.4.2.3 Consultation with Medicine Men/Women and Witchdoctors

This research has discovered that the Bemba Catholics’ belief in mystical powers influences them to consult with *Ing’anga* ‘traditional healers’: medicine men and women

and witch doctors'. Participant 3 confirmed this finding when he stated, "I find traditional healers to be more effective than hospitals or prayers from the priests with sicknesses and health conditions caused by the evil powers." This evidence found its climax in priest A's assertion that Bemba Catholics undoubtedly believed in the healing power of God but believed more in his healing powers endowed upon traditional healers, and in healing methods mystically availed to them alone. Relatedly, Moore (1940) alluded that many Africans believed that evil spirits and witches caused some sicknesses. Therefore, it only makes logical sense that they think that people with similar powers, such as the traditional healers, could heal them instead.

The research has further discovered that Bemba people visit medicine and women and witch doctors because they believe that there are illnesses, and health problems untreatable by modern medicines and doctors and that only a traditional healer can heal them. The research has divulged that these illnesses and medical conditions are the ones the Bemba people attribute to the doings of witches and sorcerers. They believe these witch doctors and medicine men/women are the only ones who can heal these illnesses. Participant 5 affirmed that Bemba Catholics consulted with traditional healers because they believed in their effectiveness. He stated that they were many cases where modern medicines failed to solve a health issue, later on, prayer, while witch doctors and traditional healers with their traditional healing methods solved it straight away.

Moore (1940) asserted that Bemba Catholics believed God healed them of their sicknesses directly or through the *Ing'anga*, but when God procrastinated, then the traditional healer would do the healing. This has proven how rooted the belief that traditional healers are endowed with mystical powers is. Consulting traditional healers was strongly discouraged by the Catholic Church, hence, this behaviour created conflict between the Catholic Church and the Bemba Catholics who practise these activities. However, this study has observed that the Bemba Catholics involved in this behaviour focus more on finding solutions to their problems, finding a cure to their sicknesses and answers to their physical and spiritual suffering than on the implication their behaviour had on their relationship with the church and what is expected of them.

5.4.2.4 Practice and Use of Traditional Medicine

Research has found that Bemba Catholics believe in the presence of mystical or magic powers in herbs, traditional medicine and nature. They also believe that traditional healers such as medicine men and women and witch doctors possess mystical or magic powers. These beliefs indisputably influence them to practise and use traditional medicine. Some Bemba Catholics have been reported to be medicine men and women, actively or passively practising traditional medicine. Participant 20 affirmed these findings by claiming to be a medicine woman. She further confirmed the fact that some Bemba Catholics use traditional medicines. He stated that many Bemba Catholics went to him for the help of different sought. They took to him issues of infertility, mental illnesses and marital related. He then provided herbs and healing, in consultation with the spirits. Oger (1991) in his long interaction with Bemba Catholics made recurring behaviour and re-emphasised that not only did Bemba Catholics use traditional medicine but also that some actively practised traditional medicine even though most of them did this in hiding. The research has further indicated that many Bemba Catholics do not find using and practising traditional medicine conflicting with their Catholic faith. It is indeed indisputable then that the Bemba people's belief that God provided humankind with nature and knowledge on how to use it enables them to see no conflict with their Catholic faith since the belief is rooted in God.

Apart from traditional medicine being believed to be a gift from God, the research has also discovered that some Bemba Catholics regard traditional healing as being part of their culture and traditions and that they do not see it disappearing soon. Sayings such as *kwimba kati kusansha nalesa*, uttered by many Bemba Catholic participants to signify 'God's approval of traditional medicines', prove how deep-rooted the influence of the belief in mystical powers is. Mbiti (1991: 172) argued this was so because traditional medicines somehow provided people who believed in them with a sense of protection, security and safety was cognisant of this research's findings. He asserted, "It is the belief in the efficacy of such medicine which inspires hope in the sick, confidence in the traveller, and security in the many who feel that they are surrounded by mystical and

physical enemies.” This research has concluded the incontestable fact that the belief in mystical powers by the Bemba Catholics influences them to practise and use traditional medicines. Though the use of traditional medicines in their natural state did cross paths with Catholic teachings, the use of concoctions and summoning of mystical powers to inhibit the medicine did. However, the study has observed that the Bemba Catholics focused more on the healing benefits of traditional medicine and the magnanimity of the traditional healing service.

5.4.2.5 Tattoos, Charms and Amulets

The results of this study have shown that Bemba Catholics tattoo their children and adults and that they use charms for reasons ranging from protection to attraction because they believe in mystical powers said to be enshrined in them. To affirm these findings, participant 5 narrated, “During infancy, childhood and adulthood tattoos ‘*Inembo*’ are cut in our skins to heal us from certain illnesses and to protect us from bad magic, bad luck and witchcraft.” Participant 9 who testified to this gave clear evidence of the Bemba Catholic’s practice of *Inembo* and charms. She said that she was not afraid of witchcraft, sorcery or magic because she was fortified as a baby through ‘*Inembo*’ so charms and curses cannot work on her. These findings were summed up in assertions of all participants from Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders in in-depth interviews that some Bemba Catholics were believed to use charms in one or two circumstances to either better their lives or affect other people’s lives. Chidili (2014: 64) recorded a similar pattern of behaviours among the West Africans concerning charms. He stated, “A charm is believed to preserve people from evil, diseases, bullets or motor accidents or to make one succeed in trade, love affair, in fishing, in catching thieves, passing examinations etc.” This is indicative of how the belief in mystical powers influenced Africans across the continent to tattoo and use charms and amulets believing they will protect them from the evil caused by others in society.

The research has further discovered that both tattoos and charms have the same purposes of protection, good luck and preservation, except that tattoos are also done for healing purposes. To Mbiti (1991: 171) Africans believed there was medicine for everything;

they believed that there was medicine to prevent things from going wrong, protecting a person from being harmed, fortune and success and so on. He asserted that people tried to get these medicines and use them in various situations of life with the belief that they would see their wishes fulfilled. According to Ejizu (2002:12), “People protect themselves against their nefarious activities through different ritual practices, including offering ritual sacrifice, making and wearing of charms and amulets.” This description of the measures African people used against evil believed to be perpetuated by the witches, sorcerers and magicians, emphasising the place of charms and amulets in society echoed both this research’s and Mbiti’s argument. On the contrary, this established that the practice of tattooing and the use of charm was not just for protection but also for life and fortune preservation and good luck.

Bemba Catholics use charms to improve and protect their business endeavours, marriages, children, property, attract the different sex, get a promotion at work and other sorts of reasons. This was because mystical powers are believed manifested in charms and amulets, which people believe and use for their believed power to influence life events (Mbiti, 1999). The use of charms and tattoos were popular mystic expressions among the Bemba Catholics and these behaviours were undeniably influenced by their belief in the presence of mystical powers in them as expressed by all respondents across the samples and literary material consulted. Even though many Bemba Catholics saw nothing wrong in them using charms, amulets and tattooing with their faith in the Catholic teachings. The research established that did not allow its members to engage in such activities. The question of co-existence between the Bemba catholic members convinced of the importance and benefits of these indigenous activities and the Catholic Church that sees them as pagan remains of great interest.

5.4.2.6 Suspicions, Accusation and Fear of Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

This study has attested that the belief in mystical powers leads Bemba Catholics to suspect witchcraft, sorcery, and other magical practices in their communities. The research has also discovered that this belief influences Bemba Catholics to fear and accuse other members of the family and community of practising witchcraft, sorcery and

magic on them or others. The predisposition of the Bemba Catholics to perceive misfortunes, suffering and death as acts of witchcraft, sorcery and magic influences them to make accusations that are mainly aimed at blood relatives, work associates, classmates, the elderly and acquaintances.

Participant 17 validated these findings by stating, “We have to protect ourselves, family, possessions from witchcraft, sorcery and magic. There are a lot of evil men and women who harm innocent people out of jealousy of their prosperity.” This indicates the level of suspicion and accusation in Bemba communities. It is such perceptions of others that are believed to influence them to consult diviners and use charms to protect themselves from harm that is believed to be caused by witches/wizards and sorcerers. Priest A further highlighted this evidence by stating that Bemba Catholics still held a strong belief in the existence of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. Which he felt influenced their behaviour of consulting diviners and use of charms to protect themselves from the harm believed to be caused by the witches and sorcerers. Some Bemba Catholics upheld a resilient belief in the existence of witchcraft which he profoundly believed influenced their behaviour of pursuing divination and use of charms for protection from the witches/ wizards and sorcerers (Hinfelaar, 2007). Why this was so was made clear by Mbiti (1991:165) who argued, “Belief in the function and dangers of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft is deeply rooted in African life and despite modern education and religions like Christianity and Islam it is very difficult to eradicate this belief.” This rendered the ATR belief system insoluble energy and force to reckon with.

The superstitious behaviours exhibited by some Bemba Catholics created fear in them, which influenced every aspect of their lives from social to economic development. The fear associated with witchcraft, sorcery and magic by some Bemba Catholics extended to hesitancy to develop economically, send children to school and so forth, for the fear of being bewitched. The fear of being bewitched led some Bemba Catholics to fortify their children and themselves from infancy by tattooing and wearing charms and amulets to be protected from witchcraft, sorcery and bad magic. This fear underpins the Bemba Catholics' desire to seek witch doctors, traditional healers, diviners, medicine and women

for protection, hence leading to behaviours of using charms, amulets, tattooing, fetish and so on.

It is indisputable that such suspicions are undeniably disparaging and exert irreparable damage, at all levels, on the accused or suspect of witchcraft practice. These acts do surely cause stigma for the entire family and generations to come. As evidence, priest B observed in his many years of serving a rural parish in Mpika that Bemba Catholics took misfortunes, suffering and death as acts of '*Ubuloshi* or *Ubwanga*' (witchcraft, sorcery and magic). This was further proven in participant 17's account, "We have to protect ourselves, family, possessions from witchcraft, sorcery and magic." She that there were a lot of evil men and women who harmed innocent people out of jealousy of their prosperity and that people even feared educating their children or leading a decent life to avoid attracting evil people to them. Bemba Catholics expressed a lot of fear of witchcraft, sorcery and magic, which led them to practise measures against them such as charms and tattoos (Oger, 1991, Ogez, 1991). The research established that this fear led to divisions and uproar in the community and worse still witchcraft accusations very often had a devastating effect on the family, friends and community. With all these divisions and upheavals one wonders why some Bemba Catholics still engaged in the suspicions and accusations of others of practising witchcraft, sorcery and magic, the answer lies in the intensity of their belief in occult powers.

5.4.2.7 Practice of Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic

This investigation has indicated that not only do some Bemba Catholics suspect, accuse others and fear witchcraft or sorcery and magic but there is also a suspicion that some of them are involved in practising witchcraft or/ and magic. Some citations of a few instances where some members were implicated in the practice of witchcraft and magic were given. Priest D affirmed these findings as he stated that some of their Bemba Catholic members were implicated in the practice of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. Many Catholic priests and Bemba Catholic participants from both in-depth interviews and FGDs gave the same assertion. Oger (1991) reported similar incidences of witch finding and hunting among Bemba Catholics. The research has disclosed that the aforementioned

cases were more rampant in rural parish communities than in urban communities. Some cited reasons for the low rates in urban parishes were due to exposure to civilisation, educational attainment levels and modernisation.

Interestingly, the research has also guided that in times Bemba Catholics believed magic could better their lives, they turned to approaching witch doctors to collect magic charms for riches, marriage, sports, general success in life and so on. It has been indicated that some Bemba Catholics use magic enshrined in charms and amulets to protect their businesses from witches and thieves believed to use magic and witchcraft to steal from them. Some are believed to use magic charms and witchcraft to protect their homes, property and family from harm believed to be sent by witches/wizards and sorcerers. The research has learnt that these magic charms of all kinds make them feel safe. Many respondents, however, felt that these behaviours were tantamount to practising witchcraft, magic and sorcery. As evidence, priest A opined that many Bemba Catholics stayed in fear and resorted to the use of charms to protect themselves and their property due to their belief that there are evil people in society who do others harm. He further asserted that where Bemba Catholics believed that magic could better their lives, they resorted to visiting witch doctors to collect lucky charms for success.

Hinfelaar (2007) noted that the desire for Bemba people to protect themselves or their family and possessions from witchcraft and sorcery could be seen in the traditional measures they took such as tattooing and wearing charms on the body, wearing amulets, planting charms around the property. Therefore, the research has deduced that Bemba Catholics are believed to practise magic and witchcraft for what appears to be morally resounding reasons and justifiable fears that are only understood by them. Yet, their belief in the existence of mystical powers in these activities influenced these behaviours. The research has also noted that these behaviours were highly denounced by the Catholic Church and had a great-perceived implication on their faith and spirituality. Though it was difficult to prove the practice of witchcraft, sorcery and magic, many believed some in the community practised them due to divination, witch-hunt and mere suspicion linked to evils befalling families and community.

5.4.2.8 Fear and Use of Oaths, Vows and Curses

This study has discovered that the belief in mystical powers influences some Bemba Catholics to make and fear curses, vows and oaths. The belief influences them to create a worldview in which they see some sicknesses and misfortunes as consequences of curses and broken oaths and vows. Priest A of the charismatic movement (a Catholic prayer group) who stated that the group addressed cases of curses, oaths and vows that needed undoing made this finding clear. He further added that many of the Bemba Catholics that went there took issues of broken oaths and vows made to their ancestors and relatives before they died and that they felt as if they were living the consequences of the broken vows and oaths. This was especially when things were going bad in their lives. Participant 1 affirmed these assertions made by priest A by saying that Bemba tradition explained some sicknesses and misfortunes as consequences of curses and broken oaths and vows.

The research has further indicated that some Bemba Catholics sometimes engaged themselves in some traditional rituals that were done to undo the curses. In Bemba culture, there were mysterious powers in the word used to bless or curse someone. Some people were believed to curse others, parents cursed their children and some made vows and oaths. The research has further shown that the Bemba culture considers oaths and vows to be spiritually binding. Making oaths and vows means agreeing with ancestral spirits, the spirits of the dead and the non-human spirits. Most Bemba Catholic participants expressed the belief that Bemba people used a curse to harm other people. They also stated that the fear of curses, oaths and vows seemed to come from the belief in the presence of mystical powers in them. Most of the participants interviewed expressed fear of elderly people, witches and sorcerers that they believed wished people bad luck through the spoken word. All this certainly induces fear of oaths, vows and curses in some Bemba Catholics as Magesa (1998) observed that the fear of curses, vows and oaths is a real deal in African communities and the consequences were attributed to offending spirits.

The research has further indicated that some Bemba Catholics feel that there are some positive influences of their belief in oaths, vows and curses such as saving a community from deceitfulness, promoting virtues such as truthfulness and faithfulness and solving some disputes in the community. Both the fears created, and the perceived benefits arguably motivate the Bemba Catholics to use oaths, vows, and curses.

5.4.2.9 Performance of Mystic-Related Agricultural Rituals

Research has revealed that some Bemba Catholics are believed to perform farming rituals where they plant charms and fetishes to magically protect '*Ukushilika*' in their fields from magic stealing '*Ukukula*' by the use of magical creatures '*Ifikulilo*' famously known as '*Amalomba*'. Some Bemba Catholics have fallen victim to suspicions that they magically steal from others. That is why their stocks of goods never run dry. Participants across all the samples attested to this by expressing the belief that Bemba Catholics were involved in ritual performances of some sort. They are believed to perform agricultural-related rituals such as planting rituals, first fruit rituals and taboos and harvest rituals. To affirm these claims, participant 19 alleged that some Catholic farmers in her community performed some rituals in their fields. This was done before they planted their seed, they sprayed and planted charms and fetishes and hanged other quack objects and before eating the first fruit and harvesting is done. According to Mbiti (1991), this was done because, through ritual activities and words, people felt they were capable of exercising a certain level of control over the 'invisible world' and the 'forces of nature.' Mbiti supposes the inevitable tendencies of Africans to perform acts that make them comfortable and secure. Which he felt was universal to every African, whether a Christian convert or traditionalist. This behaviour was believed to be overwhelming due to the factor that the huge population of Mpika district engages in agricultural activities. Therefore, this influence of the belief in mystical powers by Bemba Catholics was very evident in their livelihood and economic activity.

5.4.2.10 Performance of Mystic Related Personal and Homestead Rituals

Research has determined that some Bemba Catholics engage in child-naming rituals. It has also found a linkage between child naming with its rituals and the belief that ancestral spirits and spirits of the dead have the power to influence a child's future life. To the Bemba people, child naming is an act of remembering the dead members of the family. The child naming rituals performed are enshrined in the Bemba culture and mystical powers. The research has further discovered that Bemba people bring back the names of their dead relatives to continue the dead person's spirit in the newborn child.

Most participants who linked child naming to the belief that the ancestral spirits had powers to influence a child's future life authenticated these findings. For instance, Participant 7 said that the remembrance of the dead members of the family through child naming and the ceremonies around it were enshrined in Bemba culture and the belief about mystical powers. This was exemplified by priest D's argument that with the benign characteristics of the mystical powers, there was an assurance of protection, good health, and prosperity to the child named after a given ancestral spirit. However, he noted that not picking the name of a malevolent ancestral spirit for a child results in misfortunes and curses in the future life of a child. The Bemba people brought back the names of their dead relatives through naming rituals, which were mystic to continue the dead person's spirit in the newborn child (Werner, 1971). However, this concept is influenced by the belief that the spirit of the dead relative finds its representation in the childbearing name.

Some Bemba Catholics perform these personal rituals because of their mystical relevance in their lives. While others were believed to have performed some rituals to get a promotion at work, to bear a child, to get married, to prevent an evil eye on the unborn child during pregnancy, to prevent problems during childbirth and when naming a child. These rituals were said to have been performed to accompany these activities to bless and protect the people and elements involved. Some are believed to perform rituals concerning life and homestead. Some Bemba Catholics performed rituals that involved pregnancy, birth, child naming, marriage, childbearing and death. These rituals were performed to bless and protect the people and elements involved from witches, sorcerers,

magic and spells. These findings were proven in traditional leader I's statement that some Bemba Catholics were believed to have performed some rituals to bear a child, to get married, to prevent an evil eye on the unborn child, and to prevent problems during childbirth. He also added that some Bemba Catholics planted charms and other traditional medicines in their new homes, barns and goods. Some performed rituals during birth, marriage and death. The justification of this behaviour is founded in Mbiti's (1991: 140) contextualisation of rituals, he stated, "The rituals are intended to bring blessings upon the homestead, to remove the impurities of sickness and to make the life of the homestead run smoothly." This explains the cosmological convictions of the African people about the homestead rituals and their place in their lives. Also indicates the interconnectedness of the BTR with the Bemba people's lives. This behaviour was deemed natural overpowering the teachings of the Church and their Catholic faith.

5.4.2.11 Performance of Mystic Related Professional Rituals

Some Bemba Catholic professionals are believed to perform certain mystical-related rituals to secure promotions, protect their positions or jobs, to enhance their performance or sales in a business for merchants. All participants across the samples unanimously expressed the assertion that some Bemba Catholics in professional jobs such as teaching, nursing, politics, clergy and others, and those in skill-based professions such as; farming, carpentry, fishing, and trade are believed to perform some sort of rituals where charms are involved. Some cases of some professionals bathing in traditional medicines outside their offices or business premises or farms, inviting witch doctors, elders of the family to the offices to perform some rituals on newly acquired jobs, were reported to this investigation. Emphasising the purpose of these rituals for an African, Mbiti (1991) asserted that rituals aided in lessening conflict and tension in different professions. He asserted that professionals were 'self-protected' by the rituals they performed. There was a conviction by the participants that no one holding especially influential positions in politics, church or community has done any sort of ritual to either acquire that position or maintain it. This happened in most cases due to a belief that other people are using magic to take their positions away from them, so they needed to protect them.

Although these rituals seemed to favour the performers, some rituals came with many restrictions. To this fact, Mbiti highlighted that some rituals bound those who performed them to take up an ‘oath of secrecy.’ On the many restrictions surrounding these rituals, Mbiti (1991: 140) added, “In professional rituals, there are many taboos concerned with what people may not do, what not to eat or touch, how they should behave at certain times.” Although these actions believed to be taken by some Bemba Catholic professionals were believed to be in breach of their Catholic faith and spirituality and the fact that they pursue rituals indicated how deep-rooted the belief in mystical powers was and it’s overpowering influence.

5.4.2.12 Performance of Mystic Related Health Rituals

The study has ascertained that some Bemba Catholics are involved in performing rituals about the health of individuals and families. Apart from paying visits to the witch doctors or medicine men and women or using traditional medicine, some engage themselves in performing rituals that involve the invocation of mystical powers for protection, blessing and healing. The majority of participants across the samples conveyed the belief that some Bemba Catholics were involved in performing rituals around the health of individuals and families, which ascertained these findings. These rituals included bathing, wearing and planting charms and traditional medicines and the house and offices. Some participants were very convinced that there were rituals believed to prolong life, help dodge death and prevent death from happening and they believed that there were people in their community who were suspected of prolonging their lives using these rituals. To confirm these allegations and beliefs, participant 4 narrated, “Some old people and young people are believed to possess snakelike magical creatures ‘*Amalomba*’, materially and magically created out of some mystical rituals to prolong the owner’s life among other functions.”

The possible justification for this behaviour according to Mbiti (1991) was that for African people, the disease is not just a physical condition; they use religion to find the mystical cause behind the disease and try to find who was responsible for it and who sent it to the sick person. Mbiti (1991: 139) maintained that Africans were in constant search

of the mystic and human cause of their health predicament, he stated, “The death of any individual is believed to have a cause. This implies that many rituals are performed to prevent death, delay death, to ward off it. Part of the funeral rites includes the idea of chasing away death from the family.” This proves the place suffering such sickness, physical harm and death are an integral reality in African societies and how anything that threatens this reality is regarded and the ‘desperate measures’ taken to avoid it.

5.5 The Church’s Response to Bemba Catholics’ Belief in Mystical Powers

The Catholic Church considers the belief and behaviour of its member in pursuing activities that manifest mystical powers to be pagan and sinful. These behaviours were found to conflict with the teachings and faith of the Catholic Church. It questioned the faith of Bemba Catholics and a century of evangelisation and proclamation of the Catholic faith and spirituality. This was the reason the local Catholic church in Mpika was implementing measures such as sensitizing Catholics against the belief and practice of mystical powers, suspension of the victims of the belief and practice from partaking of sacraments, inculturation and dialogue as responses to their Bemba Catholic members’ belief in mystical powers and consequent behaviours. These measures are partly the efforts of the local church to incorporate the universal church’s call to respond effectively to the influence of ATR belief on African Catholics.

5.5.1 Sensitisation against the Belief and Practice of Mystical Powers

This research has discovered that the Catholic Church in Mpika discourages its members from indulging in traditional beliefs such as witchcraft, sorcery, magic and traditional medicines that involve spirits and other beliefs and practices. The church is believed to use available media such as homilies, secular, radio programmes and other media. The church in Mpika is said to implement sensitisation programmes starting with children in catechetical classes. It has also been discovered that the Catholic Church in Mpika runs some programmes on the radio that are sensitive to the community to the divisive nature of witchcraft, magic, sorcery and witch finding on families and communities. These findings were in agreement with the claims made by white father scholars such as Garvey

(1994, 1974), Oger (1991), Ogez (1991) and Hinfelaar (1994, 2004) about their responsive strides against issues of the Bemba Catholics' continuous religious dualism which was manifested in their easy swells in the BTR means finding solutions to their problems and belief in occult powers. However, after over a century of campaigns against the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers, this study reports that the problem is still evident and thriving up to date. Moreover, Garvey (1974) and Ogez (1991) accounted for encounters in their respective mission stations and their responses to their members' participation in witch-hunting and consultation with the witch doctors and diviners, which they said sometimes, brought the communities to total confusion.

5.5.2 Suspension from Partaking in Sacraments and Church Activities

The church had a few instances in which it suspended some members of the church who were believed and suspected of participating in the elements of mystical powers such as; witchcraft, witch-hunting and divination to help members renounce such activities. However, there was no evidence of such action in the contemporary church, yet self-expulsions out of suspicions of practising or participating in mystical powers were common, which probably reflected in expulsion by the church. The research as further discovered that the church suspended some members who believed and reported participating in mystical activities from Eucharistic communion.

However, these measures have been described as a last resort in terming the confusion and divisions brought about by the issues of superstition, belief in mystical powers, suspicions, practices of witchcraft, magic and sorcery in families and communities. Censures and suspensions were among Christian responses to witchcraft in society (Hayes, 1995). Although these measures were claimed to work in critical situations, they ignored the values such as the respect for nature, peace and unity embedded in BTR of mystical powers of the Bemba people. These values are a direct benefit of the manifestations of mystical powers through the practice of benevolent rituals and life-giving mystical activities such as naming, natural healing and medicines.

5.5.3 Inculturation

The local church is engaged in an approach to solving the problem of its members' belief and influence, which was believed to be mutual by most participants, known as inculturation. Many priests expressed that the belief in mystical powers by some of their members was a big problem for the church. They, however, alleged that the church paid little attention to it because it meant little, to individual church leaders or the entire church. Many priests yet described the problem as a 'big pastoral problem' faced within their parishes. The church also acknowledged how deep-rooted the belief in mystical powers was in their local members. Several Bemba Catholics and traditional leaders confirmed that the local church had been engaging in inculturation, though it had a long way to go. However, some Bemba Catholics and priests expressed concerns over the selectiveness of the church in the inculturation of the Bemba cultural and religious elements in Catholicism.

Responding to the question on the church's response to Bemba Catholic members who believed in mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology, a merged response of the priests was, "The belief in mystical powers by some of our members is a big problem. We pay little attention to it because it does not mean much to us." This response ignored the fact that the church claimed that the issue was a 'big pastoral problem' both at the local level and universal, as evidenced in the pope's encyclicals and sandal calls Bascom and Herskovits (cited in Sourou 2014). They added, "A mutual understanding and acceptance of their indigenous beliefs can be of help in curbing the problem." The idea was appealing but raised the question of whether that was a suggestion or an actual response of the church to the problem. Inculturation as a means of responding to Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers and their manifestations creates scepticism as to how beliefs and practices considered sinful and pagan could be inculturated in Catholicism.

Chidi (2008: 9) acknowledged that the domain of inculturation was very vast. He reported about the 1994 and the following synods call to the inculturation of ATR elements, "The Fathers insisted on its spiritual dimension, emphasizing the theological, liturgical, catechetical, pastoral, juridical and communications aspects. He also reported

on the detail of the church fathers' vision and worldviews that needed to be studied in view of integrating the worldviews as presented in Christianity and ATR. Such areas included health, illness, healing and marriage among others. The church expressed the need for fair understanding and acceptance of native members' indigenous beliefs. However, the research discovered that Bemba members of the church found it conflicting that the church found it hard to the cosmology of mystical powers in its entirety but it believed in supernatural powers such as the Holy Spirits and interceding powers of the saints. Their belief in the powers of the ancestors and spirits to intercede and influence their lives was denied and labelled as evil by the church.

Although the church promoted the inculturation of some of the ATR beliefs in the church in Africa, it strongly discarded mystical elements that it assumed caused division and ruined families and societies (Sourou, 2014). Therefore, inculturation seems to be controversial in the church in Africa. The research has argued that although 'some' BTR beliefs have been inculturated into the Catholic liturgy as means of explaining some Catholic beliefs, the church is still far away from tolerating and or considering the belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba people's religious cosmology.

The research has further argued that inculturation raises questions that desire deeper introspection for both the Catholic Church and the Bemba Catholics. Clear role partage for both parties to play in inculturation should be well defined. A question of who decides what BTR beliefs should be incorporated into the Catholic faith in Mpika must be ascertained. Otherwise, one-sided inculturation rarely benefits both parties equally, but it only creates more discrepancies and misunderstandings of intentions. It also creates an impression that one tradition is doing the other a favour in this case for reasons of making the other relevant and saving it from extinction, syncretising it. Many Bemba people and Catholics share this thought, which was sustained in their call on the Catholic Church to re-examine its responses to the Bemba Catholics' belief and practice in mystical powers, the proposal that has found support with Sourou (2014), in his examinations of the synodic calls on the African Catholic Church to dialogue and inculturation.

5.5.4 Dialogue

The research has also discovered that the response to the belief in mystical powers, by some Bemba Catholics, which later influences them to indulge and practise in the believed manifestations of these powers, was dialogue. They reported the church to have been engaging members in talks about issues of conflicting beliefs to find solutions. These findings coincide with the resolutions of the 1994 Catholic synod to pursue dialogue in dealing with ATR beliefs of African Catholics. The synod began the engagement towards cohabitation in dialogue with African traditional religions reported by Sourou (2014). The African Catholics were invited to salvage good elements from their 'spiritual roots' and reconcile with them. He, however, was sceptical about what this invitation to adopt good ATR elements into the individual Catholic faith or the entire African Catholic faith meant. He felt that this invitation could have simply entertained these ATR elements for the sake of peace between the African members and the Catholic Church. Chidi (2008: 8) reported, "The Synod Fathers also encouraged dialogue *ad intra* with those who are now Christians but who would want to retain some or all of the precious values from African Traditional Religion and Culture." These efforts are being made by the church to make faith and African culture meet somewhere so that all Africans could accept it. This call emphasised dialogue from within the church. Sourou (2014) feels the dialogue implemented by the Catholic Church in Africa was not mutual enough to appease the African followers.

Some Bemba Catholics and most Catholic priests interviewed asserted that the church had been engaging in dialogue with traditionalists and hardly with its members, who were the real victims of the belief and practice. However, they expressed the need for mutual understanding from both the church and the Bemba members to find the best solution on how to end the problem of dual religiosity if that were desired. As evidence of the above allegations, priest D claimed that the church was engaging in dialogues with different beliefs outside the church. He, nevertheless, felt that little attention was given to people within the church who may have had conflicting beliefs; the church was doing less to enforce dialogue within itself. Sourou's (2014) scepticism sat well with this priest's

allegation and some Bemba Catholic participants' views of displeasure with how the church handled members with conflicting beliefs. The findings instituted that the church was doing less to enforce dialogue within itself, with its members, and concentrated on the outside of the church. Some Bemba Catholics expressed the feeling that the dialogue perpetuated by the church was only in the interest itself to champion its beliefs and undermine people's traditional beliefs they have cherished for ages.

The research has on the contrary discovered that the Catholic Church has made desirable progress in terms of tolerance of its members' beliefs and practice of their traditional beliefs, which has not always been the case since the coming of the missionaries to the Bemba land. Therefore, the findings of the research have shown that although the local Catholic Church is actively implementing synodic invitations to the African church, the implementation created scepticism in some Bemba Catholics and Bemba traditionalists because of poor communication of the intentions and observable implementation gaps.

The researcher pursued information from all categories of participants, who gave substantial information that effectively accounted for each of the four objectives of this study. The information given by the participants fitted well with the related research and literature. Therefore, the research objectives that this investigation intended to achieve to investigate the influence of Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers on Bemba Catholics of Mpika district have been accomplished due to the thorough execution of the research study.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of this study by establishing the Bemba religious cosmology of mystical powers, Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers and reasons for it, the influence of the BTR belief in mystical powers on the Bemba Catholics on Mpika and the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholic members who believe in mystical powers. The next chapter concludes the research investigation and makes recommendations for both this research's problem and future research.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview

The previous chapter discussed and analysed the field findings. This chapter has concluded the findings of this investigation on the influence of the belief in mystical powers on Bemba Catholics in the Mpika district of Zambia. The conclusion of the findings has been made in light of the research objectives. It has provided recommendations to the local and universal Catholic Church and Bemba Catholics in Mpika. It has also provided recommendations for further research as provided by issues of concern identified during the study.

6.2 Conclusion

To conclude the findings of this investigation on the influence of Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers on Bemba Catholics of Mpika district in Zambia, the study considers its four objectives and research questions.

In relation to the first objective 'to explore the beliefs in mystical powers of Bemba cosmology present in the 21st century Mpika district', the study concludes that in Bemba society, everything that happens, whether good or bad, circumnavigates around the belief in mystical powers. A belief in mystical power is a religious notion in Bemba culture and tradition. The belief in mystical powers encompasses rituals, experiences, emotional, ethical and social aspects that characterise a Bemba person. These powers are considered supernatural, impersonal or magical. They are believed to have either benevolent or malevolent natures.

According to the Bemba people, the unseen world (spiritual world) exists and they regard it as somewhat the source of mystical powers, the world comprises the spirits of both humans and non-humans. The spirits are believed to be the sources of mystical powers they experience, although the exact source of these powers is not well known. The reality and destiny of people are profoundly rooted in the spirit world and the spirits govern all

social and spiritual phenomena through their actions. Both types of spirits possess mystical powers to protect people from misfortunes such as famine, droughts, disease and witchcraft. Atypically, they believe that spirits have mystical powers to cause misfortunes to people and the community when they get offended or when people disobey set traditional and cultural norms of society.

The existing communication between the two worlds means requesting supernatural powers, revelations, protection and fertility of the land, rains and prevention of diseases. Mystical powers are believed to manifest in society through divination, magic, witchcraft, traditional medicines and sorcery, oaths, vows and curse. Witches, sorcerers and wizards are believed to manipulate and employ these powers to influence life in society. The witch doctors, rainmakers, diviners, medicine men and women use these powers to do well for people in society. The environment, nature and natural resources such as trees, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests and animals inhabit mystical powers. Mystical powers also inhabit human beings, objects, charms, fetishes and amulets.

The belief in mystical powers in Bemba society extends to the socio-economic, political, developmental, religious and psychic atmospheres of the people. With these findings, this study has assertively concluded that the Bemba people believe in mystical powers and that this belief holds an immense place in their lives. In addition, the believed manifestations of the mystical powers are fundamental realities in Bemba society that are presented as tradition, culture and as utmost heritage. In exploring the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers, this study has created an awareness of this least explored area of the Bemba people's religious and cultural systems to the young generation of the Bemba people and others. This also fosters an appreciation of the Bemba cosmology of mystical powers in Zambian society and elsewhere.

On the second objective of the study, 'to account for the presence of mystical power beliefs of the Bemba cosmology in the 21st century Mpika district, the research has established that Bemba Catholics share in the traditional Bemba cosmology of mystical powers. The Bemba Catholics cannot be separated from their indigenous belief system.

Because they believe in this cosmology, Bemba Catholics have developed both the traditional conceptualisation of the supernatural and the conception of causation. They view supernatural powers to be behind every fortune and misfortune in the world. Misfortunes and fortunes have worldly causes, such as witches, sorcerers and magicians. They believe in the manifestation of mystical powers in society through divination, magic, witchcraft, traditional medicines and sorcery, rituals, oaths, vows and curses. Due to this investigation and other reviewed related research and literature, the study has concluded that many factors influence the Bemba Catholics to believe in mystical powers. Such factors are the strong traditional sense of family, socio-cultural heritage and dynamics, the perceived lack of effectiveness of the Catholic Church and non-holistic conversion to Catholicism. This study has brought to light the involvement of the Bemba Catholics in the belief in the mystical powers, indicating how deep-rooted this is. Although the Catholic Church indicated its displeasure with this belief and cosmology for its people, the study recounts how this belief is fostered by its alleged inefficiency in finding a lasting solution to the problem.

Concerning the third objective to investigate the influence of the belief in Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers on the Bemba Catholics and its implication on the Catholic faith in the twenty-first century Mpika district, in Zambia, the study concludes that the belief influences Bemba Catholics on a two-fold reality. It influences their perception and conceptualisation of reality around them. This is clear from the findings on the way Bemba Catholics conceptualise the supernatural and perceive causation. In effect, the conceptualisation and conception of reality influence their interpretation of the world around them 'worldview', life events, social and moral phenomena such as suffering, illness, death, evil and goodness and others. This interpretation also entails that misfortunes always have a cause from witchcraft, sorcery, magic and spirits. The supernatural reasons apply to every event and circumstance that happens to Bemba Catholics.

Bemba Catholics are further influenced to turn to Bemba traditional knowledge as the ultimate source of answers to such occurrences as misfortunes. The belief in mystical

powers influences the Bemba Catholics' behaviour. This influence is manifested in the Bemba Catholics' tendency to suspect and accuse other people they label as sorcerers, witches and wizards of causing their situations. These situations include prolonged and unexplained sicknesses, death perceived to be 'mysterious', and calamities befalling their families. They further resort to traditional means of solving problems such as traditional medicine, divination, witch hunting, charms, vows, oaths, rituals and magic. They are influenced to involve themselves in child naming rituals, consultation with the diviners, witch hunters, traditional healers and the practice of traditional medicine.

Furthermore, they are influenced to use charms to improve and protect their business endeavours, marriages, children, property, attract the different sex, get a promotion at work and for other sorts of reasons. Some are influenced to engage in the practice of tattooing to protect themselves from bad magic, witchcraft and sorcery. They are influenced to make and fear curses, vows and oaths. They are influenced to perform rituals related to mystical powers such as agriculture, pregnancy, birth, child naming, marriages, childbearing, death, promotion, protection, health, blessing, healing and many others. With the provided evidence from this research on the influence of the belief in the mystical by the Bemba Catholics, the researcher has concluded that the belief in mystical powers has a tremendous influence on the Bemba Catholics. However, the study wonders about the effect this influence has on the Catholic Church and society.

This study has indicated that the belief in mystical powers by the Bemba Catholics more still the practice in the manifestations of the mystical powers revealed conflicts with the Catholic faith, teachings and spirituality. Even the belief and practices in activities that manifested mystical powers were strongly forbidden by the Catholic Church due to its belief that these behaviours affected the faith: spirituality and Catholic identity of those who participated in them do not stop the Bemba Catholics from being influenced by the belief. This signifies how deep-rooted and influential the belief in mystical powers is. The Catholic Church then engages in responses to this problem as observed.

With regards the fourth objective to examine the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholics' belief in Bemba traditional religious mystical powers), it is concluded that the local church implements sensitisation programmes against the dangers of believing and practising in mystical powers to its members, dialogue and inculturation. Although efforts have irrefutably been made to create platforms for dialogue and enculturation, based on these findings, the researcher has argued that much remained to be desired. The research has concluded that the dialogue the church engages in lags in terms of holistic and sincere consideration of the Bemba people's religious heritage. The methods and aims of these dialogues and enculturation have created scepticism in some Bemba Catholics who felt that the actions benefitted the church more than the Bemba Catholics who wished to find the middle ground in these issues. Also, even though these methods of engagement and intervention employed by the Catholic Church seem attractive pose a danger to the dissolution of the Bemba cultural, religious and traditional remnants embedded in the belief in mystical powers, which the church only sees as a pagan and negative influence on the Bemba Catholic's faith.

The emphasis on the relations between BTR and the Catholic Church leads Bemba cultures and religious identity to be swallowed up by the Western religious-cultural system, which may soon prove atrocious. The questions of whether these measures are effective and efficient have risen. In addition, the question of sustainability of the measures in question arises in this era of religious pluralism. Should the Catholic Church continue with the inculturation path or should it hybridise? What best response and coexistence measures could be of key interest to both ATR and the Catholic Church in Africa, is a major concern.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this study, the research has made the following recommendations:

- i. The church needs to engage in mutual intra-dialogue and collaboration with those members that adhere to the belief in the mystical powers of the BTR to ensure

open coexistence between the Catholic Church and her Bemba members. The lack of mutual intra-dialogue creates conflicts between the members of the Church and the Church. Include the basis for this recommendation.

- ii. The Catholic Church to consider the benefits of the Bemba Catholics' belief in mystical powers (good and evil spirits) as a foundation for planting the Catholic belief in the existence of evil and free will in her Bemba followers. If this belief is integrated well into the Catholic faith, it may strengthen the Bemba Catholics' belief in the existence of God, Jesus and Holy Spirit as supernatural beings and their mystical powers to influence human life course.
- iii. The Church may need to identify and engage individuals who are sufficiently vested in African religious beliefs, cultural, traditional and knowledge systems, converts and traditionalists alike who have impartial perspectives on these matters. These might provide the Church with proper and fair guidance that may help her gain profound and more precise knowledge and appreciation of these African heritages, such as the cosmology of mystical powers.
- iv. The Church to realise and uphold the true nature and values of BTR especially those embedded in the cosmology of mystical powers such as love, oneness and respect for others and nature, which promote and protect both humans and nature.

6.4 Recommendation for Future Research

This investigation was limited to the study of the influence of Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers on Bemba Catholics of the Mpika district of Zambia. For future research, there is a need to broaden the study of the influence of ATR belief in mystical powers on African Christians to create a broader perspective on the problem. A comparative study of Christian and ATR beliefs in spiritual powers may also be considered to create knowledge of the phenomenon. This arises from some of the accidental findings of this study such as demons and principalities.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has concluded the field findings and literary discoveries about the influence of the Bemba traditional religious belief in mystical powers on Bemba Catholics of the Mpika district of Zambia in light of both research objectives and questions. It has also provided recommendations to the local Catholic and the universal Church and provided recommendations for further research to bridge the gaps that this study might have created.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH BEMBA CATHOLIC LAITY

Interviewee's Details:

Name of the parish:

Name of Participant (optional):

QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that some supernatural powers or forces influence all human activities and yours in the world?
2. What makes you believe that there are such powers out there?
3. Would you explain how these powers influence your daily activities?
4. What are your personal experiences with the mystical power? How is it expressed in society?
5. Do you believe that these supernatural powers act in all kinds of ways for good and evil?
6. What are some ways these powers are manifested in your society?
7. Do you believe that there are people in your community who use these certain powers to harm or/and do well to others? Explain!
8. Give examples of such sources of knowledge to the previous question.
9. Do you believe you can protect yourself from harm and bad wishes from others? If yes, how is that done?
10. What could be the reasons for your believing in supernatural powers while still holding onto the Catholic faith?
11. Does your belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba tradition conflict with your Catholic faith?
12. If yes to the previous question, how would you describe the conflict? OR if no, explain why you feel there is no conflict!
13. How does your belief in mystical powers influence you as a Catholic? Give examples!

14. What is the Catholic Church's response to your belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba tradition?
15. What are your recommendations to the Catholic Church concerning this conflict of belief?

Appendix II: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PRIESTS

Interviewee's details:

Name of the parish:

Position held:

QUESTIONS

1. Have there been any reports about your Bemba parishioners' involvement and practice of activities related to the Bemba belief in mystical powers?
2. If yes to the previous question, what are the practices reported to your office? Are there any documents to support that? (you may share the documents if you wish so)
3. How often are these cases reported to your office, and how would you grade your parishioners' involvement in church activities?
4. Does the belief in mystical powers sometimes lead Bemba Catholics to practise activities that manifest the existence of these powers?
5. How is this belief in mystical powers practised by your parishioners in the community?
6. What are the most common practices your Bemba parishioners involve themselves in that you directly link to their belief in mystical powers?
7. What are the observable influences of the belief in mystical powers of your Bemba parishioners?
8. What could be the reasons some Bemba Catholics believe in mystical powers?
9. Does the belief in Bemba traditional religious mystical powers create any conflict between the believing Bemba Catholics and the Catholic Church?
10. If yes to the previous question, what are these conflicts? Or if no, explain why you feel there is no conflict!
11. What has been the Catholic Church's response to Bemba Catholics' belief in Bemba traditional religious mystical powers?
12. What could be your recommendations towards the Catholic Church and the Bemba Catholics concerning the conflict of belief resulting from the latter believing in Bemba mystical powers?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix III: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BEMBA TRADITIONAL LEADERS

Interviewee's Details:

Name of the village/parish:

Position held:

QUESTIONS

1. How are the impersonal supernatural powers or forces explained in Bemba tradition?
2. Why do Bemba people believe in mystical powers?
3. How are these powers manifested in Bemba society?
4. Why would Bemba Catholics be influenced by the belief in mystical powers?
5. How prevalent is the belief in and practice of activities linked to mystical powers by Bemba Catholics in your area?
6. Does the belief in Bemba traditional religious mystical powers create any conflict between the Bemba Catholics and the Catholic Church?
7. If yes to the previous question, what are these conflicts? If no, explain why you feel there is no conflict!
8. How would you suggest that the Catholic Church handles some of its members believing and practising activities of a belief of their homeland religion, in this case, mystical powers?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix IV: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS FOR BEMBA CATHOLIC LAITY

Interviewee's Details:

Name of the parish:

The number of participants:

QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that some supernatural powers or forces influence all human activities in the world?
2. Do you believe that these supernatural powers act in all kinds of ways for good and evil? And how do they act for good and evil? Give examples!
3. Do you believe mystical powers influence the daily lives of people and communities?
4. If yes to the previous question, how do these powers or forces influence the daily lives of people in the community?
5. Do you believe that there are people in your community who use these powers to harm and or do well to others? Give examples of such sources of knowledge.
6. Do you believe some people can use the word to cause someone harm or good? Explain and give examples.
7. Do you believe you can protect yourself from harm and bad wishes from others? If yes, explain how that is possible.
8. Mention some ways these powers are manifested in society.
9. How are these powers experienced in the lives of people and communities?
10. What activities are you involved in that are linked to your belief in mystical powers?
11. What could be the reasons for your believing in supernatural powers while still holding onto the Catholic faith?
12. Does your belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba tradition conflict with your Catholic faith?
13. If no to the previous question, explain why you feel there is no conflict. Or if yes, explain the conflict.
14. How does your belief in mystical powers influence you as a Catholic?
15. What is the Catholic Church's response to your belief in the mystical powers of the Bemba cosmology?