



# Reasons for the Acholi Practices of Syncretism against the Christian Norms in Northern Uganda

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**Abstract:** *Syncretistic practice is mixing of two or more religions that observe different traditions and beliefs that existed before time in memorial, in the ancient religion and the modern time. When Christianity came into Uganda the Acholi were encouraged to leave their traditional worship and take the monotheist worship of the Christian God. The Acholi Christian converts responded positively to the call and the demand of the missionaries. After 130 years of practicing Christianity some Acholi Christians went against the principle of observing one religion instead, they got involved in syncretism. The study investigated the reasons for the Acholi practice of syncretism against the Christian norms. The study was conducted qualitatively and by use of interviews, focus group discussions and participants observation for data collection. This case study and the data gathered were analyzed qualitatively to ensure its validity and reliability. The study revealed that the practice of syncretism among the Acholi is as a result of dominancy of Acholi traditional religion; the method of how Christianity was introduced among the Acholi did not make them understand the basic concepts and principles to adhere to Christian doctrines. Thus, some of them practice syncretism ignorantly as means to find meaning and purpose of life alongside Christianity. To some extent the church has been blamed for the practice of syncretism by some Acholi Christians because they have not taken the positive role of discipleship and transforming the nature of Christian worship that respond to the needs of the community. This made some of the Acholi Christians find an alternative services from their traditional religion beside Christianity.*

**Keywords:** Acholi, Syncretism, Christian, Northern Uganda, Practices

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Definition of syncretism and its conception framework

In this section, the term syncretism is defined and the conceptual framework presented. This is done to relate the investigation of the study on syncretism in religious beliefs

and practices among Acholi Christians of Northern Uganda within the context of the research design and research question that facilitates the presentations, analysis, interpretation and the generalization. This makes the study valid and reliable.

The term “Syncretism”

## Definition of syncretism

Scholars define syncretism in different ways as a means of building its conceptual framework and models to build a working definition that is scientific. According to many scholars, syncretism is an ancient practice; a theological argument that looks at the positive and negative aspects of the phenomenology (Droogers, 1989). These experiences were common among the Greco – Roman religion, Judaism, other religions of the Far East and African traditional religion (Sundermier, 2008). Syncretism exists in literature, music, representational arts and other expressions of culture as well as architecture and politics (Bamaïyi, nd)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, (nd), the word syncretism came into English vocabulary by 1618 and the word is derived from the modern Latin word “syncretismus”, drawn from one Greek word συγκρητισμός that means “synchronization with Crete”. Thus, the term syncretism is derived from a Greek word “synkretismos” that first appear in Malarita (490ab) by Plutarch who derives the meaning from a false etymology from Cretan who in time of danger would set aside all differences in order to make a common cause against the enemy (Sundermier, 2008, p. 167). Therefore, the phenomenon of syncretism is a worldview practice that attempts to reconcile desperate or contrary beliefs of originally separate traditions. This is common in the field of theology and methodology of religions that designate means for an inclusive method to other faith.

The theological meaning of the term syncretism appears for the first time in the late middle - Age (Eramus), it means mixing together confessionally related doctrine that originally did not belong together. In the modern time, it is used for describing the blending and equating of various religious systems. The term has never been valued – neutral in field of religious study (Sundermier, 2008). Thus, Syncretism is the process by which different cultural or religious traditions merge to form a new, distinct system that incorporates elements from the contributing traditions. This can occur in various aspects such as beliefs, rituals, myths, and symbols, resulting in a blended or hybrid practice (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

This blending can manifest in various ways, such as in theology, rituals, myths, and symbols (Shaw & Stewart, 1994). It often occurs when cultures come into contact through trade, conquest, colonization, or migration, resulting in an exchange and fusion of ideas and practices. Key features of syncretism include the integration of diverse practices and theological elements, which often arise from cultural interactions through trade, conquest,

colonization, or migration. For example, the religion of Vodou practiced in Haiti combines elements of West African religions with Roman Catholicism, illustrating how syncretism creates new forms of religious expression by merging distinct traditions (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

For instance, the development of Hellenistic religion involved the fusion of Greek and Eastern religious elements during the Hellenistic period, demonstrating how syncretism can produce new religious forms (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). Similarly, the emergence of Sikhism in the Punjab region incorporated elements from both Hinduism and Islam, illustrating the dynamic nature of religious syncretism (Flood, 1996). Syncretism also occurs in popular religions such as Vodou, practiced in Haiti, which combines aspects of West African religions with Roman Catholicism. This syncretic religion shows how diverse elements can coalesce into a unified practice (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

## The modern definition of syncretism

Modern definitions emphasize syncretism as a dynamic and ongoing process of cultural negotiation and adaptation. For instance, Parker and Stamatov (2020) describe syncretism as the interaction and merging of distinct cultural systems that produce new forms of expression, highlighting its role in cultural resilience and innovation. Syncretism can be observed in various religious and cultural contexts. One contemporary example is the adaptation of Christianity in different global contexts, where local customs and beliefs blend with Christian teachings to form unique religious practices (Beyer, 2016). This process not only demonstrates the adaptability of religions but also how cultural identities are maintained and transformed through syncretic practices.

For example, the Hellenistic period saw the fusion of Greek and Eastern religious elements, forming a syncretic tradition that incorporated gods, myths, and practices from multiple cultures (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). Similarly, the development of Christianity in the Roman Empire involved significant syncretism, as early Christians adopted and adapted various elements from Greco-Roman religious and philosophical traditions (Baird, 2015). In recent scholarly discussions, syncretism is viewed as an active and dynamic process of cultural and religious negotiation. According to Stewart (2017), syncretism involves the continual reconfiguration of cultural elements, which allows societies to adapt and evolve in response to changing circumstances. This view emphasizes the fluidity and ongoing nature of syncretic processes.

Parker and Stamatov (2020) highlight that syncretism often results from interactions such as trade, migration, colonization, and globalization, which facilitate the exchange and fusion of diverse cultural elements. They argue that syncretism is a critical mechanism through which cultures maintain resilience and foster innovation in the face of external influences. In practical terms, syncretism can be seen in various contemporary religious practices. For example, the incorporation of indigenous rituals and beliefs into Christianity in Latin America demonstrates how local traditions can blend with global religious practices to create unique, localized expressions of faith (Beyer, 2016). Furthermore, the adaptation of Eastern spiritual practices within Western contexts, such as the incorporation of yoga and meditation into secular wellness routines, illustrates the syncretic blending of religious and cultural elements across different societies (Hanegraaff, 2016). In summary, syncretism is the process of merging distinct cultural or religious elements into new, cohesive systems, reflecting an ongoing and dynamic process of cultural exchange, adaptation, and innovation (Stewart, 2017; Parker & Stamatov, 2020).

In the study of Dialogue and Syncretism (Droogers, 1989) states that, "Syncretism is a tricky term. Its main difficulty is that it used both objective and subjective meaning. The basic objective meaning refers to neutrally and descriptively to mixing of religions. The subjective meaning includes an evaluation of such intermingling from the point of view that, one of religion involved. As a rule, the mixing of religions is condemned in this evaluation as violating the essence of the belief system".

Rudolph (n.d. quoted in Droogers, 1989), says "the other hand, syncretism existed in the earliest form of Christianity; however, it retained its negative meaning, signifying a deviation from original purity, and often used to designate as sect-like group as pointed". In the 17th century, the notion took on a negative character and came to refer to illegitimate reconciliation of the opposing theological views. Syncretism, thus, became a polemical term employed to defend true religion against heresy. The distinction between an objective and a subjective definition of the concept has obvious roots in history. Kraem looked at the exclusively negative sense of syncretism, denoting an illegitimate intermingling of heterogeneous elements. This idea is observed by evangelical Christian up to date (Droogers, 1989).

A particular religion may have Syncretistic elements to their history. However, adherents to the system belonging to the revealed religion such as the Abrahamic religions or any system that shows exclusive approach, look at the practice of syncretism as a betrayal for their pure truth. They assert that addition of incompatible belief corrupts

the original religion; making it no longer true and who seek the incorporation of the new view, beliefs or practice into religious system distort the original faith. According to Sundermier, (2008), in the history of Christianity, Syncretistic practices were observed from positive perspectives and maintain that Christianity is Syncretistic in its nature. This view was maintained in both the Dialectic theology and Existential theology. In addition, Sundermier observed that the legitimate attempt by the Third World churches to seek their own form, which would encounter with non-Christian context also bring a sense of positive meaning of syncretism.

## Syncretistic Definition in African Context

In the African context, syncretism refers to the blending of indigenous African religious practices with elements from other religions, particularly Christianity and Islam. This fusion results in unique, hybrid religious expressions that reflect the dynamic interaction between different cultural and religious traditions.

### Key Aspects of Syncretism in the African Context

**Integration of Traditional Beliefs and Practices:** African syncretism often involves incorporating traditional African beliefs and practices into the framework of imported religions. This can include the veneration of ancestors, the use of traditional healing methods, and the incorporation of indigenous symbols and rituals within Christian or Islamic contexts (Hackett, 2017).

**Adaptation and Resilience:** Syncretism in Africa demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of African cultures in the face of external influences. By blending new religious elements with traditional practices, African communities maintain their cultural identity while engaging with global religious movements (Hastings, 2017).

## Examples of Syncretistic Religions

**African Christianity:** In many parts of Africa, Christianity has been adapted to include traditional African elements. For instance, in the African Independent Churches, Christian doctrines are combined with indigenous beliefs and rituals, resulting in a distinctive form of worship that resonates with local cultural contexts (Olupona, 2017).

**Sufism in Africa:** In regions where Islam is prevalent, Sufi orders have integrated local customs and traditions into their practices. This syncretism is evident in the veneration

of local saints, the use of traditional music and dance in religious ceremonies, and the incorporation of indigenous healing practices (Trimingham, 2017).

**Cultural Exchange and Innovation:** Syncretism in Africa is not just a passive blending of elements but a creative and innovative process. It involves the active reinterpretation and reconfiguration of religious practices to address contemporary social and spiritual needs. This dynamic process ensures that religious practices remain relevant and meaningful to African communities (Hackett, 2017).

## Recent Scholarly Perspectives

Recent scholarship highlights the importance of understanding syncretism as a complex and multifaceted process. Scholars argue that syncretism in Africa should be seen as an ongoing negotiation between different cultural and religious elements, rather than a static amalgamation. This perspective emphasizes the agency of African communities in shaping their religious identities (Hackett, 2017; Olupona, 2017).

In conclusion, syncretism in the African context involves the creative blending of indigenous religious practices with elements from Christianity and Islam, resulting in unique and dynamic expressions of faith. This process reflects the adaptability, resilience, and innovation of African cultures in response to external influences.

### 1.1.1 Concept of syncretism – Symbiotic model and Synthetic syncretism models

The scholars claimed that the creation of Syncretistic situation come into play as a result of primary cultures and their religions over powered by differentiated superior societies for example the context of cultural contacts, migration, conquest, colonialism and mission efforts by world religion which are unavoidable circumstances but remains of two minds. However, the higher religion does not replace the previous existing religion but selectively integrates, rejects or re-interprets the elements of traditional religion (Sundermier, 2008). For example, the way Mohamed interpreted pre-Islamic religion and its rites into the religion of the revelation in Macca. Islam absorbed the element of Germanic religion into north European Christianity. Israel too adopted Canaanite religious rites and ideas into its religion. This is called a model of symbiotic syncretism (Sundermier, 2008).

According to Bamaiyi (n.d), religious syncretism is an aspect of blending of two or more religious belief system

that has got different worldviews, into a new system. This amalgamation exists and happens where many religions live in areas of proximity and function actively in the culture. Thus, when the conquered and conqueror brought their religious beliefs with them, they were not successful in eliminating the old beliefs and practices wholesomely.

Kamstra (1970, quoted in Drogers, 1989) stressed that syncretism must be seen as a general human trait, and that it is consequently present in all religions including Christianity. Kamstra defined syncretism as “coexistence of elements foreign to each other within a specific religion, whether these elements originate in other religions or for example in social structure”

Kraenmer (1962, quoted in *ibid*, pp. 9-10) maintained that “syncretism is inevitable, unconscious syncretism, which occurs in intercultural contact” whereas for Hartman and Ringgren (*ibid*, pp.10) defined syncretism as “any mixture of two or more religions”.

Pye (1971) conceptualize syncretism as “a temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religions and other contexts within coherent religious pattern”. Meanwhile a theory of an integration of entire system that is conceivable is referred to as synthetic syncretism. This is a horizontal encounter of equal system like Greek religion and Roman religion. This occurs at the elementary level (Sundermier, 2008).

## Models of Syncretism

With the comprehensive understanding of syncretism concerning the Symbiotic and Synthetic Syncretism models, it's essential to delve into many recent studies that provide diverse perspectives and examples.

### *Symbiotic Model of Syncretism*

The Symbiotic Model remains significant in comprehending how traditions can coexist and impact each other without losing their meticulousness. Recent scholarship accentuates how this model has manifested in contemporary multicultural and multi-religious societies (Stewart, 2019).

The key Characteristics of the symbolic model include Mutual Influence: where traditions influence each other while maintaining distinct identities; Coexistence: Where elements from each tradition remain identifiable within a shared context; Adaptation: Where practices and beliefs are adapted to integrate elements from other traditions without losing core identities and; Reciprocity: A dynamic

exchange where traditions mutually enrich each other (Madsen & Carbine, 2021).

This aspect is observable in the incorporation of Buddhist practices such as meditation into Western wellness and mental health programs, where the original Buddhist context is preserved but adapted to fit Western frameworks (Baumann, 2017).

### *Synthetic Syncretism Model*

The Synthetic Syncretism Model involves blending elements from various traditions into a unified new system. This model is predominantly pertinent in the network of globalization, where cultures and religions progressively interconnect and merge (Khan, 2020).

The Significant Characteristics of the above include Integration: here, diverse traditions mix into a single, interconnected system; Transformation: Original traditions adjust, losing some of their distinct identities; Novelty: The subsequent system is new and different from the causative traditions; and Homogenization: A trend towards establishing a new homogeneous tradition rather than sustaining distinct elements (Martínez, 2018).

A typical example of the above is the creation of Candomblé in Brazil, which integrates elements of African Yoruba religion with Catholicism and Indigenous practices to form a distinct religious tradition with unique rituals and beliefs (Capone, 2021).

### *Comparison of the symbolic model and Synthetic model of syncretism*

Identity Preservation vs. Transformation: this pays attention to preserving distinct identities while allowing mutual influence, whereas the Synthetic Syncretism Model involves the creation of a new, unified tradition through integration and transformation (Stewart, 2019). Interaction vs. Creation: The Symbiotic Model involves interaction and mutual adaptation, while the Synthetic Syncretism Model involves creating a new system from the integrated elements of the original traditions (Madsen & Carbine, 2021). Outcome: The Symbiotic Model results in pluralistic coexistence with reciprocal enrichment, whereas the Synthetic Syncretism Model results in a novel tradition distinct from its predecessors (Khan, 2020).

Both models of syncretism highlight different processes of cultural and religious interaction. The Symbiotic Model emphasizes coexistence and mutual enrichment, upholding the balance between influence and identity. The Synthetic Syncretism Model demonstrates how new, innovative

systems can emerge from integrating diverse elements, leading to new traditions. The current studies have been more concerned with an increasing complexity and prevalence of syncretism in an increasingly interconnected world (Martínez, 2018).

In conclusion, the phenomenon of syncretism is a worldview that attempts to reconcile desperate or contrary beliefs of several originally separate traditions. This is common in the field of theology and methodology of religions that designate means for an inclusive method to other faith.

Thus, all definitions and concepts on syncretism has enabled me to comprehend the detailed meaning of syncretism from different scholarly perspectives and enhanced this study to gauge its discussion on the study of syncretism in religious beliefs and practices among the Acholi Christians of Northern Uganda.

Therefore, the study takes a working definition of syncretism and maintains the symbiotic and synthetic, syncretism that is mixing together and blending of beliefs and practices from different societal cultural backgrounds as a result of vertical or horizontal influence in power relation. This focuses on Acholi traditional religion and Christianity.

## **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Before the advent of Christianity in 1877 (Ward, retrieved 1/5/2012 online publication) as one of the religions in Uganda, the people of Uganda and the Acholi of northern Uganda in particular, used to have various forms of beliefs and practices in traditional religion that includes the worship of gods (*Jok*) like any other African societies. The missionaries introduced the worship of monotheism (not in favor of the Acholi polytheisms) and the Acholi, like other Ugandans, accepted and were instructed to leave the practice and beliefs in their old religion which were considered evil by the missionaries. Even though the Acholi people believed in Christianity as a true religion, some still went back and practiced their traditional way of worship like making offerings and sacrifices to atone for their sins and appease traditional gods ('*Jok*'). After some time, some of the Acholi Christians gradually returned to their old religion alongside Christianity.

It is upon this practice that this study seeks to investigate why the Acholi practice syncretism.

This study will examine syncretism from a Christian theological point of view.

## 2. Literature Review

This section discussed related studies in link with the study conducted in Africa, Uganda and among the Acholi community in reference to syncretism in religious beliefs and practices.

African traditional religion is an action-oriented religion, involving some activities, for example: consulting diviner, pouring libation, offering prayers and sacrifices, enthroning a chief, falling into trances, among others. These activities have definite goals to be achieved such as: solving a problem, curing sick people, bringing favorable weather, placating angry spirits, and invoking blessing of ancestors (Mbiti, 1969).

Therefore, according Mbiti, (1980),

*“The church is composed largely of people who come out of the African religious background. Their culture, history, world views and spiritual aspirations cannot be taken away from them. These impinge upon their daily life- and experience of the Christian faith. So the church which exists on the African scene bears the marks of its people’s backgrounds. No viable theology can grow in Africa without addressing itself to the interreligious phenomenon at work there.”*

The above reflects the nature of the Acholi community.

According to Chavunduka, (1999), the Africans who became Christians were discouraged by the church from getting involved in African traditional religious rituals. However, many African Christians continued to participate in traditional religious rituals. Many African Christians practice dual membership; in the Christian church and African religion. Thus, this article gives evidence of the existence of syncretistic practice among the African Christians hence the Acholi inclusive.

Chavunduka, (1999) observed that:

*“The early Christian leaders’ debates that “many African religious rites and rituals and cultural practices are against Christian faith and morals are unfounded. He argued that in*

*recent years a number of African scholars have shown that many traditional practices that Christian churches eliminated or tried to eliminate were not against Christian faith and morals.”*

These observations give chances that motivate one to practice syncretism.

African religion does not encourage people to venerate their ancestors instead of worshipping; members of African religions talk to their ancestors but worship God. African religion says, God is for everyone everywhere. The ancestral spirits are concerned with the day-to-day affairs of their descendants. They are the intermediaries between the living and God. People pray to God through their ancestors (Chavunduka, 1999). This is also a common belief and practice among the Acholi traditional society of northern Uganda.

However, Mathema, (2007) in his writings, “the African worldview: a serious challenge to Christian discipleship” states that:

*“the traditional African worldview has a strong influence and shaping power on the African in that it unifies the African’s thoughts and life. It defines the good life that must be pursued, preserved, and protected; and it guides the thinking, choices, and actions”.*

This seems to indicate that syncretism is an inevitable phenomenon in the church.

Mathema, (2007) also observed that the traditional African worldview often hinders the internalization of Christian message and practice among many African Christians. Thus, the traditional African worldview throws a serious challenge before a church that seeks to “make disciples of all nations,” as the Lord mandated Matt. 28:19 (NIV). This means that the practice of syncretism interferes with the church’s operation and belief in Christianity.

The other research conducted entitled “*Thing Behind the Thing*”; on the study, “*the role and influence of religious leaders on the use of traditional practices acknowledgement in Uganda*” (Quinn, 2009) This study investigated if the church in Uganda can reorganize authority and authenticity of African Traditional Religion as other religions practiced in Uganda.

The church leaders rejected and resisted the acknowledgement to give power to African traditional religion because the practice is unchristian. The resistance by Church leaders in Uganda indicates the leaders had sensed the danger of allowing syncretism if religious practices of the Africans are treated as equals with Christianity. In relation to my study, this is significant because it identified some fear of the church leaders on the mixing of religion. This laid the foundation for this study.

The Christian leaders according to research entitled '*Thing Behind the Thing*'; reported that church leaders across the Christian sects are against African practice of sacrifices to Ancestor spirits and those rituals, because it contradicts with Christian doctrine. The motive to recognize and acknowledge African traditional religion can breed syncretism in the church in Uganda.

The study conducted by Okidi, (2006, unpublished material) on "*the concept of reconciliation among the Acholi of northern Uganda in relation to 2 Corinthians 5:16 – 6:2*" reported that some Acholi Christians acknowledged and got involved in the rituals of reconciliation. However, they are criticized by the church as their participation promotes double standards which are against Christian beliefs. Therefore, my previous studies also gave me a motivation to find the reason why some Christian in Acholi advocates for the mixing of the two religions while others oppose.

When Christianity came to Acholi land in 1903 and created a controversy of disastrous choice of the word '*Lubanga*' or '*Ruhanga*' as the name for god. This was an importation from Bunyoro where *Ruhanga*, a traditional name for the creator, was used as Christian God (Ward, n.d 1/5/2012).

He asserts that one of the missionaries, Crazzolaro always regretted the use of this alien name. He felt that the Luo word '*jok*' was quite capable of carrying the Christian concept of divinity. But both Church Missionary Society and the Verona authorities had come to a conclusion that '*jok*' had too many ambiguous and positively evil associations to be used. I discovered that the use of another name for Christian God reflects a syncretistic phenomenon from the onset of the introduction of Christianity in Acholi but the missionaries did not realize it.

Mbit, (1980) says:

*"The God described in the bible is none other than the God who is already known in the framework of our traditional African*

*framework of our traditional religiosity. The missionaries who introduced the gospel to Africa in the past 200 years did not bring God to our content. Instead, God brought them. They proclaim the name Jesus Christ. But they used the names of the God who was and is already known by African peoples - such as Mungu, Mulungu, Katonda, Ngai, Olodumore, Asis, Ruwa, Ruhanga, Jok, Modimo, Unkulunkulu and thousands more. These were not empty names. They were names of one and the same God, the creator of world, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*The one African theologians, Gabriel Setiloane, has even argued that the concept of God which the missionaries presented to the Sotho-Tswana peoples was a devaluation of the traditional currency to Modimo (God) among the Sotho-Tswana."*

What Missionaries did not know is that the word "*Lubanga*" at the time also "had a sinister indigenous meaning *Jok 'Lubanga'* referred to unambiguously evil spirit responsible for tuberculosis of the spine" (Ward, n.d 1/5/2012). The use of the traditional name of God by three religious traditions of Acholi, Bunyoro and Christianity is a sign of syncretism, hence promotes the investigation as to the Acholi of Northern Uganda practice syncretism in their religious beliefs.

According to Ngomlokojo, (1999) states that in spite of the fact that Christianity is built on monotheism, in some areas of Uganda there are Christian converts who still uphold strong indigenous beliefs. For example, some Acholi Christians secretly practice African traditional religion for example offering of animal or bird blood sacrifice for atonement to ancestor spirits and upholding certain taboos. This expresses the existence of double standards in religious practices and beliefs among the Acholi people of Northern Uganda.

This Idea is completely expressed in one of the reasons why East African Revival Movement came into existence; For instance, some of the Christians and church leaders were practicing double standards in the Christianity. The late *Otunu* in Northern Uganda broke away from the main stream Church of Uganda in 1940s and also publicly rebuked one of the Anglican bishops of Northern Uganda for double standard life of his church leaders.

As it was mentioned above, the Pioneer of East African revivalist posed a question "What is missing in the church of Uganda? Harper in his article says that, East Africa at

that time had much nominal Christians, with low moral standards and a great deal of corruption?” (Harpe, 1986)

The above points out that there existed a tendency of dualism not only in the way of atonement but other areas of life among the Acholi Christians and Uganda at large as revealed by uprising of the East African Revival Movement that emphasized that ‘people of the way’ must always walk in the light (public confession of sins and repentance) – *‘wok in ceng’* in Acholi - and cleansing by blood of Jesus Christ Acholi Christian called (*wot iremo pa Yecu Kricito*) meaning walking in the blood of Jesus Christ.

In the prior study I discovered that the struggle for religious space and upholding specific religious values by both African traditional religion and Christianity poses the tendency of syncretism among the Acholi and Africa.

It is upon these prior studies discussed above that I am motivated to research on the syncretism in religious beliefs and practices among the Acholi Christian of Northern Uganda. Hence, adding to the world-wide literature of the theological debates and upholding of Christian faith.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study was purely qualitative

### **3.2 Units of analysis**

This study was conducted in the parish of Patongo Church of Uganda and Lira Palwo Church of Uganda. Patongo Parish is found in Patongo Archdeaconry and Lira Palwo in Agogo Archdeaconry that is under the administration of the Diocese of Kitgum, the Province of the Anglican Church of Uganda. Patongo Church of Uganda is located at Patongo Town council, Patongo Sub County and Lukole Town Council. On the other hand, Lira Parish church of Uganda is located at Palwo Sub County in Agago district which is one of the five districts of the Acholi.

The phenomenon of syncretism is common in most cultures in Uganda and Africa at large. This study focused on Acholi sub ethnic group for the following reasons:

The researcher belongs to the Acholi sub ethnic group and Patongo Parish his place of origin and Lira Palwo Parish is his first Parish of church Placement. In all these places he had witnessed the Christian involvement in syncretistic religious life but he did not know the reasons as to why

they got involved in it although the church continued to rebuke them. The study selected these places as a sample of other churches in Acholi. Lira Palwo was selected because it is one of first places where Christian Missionary Society established its mission centers. Patongo parish was created out of Lira Palwo Parish. This allowed the study to trace how Christianity was introduced in the area and its spread to other area of Agago district. Lastly, Lira Palwo and Patongo was selected because the people who live in these areas speak the same Luo which the researcher is conversant with, thus, he is fluent with, which, as a result, enhanced effective interaction and collecting data in its original form from the host mouth.

The security reasons also influenced the choice of these places. This is sensitive on the ground that Northern Uganda is still under reconstruction from the aftermath of 20 years of war. Therefore, the researcher had to be sure that his life was not in danger that could risk the success of this study. Finally, such research has not been carried among the Acholi according to various literature that is available. Most of the studies concentrated on the phenomena of wars in Northern Uganda.

### **3.3 Sampling**

The basis for making selections of cases and human subjects is consequently purposeful or purposive, since random sampling selections might easily fail to yield the most informative sites or samples human subjects, skewing findings because of sampling bias. Cases and subjects may be selected for their representativeness of a larger population but are more likely to be chosen for their or informativeness (Mabry, 2008).

The study was carried out in a defined geographical location, selected target number of the respondents and the respondents were selected basing on their experiences and knowledge on the research subject; their involvement and reputation in the community and the church. Respondents for in-depth interviews (face to face) were selected in accordance with their religious academic expertise and experience of Acholi community.

#### **3.3.1 Sampling procedure**

The preliminary survey of the people to be interviewed was conducted through the parish priests and traditional leaders in Patongo and Lira Palwo. Here, I oriented the parish priest about the kind of people whom I wanted to interview, that is, the church leaders, experienced church elders and Acholi traditional leaders who can provide relevant information on the research topic. The parish priest and traditional chief assisted the research in identifying



respondents for focus group basing on their experience and knowledge on both traditional and Christian religious beliefs.

For individual interviews, people I intended to interview were directly contacted, we agreed on the date, time and venue for the interview. This was done in order to allow adequate preparation and planning by both the researcher and the respondents to avoid unnecessary interference.

Category selected for research interview and focus group discussions included the bishop, priests, catechist, lay Christian leaders and church elders; religious professionals and Acholi traditional (religious) leaders.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

It is important to note that for a researcher to come up with good research findings he or she must use dependable, reliable and relevant methods of data collection. This is because the quality of the research findings a researcher gets are to a very big extent determined by the methods of data collection the researcher uses. According to King et al. (1994, p.23), data is a “systematically collected elements of information about the world” and Yin (2009, pp.101 – 113,) also mentioned that “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observations and physical artifacts” as the most commonly used source of data.

Creswell (2009) outlines data collection steps that include setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through unstructured or semi structured observations and interviews, documents and visual materials, as well as establishing the protocol for recording the information.

This study used in – depth interview, focus group discussions and participants observation as means of data collection for the field study. Secondary data from the library, journals and internet websites was also used.

### **3.5 Data collection methods**

I used in-depth interview, focus group discussions and participants’ observation as means of data collections. These were applied in the following ways.

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

In an attempt to acquire data from the field, I used a qualitative interview as one of the methods of data collection. Steinar & Brindkmann, (2009), observed that qualitative research interview attempts to understand the

world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. This observation shapes the attention and focus of this study to make it scientifically relevant. They defined as an interview an exchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interests. This method encourages a person to tell her story.

I did not apply all aspects of interview methods applied to the study. I use face- to- face interview (in- depth interview).

#### **Underlying principle of face –to- face interview**

The main advantages of face-face-interview are “the availability of an interviewer to structure the interview situation that helps to motivate respondents. It allows optimal communication, as both verbal and nonverbal communications are possible. The Structured and partly structured interview schedules with open questions can be used as interviewer poses questions; follow up with additional probes, bridges silences, and records answers.” (Leeuw, 2008) This method gave me opportunity to explore more detailed information from the field because the interview environment was friendly as the respondent had developed confident and competence in the subject of the study.

However, its disadvantage is that the respondents can feel repressed to give answers to sensitive issues at the present of to reveal important information at the present of the interviewer (ibid). This gap was bridged by the use of other methods of data collection such as focus group discussions and participants’ observation.

#### **Procedures**

Three respondents were interviewed having been selected based on their expertise in the field of religion, acquaintance to Acholi traditional religion, and community and church activities in the Acholi Land. They are also active Christians.

The composition of the respondents include: head teacher who is Clergy (ROP), a Christian religious education teacher (OPB) from Lira Palwo and a retired bishop of the Diocese of Kitgum (MBO) from Kitgum.

I used structured open ended question guides that focus on the three research questions that based on the causes, the effects of syncretism on Church ministry in Acholi sub region, Northern Uganda and possible perspective of curbing down syncretistic practice in the Church. I used the

oral interview and also recorded all the proceedings as a means of documentations.

This question guides help me to probe the respondents in order to cultivate relevant information on the reasons for the practice of syncretism among some Acholi Christians; find the aftermath and possible remedies to curb down the practice in the church.

I interacted with the respondents and I observed verbal expression, body movement such as hand's illustrations and facial expression. This helped in the analysis and interpretation of the data. I interview the above respondents because of their expertise in the field of religion.

### **3.5.2 Focus group discussions**

A focus group is commonly “understood to be a group of 6 – 12 participants, with an interviewer, or moderator, asking questions about a particular topic. It is an in-depth group interview that applies homogeneous groups to provide information around topics specified or it is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perception on a defined environment” (Smithson, 2008).

Focus group discussions have been used widely by social science researchers because:

They allow flexibility of the members to discuss free on issues. Discussion allows participants to talk to members and facilitators directly, in that way, firsthand information is collected (Amin, Martin E., 2005, pp.188). Amin, (2005:188) says that on a group settling, peoples relax up thus the interaction is free and feelings, experiences and ideas are valued. As a result, respondents express themselves more openly and data collected is true. On the other hand, focus group discussions can lead to other techniques of consultations as they provide background information that enables the researcher to generate hypothesis for a more elaborates study. Lastly, group discussions provide many possible answers to specific questions as opposed to questionnaires that elicit specific answers for given questions (Amin, 2005:188).

In this study, three groups were organized, that is, two in Patongo and one in Lira Palwo. The first group were church leaders, the group two were some church members of Patongo sub – parish and a third group in Lira Palwo, was a mixture of Acholi traditionalists who are Christians and also holds executive post in the Chiefdom of Lira Palwo under the Chief (*Rwot*). These focus groups were purposefully selected through the help of the Parish Priest and the *Rwot* of Lira Palwo.

The behavior of the participants at the focus group discussions included argumentativeness, corrective, and agreement on a common grounds, disagreement and dominance by some experience elders. The respondents also ask questions that shape the nature of contributions. The chairperson of the discussions group regulated and controls the process of discussions to give equal opportunities to all the members to take part. However, there were some members who were passives, the members' respected opinion of one another. In general, the focus group discussions processes were interactive and informative. I was an active observer

Comparatively, group one and group two were defensive and against the practice of syncretism because it is unethical and it erodes the church norms and values. On the other hand, group two blames the church leaders for not promoting sound teaching and neglecting of the church duties. Meanwhile group three were not against the practice and encourage inculturation and indigenization in the practice of Christian faith.

The participant in Lira demonstrated some of the Acholi traditional rituals which gave more insight to the study. The Elder in charge of Acholi traditional spiritual matters slaughtered a hen which illustrated to the research of how a ritual of atonement among the Acholi is useful. “However, Christianity do not allow the practice”, observed one of the elders.

### **Documentation of the data during the focus group discussion**

All proceedings were recorded in both video and audio. Still photographs were taken by research assistant and I took the notes.

Prior to focus group discussions, I requested the group to pick one of them to take the counter notes. OJ was the secretary for Patongo Church of Uganda and in Lira Palwo was the secretary of the cultural leaders. This was done to allow comparison of data collected in order to maintain its authenticity and relevancy thus strengthening the level of the validity and the reliability of the research findings.

After the discussions, the researcher presented the recorded audio and video clips for the participants to listen and view it. This was done in order to enhance the approval of the documentation by the respondents.

### 3.5.3 Participant Observations

Research observation is the method of data collection that employs vision as its means of data collection. It is an indirect method of data collection since in most cases it collects data without the full knowledge of the respondent. (Amin, 2005, pp.169). The observation method of data collection uses systematic procedure to identify target phenomenon to categorize, observe and record and it may be used alone, or supplement information collected using other methods (Amin, 2005, pp.188). It provides unique insight not attained by other methods. It yields direct firsthand information, which is more valid than reported information obtained from questionnaires and interviews (Amin, 2005, pp.175 – 176). Participants' Observation provides direct procedure for studying various aspects of behavior and it enables one to code and record behavior at the time as it occurs (Amin, 2005:18). It is relatively not expensive. It employs less complicated and less time-consuming procedures of subject selection, and it can offer data when respondents are unable and /or unwilling to cooperate or to offer information (Amin, 2005, pp.188). Participants' observation approach reality in its natural structure and study events as they evolved and it shows the collection of a wide range of information, even when this information is thought to be, at time of the study irrelevant (Amin, pp. 2005:188).

#### Observations

As the interviews progressed, I observed that the Acholi Christians has the in-depth of their culture and traditional religious beliefs through their emotional attachment to their expressions of some specific traditional beliefs as compared to their understanding of Christianity. This was typically captured during the ritual of atonement offered in the form of slaughtering a hen.

I also observed through facial expression and body psychology, the fear of some of the Christians in opening at the presence of the church leaders. On the other hand, I observed the boldness of some Christians in the absence of their leaders; who accused the church leadership of neglecting their pastoral role of discipleship; visiting of Christians; and their unavailability in moments of need.

Moreover, the OBM and other two respondents namely ROP and OPB openly criticized the mode in which Christianity was introduced in Acholi and Uganda as a whole. The traditionalist respondents expressed their concerns that the Acholi traditional religion is not witchcraft but way of life that should be included in the Christian way of life. This is in line with what Mbiti, (1969) says that Africans are deeply religious.

I also observed that some of the traditionalists were not afraid in confessing that they practice both Christianity and Acholi traditional religious beliefs. What Christianity cannot give or explain, they can find solace or refuge in Acholi traditional religion.

In the focus group discussion group one I observed that some of the participants were not free to express some of the issues that lead to practice of syncretism in the church at the present of the parish priest; in the second group in the absence of the parish priest they were free to air out their opinion without fear. Lastly participants in Lira Palwo were very active because they are all engaged in double standards and they argued in support of syncretism and they uphold the practice of Acholi traditional norms is not evil.

### 3.6 Methods of Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

“The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image. It involves preparing data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making interpretation of the larger meaning” (Creswell 2009). “It is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytical questions, and writing memos throughout the study” (Creswell: 2009). This is important as it helps in the conclusion and recommendation of the study.

“Data analysis involved collecting open ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants” (Creswell: 2009, p.184). I find this stage tiresome and hectic.

#### 3.6.1 Organizing and preparing data for analysis

I transcribed all the recorded audio and video data. These data were recorded in Acholi dialect, as in a process of transcriptions I translated it word by word and others as a paraphrase or descriptive especially for those Acholi words that cannot be translated directly into English words or form a meaningful sentence. I type all these and other field notes with help of the Microsoft office.

#### *Rethinking process*

This is a process that I refer to as rereading through the manuscripts again and again in order to identify and generate facts that can make sense and a logical framework

of the data analysis and making final reports. At the rethinking process I asked questions what does it mean, who said and why? How relevant is it for the study? Here, I accounted for all specific worldviews of the respondents in order to gain a general sense of information (Creswell, 2009). I call it rethinking because I have been thinking before and after the field work, but this was a particular moment I paid central focus on the meaning and purpose of all the data recorded and transcribed in relation to the secondary data that I sourced. This is a drawing of a mental map of how the data should look like.

### **3.6.2 Coding of the data**

This is an earth breaking stage that calls for patience and accuracy in order to generate a sense that can inform and transform individuals or community at large as well as opening new field for further academic ground. Data was coded thematically and logically to present an orderly participant views and analysis.

Creswell, (2009) observed that a detailed analysis should begin with coding. Thus, coding is “a process of organizing the materials into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information”.

At this stage I made a hard copy of the transcript, I went through it carefully and categorize all the data according to its source, then sorted them out according to the meaning it employs in relation to the research questions and methods use for collecting data. I labeled the relevant in formations and I pay attention to specific terms based on the actual language of the respondents (Creswell 2009) in order to generate a theme for each segmented unit. I isolated each segmented unit according to its category that can allow easy description of the meaning of the data.

### **3.6.3 Reporting procedure of the data**

In the book of Creswell, (2009), “The basic procedure in reporting the results of qualitative study is to develop descriptions and themes, for the data to represent these descriptions and themes that convey multiple perspectives from participants and detailed descriptions of the setting or individuals. Using a qualitative strategy of inquiry, these results may also provide a chronological narrative of individuals’ life, a detailed description of their experiences, a theory generated from the data, a detailed portrait of culture – sharing group, or an in – depth analysis of one or more cases.”

Reflecting on what Creswell has written above, after organizing the data, I read through and coded. At this point, I turn to write the report by telling what transpired during

the field study by either reporting directly what the respondents said or paraphrasing their statement or using direct phrase from the Acholi dialect and sometime indirectly writing the respondents worldviews that can generate sense. I did not derive the format of presenting respondents view from anywhere, but it was what I have design as an appropriate to covey the respondents’ views. However, the reporting reflects the nature of a case study.

### **3.6.4 Making interpretation**

At this stage, I sort out key issues that came out of the respondents’ worldviews and engaged it into critical interpretations and discussions as seen in chapter three and four. The interpretations and discussions are based on the issues that relates to syncretism in religious beliefs and practices among the Acholi of Northern Uganda focusing on the causes, effects and perspective interventions to curb down syncretistic practice among the Christians in Acholi sub region of Northern Uganda,

An illustration to shade more light on the issues that cannot merely be explained by words is also one of the methods I adopted at the time of interpretation of the data.

### **Validity of the study**

Validity in research is the degree to which a study accurately reflects or measures the concept it is intended to investigate. It involves ensuring that the study’s design, methods, and conclusions are accurate, credible, and applicable to other settings. Validity encompasses internal validity (ensuring the study accurately reflects causal relationships), external validity (generalizability of findings), construct validity (accurate measurement of theoretical constructs), and statistical conclusion validity (accurate statistical inferences) (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Validity denotes the truth, the accuracy, and the strength of a statement. A valid inherent is correctly derived from its premise. Steianar & Brinkmann, (2009), writes that a “valid statement is sound, well grounded, justifiable, strong, and convincing”. They also mentioned that “the issue of what is valid knowledge involves the philosophical question of what is truth”.

According to Amin (2005), Validity is the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values; that is to produce accurate results and to measure what is supposed to be measured.

Thus, validity is an overall evaluation of the extent to which theories and empirical evidence support interpretation that are implied in given uses of the scores” (McMillan, 2008, p.14). It concerns the judgment of the appropriateness of a measure for a specific inferences or decisions that result from the scores generated by the measure. It is the inference that is valid or invalid, not the measure Amin (2005, p.285).

Thus, the study treated the internal validity, interpretative validity, trustworthiness validity and viewed external validity as essential in upholding the strength of this study.

### **Internal validity**

Internal validity is the integrity of the research design for logical analysis thus full account of the research site and subject, data collection devices and the procedures were presented.

I applied “interpretative and trustworthiness techniques” (Hale, October 25). This is done to argue the validity of the study. This was done to ensure the degree of interpretation and conclusion of the research is accurate and the data reflects the phenomenon’s reality.

### **Interpretive Validity**

In the imperative techniques I observed the usefulness to determine to what extent can the study stimulates further research; contextual completeness by verifying the richness of each data collected from the field work; I also considered many as one of the devices for data collection and adhered to ethical order maintain the good rapport with participants by selecting data collection methods that promote free interaction and participations. “To uphold the validity of the study, the researcher must be aware of his direct or indirect effect on the research documentation, sites, and participants” (Hale, October 25), among others.

The research reporting style was done in a narrative, descriptive, and interpretative manner.

### **Trustworthiness of the study**

A study’s “trustworthiness” is increased when data analysis and conclusions are triangulated; subjects’ perceptions are verified in a systematic manner; and the project’s data chain of evidence is established (Hale, n.d, October 25).

Triangulation techniques employed the use of multiple data collection procedures and sources to ascertain the validity of findings (Hale, n.d, October 25).

The study also applies the technique of member checking, that is, the participants viewed the collected data, findings and its representativeness.

“In chain evidence checking” (Hale, n.d, October 25), the study made sure that there is a logical relationship between research questions, research procedures, raw data and results that correspond to the conclusions and recommendation of the study.

Other factors observed in the chain evidence checking outlier analysis technique, the highly dismissible data were detected to uphold the findings integrity; pattern matching was done to enhance the trustworthiness of the research; representativeness check was done by reviewing the literatures, interviews of different sets of participants such as church leaders, teachers and traditional leaders that gave their worldviews on the study. This helps in the comparison of the two data sources of the study that looked at its interrelatedness, relevancy and applicability.

The coding check was done to analyze the differences on data collected from primary source and the secondary source. These differences were resolved in order to generate a single meaningful report.

### **External Validity**

According to Yin (2009), he defines external validity as defining the domain to which study’s findings can be generalized.

The secondary data obtained from various sources gave the basis of the external validity on the ground that this study relates to other studies elsewhere in a different setting and the same treatment of this study can be applicable in other society that practice religion.

### **Reliability of the study**

The reliability test ensures that if an independent investigator followed the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions (Yin 2009). This study is reliable because it used appropriate recommended procedures for the qualitative studies that has been employed by other researchers, the site for the study existed in a local setting and a defined geographical location, the Acholi people as a subject of study have traditions and culture that is lived

and propagated from generation to generations. The syncretic practices in all religious beliefs have been there in the human institution in the world therefore, the field for this study is still very fertile in Acholi Land, thus it enhances any research to verify the reliability of this study empirically as the respondents still exist.

### 3.7 The process of data analysis

Furthermore, Steinar & Brinkmann, (2009) upholds that the ethical issues go through the entire process of interview investigation, and potential ethical concerns should be taken in consideration from the very start of an investigation to the final report, that is thematizing, designing, interview situation, transcription, analysis, verification and reporting of the research.

In transcription, analysis, verification and reporting; the names of the respondents are coded in initials of their name to protect the image, identity and any repercussion due to sensitiveness of the data provided. They agreed that their name can appear in the appendix but not throughout the text, however other did not mind whether their names appear or not. For uniformity I used the initials of their names.

Lastly, I also put into consideration the language format in the thesis in order to not defame the respondents. This is because it is data that is going to be used in the public domain.

Steinar & Brinkmann, (2009) observed that, “the ethical problem in the interview research arise particularly because of the complexity of researching private lives and placing accounts to the public arena”

## 4. Results and Discussion

Research Question one: Why do some Acholi Christians in Northern Uganda practice religious syncretism?

In this section, the research answers are presented in two folds; since the study used Focus group discussion and in-depth Interviews during data collection. The research presents the participants’ views, whilst the data is interpreted from the respondents’ opinion on the subject.

### In-depth Interview presentation

Answers from the respondent are in quotations and indented; then, the remarks or comments run through a normal paragraph.

Respondent one: a retired bishop of DOK (MBO, January 2012)

These were the MBO responses:

*“... the church of Christ in Uganda has failed to understand the cultural values and the importance of culture among the Luo people in Northern Uganda”*

In the phrase “... the church has failed to understand the cultural values” – here, MBO was making an attempt to explain the negligence of the early Missionary in understanding the Acholi traditional norms and beliefs. The reason could be that they came from a different society with its own sets of teaching and values. As a result of their inadequate knowledge, the missionaries were unable to infiltrate the system of the Acholi way, hence leaving some Acholi Christians to continue in the practice of syncretism.

In relation to the above, Mbiti (1980) says in an online publication that:

“Since the bible tells me that the creator of all things, his activities in the world must clearly go beyond what was recorded in the Bible. He must have been active among African peoples as he was among the Jewish people. Did he then reveal only reveals himself only in the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and other personalities of the Bible? Didn’t our Lord let it be clearly known that “before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58)? Then was he not there in other times and in such places as Mount Fuji and Kenya, as well as Mount Sinai? The decisive here is “only.” The more I peeped into African religious insight about God, the more I felt utterly unable to use the word “only” in this case. In its place there emerge the word “also.” This was an extremely liberating word in my theological thinking. Wit it one began to explore afresh the realm of God’s revelation and other treasures of our faith. I find the traditional Western distinction between “special revelation” and “general revelation” to be inadequate and unfreezing. This is not a biblical distinction. If they are two wavelengths, they make sense only when they move toward a convergence. When this happens then, passage such as Hebrew 1:1-3 rolls down like mighty waters, full of exciting possibility of theological reflection.”

The early missionaries seem to have been quick at concluding from the surface that it was irrelevant to learn from the Acholi cultural religious settings before presenting the Gospel. This hindered effective propagation of Christianity in the Acholi land. It means if the missionary had learnt from John Mbiti’s worldviews faith as quoted above, MBO would have not lamented that the Acholi decry the missionaries introduced Christianity

outside their culture and maligned their traditions. Bediako, 1992:308-312) and in Acts 17:22-31 Paul began the gospel from known to the unknown among the Athenians.

Reflecting on the expression "... church has failed to understand the values and importance of culture...", some scholars say that culture is a vehicle of mission – once you put the Gospel in the culture, there is possibility of religious growth and development.

In addition to the above Mathema (2007) viewed that Christianity was weakened when the missionaries ignored the traditional African worldview and packages the gospel with colonialism and western culture. He said this approach produced dualistic Christendom which brought about schizophrenia in the African life.

*"I think the church has failed to appreciate the importance of culture right from the beginning of in their evangelistic enterprise in among the Luo people in Northern Uganda."* (MBO, January, 2012).

In the above, MBO (January, 2012) upholds that the Acholi, (whom he refers to as the 'Luo' throughout the study), practice double standards is as a result of missionaries' neglect to recognize the importance of the culture.

He said:

*"According to the early missionaries, African culture was perceived with negative attitude as devilish in nature. As a result, they failed to reach out to the Luo people with the Gospel of Christ from Acholi cultural perspective because nothing African was good. This negative approach of missionaries' evangelism made communication between them and the Luo people extremely difficult or impossible."*

At this point, MBO had the intention to draw the attention of this study to realize that the foundation of Christianity in the Northern Uganda was not laid on a solid ground since Missionaries had prior prejudices over the Luo (Acholi or Africans) and their way of life. For example, there is controversy on the name of God in Acholi – 'Jok' which was replaced by Banyoro name of God 'Ruhanga' – because 'Jok' claimed to be a general name of spirits or supernatural beings and cannot be compared with the Christian name of God that denote 'Monotheistic' worship.

The above example portrays that the Acholi are involved in syncretism because from the onset some of the Acholi basis of understanding of supernatural being were removed

and it seemed difficult for the Acholi to adapt to the new religion without referring to their old one (jok to God).

It seems, MBO is trying to assert that if the Acholi practice double standards it is because some of them accepted Christianity more from a social point of view since it was laudable to have an alliance with the Whites and the benefits associated with it.

*"Luo culture and religion have remained very strong in spite of the introduction of Christianity over centuries, converted ones are partially Christian and they continue to practice their cultural religion a long with Christianity"* (MBO, January, 2012).

The statement, "... Luo culture and religion remains very strong ..." - it means that Christianity did not make concerted influence or change on some of the Acholi ways of life, particularly to those that bear Christian identity. The actual significance of the Gospel is meant to bring transformation in a person's life.

*"The concept of atonement among the Luo people (the Acholi) is intended to avert God's wrath against offenders. Averting anger of God from the Acholi perspective is significant and understood by native Acholi Christians and it is participatory, all members of the community are involved regardless of creed. This inclusive nature of Acholi tradition encourages double standards among Christians in Acholi"* (MBO, January, 2012).

MBO's interpretations and presentations on atonement display a certain degree of his ability of understanding the nature of Acholi Christians and their culture in relation to the Christian faith. His articulation, as a Christian leader in interpretation of Acholi traditional beliefs, gives evidence that he knows and understands his roots as an Acholi. This suggests that he is a representation of other Acholi Christians who understand their traditional religion. Therefore, it is a sign that Christianity did not erode their understanding of the old religion. The Acholi are deeply rooted in their cultural norms and practices, and they find it difficult to completely abandon their way of life and fully embrace Christianity.

He pointed out that atonement is a means through which broken relationships between God and man can be rectified. This seems to be central in Acholi way of life. The Acholi perception of atonement as stated above is similar to that of Christian perspectives. It seems these similarities made it complicated for some Acholi Christians of Northern Uganda to distinguish the difference between the Acholi and the Christian teachings and practices of atonement hence paving way to syncretism.

*“Luo people find it difficult to believe in the Christian teaching of atonement that through the death of Jesus Christ, sin is dealt with once and for all”* (MBO, January, 2012).

The above quotation “...Luo find it difficult...” means they have not understood the Christian concept of the death of Jesus Christ which left them in doubt of Christian faith.

*“...for Luo people, human relationships are very dynamic that call for frequent interactions between the proprietors and offended communities. This can only be done through frequent atonement in accordance to the new circumstances that breaks human relations among the community”* (MBO, January, 2012).

MBO was focusing on how the Acholi observe their norms and in case any of these norms is estranged then each of the norms requires a particular attention in order to restore the broken relationship between God and his people. For example, if one has committed incest, murder or has stolen, the way to atone each of these offenses are not the same because the Acholi believed that its magnitude varies as well as the elements required to undo the wrong. If such circumstances occurred, some Christians prefer to go and handle it in the Acholi way. For example, in an offense of murder, the Acholi prefer traditional means of “Mato opot” (drinking of bitter herbs of opot tree) which is very comprehensive and demanding in order to appease the spirit of the diseased and spiritual world; cleanse and restore relationship with the world of the living compared to sin of deserting home in anger that only call for sprinkling of water and sacrilegious herbs on the victim.

This suggests that tradition, culture and beliefs are influential and they structure the way of life of an individual or a community. One may wonder how MBO, who is the custodian of faith, articulates passionately and interprets the important values in culture and tradition of the Acholi traditional way of life. He presents this thought like any other ordinary Acholi without a principle in their Christian life.

*“Atonement, like daily worship, must always be done in accordance to new a circumstance (offense) that has come up and has broken human relationship among the Luo people”* (MBO, January, 2012).

According to MBO, he is trying to assert that the general idea of repentance in Christian beliefs does not give an Acholi Christian certification. Among the Acholi, each sin is handled differently in relation to its gravity and the element(s) required for sacrifices or offerings followed by a particular procedure of rituals of atonement. The Acholi

means of atonement build confidence and true restoration of the broken relationship compared to Christian atonement. These encourage the Acholi to practice their religion alongside Christianity.

*“... Acholi way of atonement is very practical.... Acholi atone to restore relationship with God.”* (MBO, January, 2012).

The practical nature of Acholi atonement is during ritual that involved slaughtering of animals, birds and use of sacrilegious herbs (yat kir, mato opot,). The practical sprinkling of the blood/sacrilegious herbs on the victim and the community as well as carrying out libation to ‘Jok’ makes purification aspect more physical and authentic in the sacred life of the Acholi people.

Secondly, MBO means that atonement in the Acholi way of life is practical; an offender had to pay a penalty and part with some of his/her wealth to appease gods, satisfy the offended and the community at large.

The MBO gave a descriptive illustration of what Acholi viewed as practical atonement that draws the attention of an individual and the community each time and again.

*“Atonement is always used in restoring the broken human relations among the Luo people, especially in the families. For example, when a husband urinates in the house; or if a wife drinks ashes (‘mato buru’) after a quarrel with the husband; at the same time in case a mother or a father curses a son or a daughter; in all these cases the relationship is cut off instantly. Among the Acholi it requires a sacrifice (‘tumu kir’) of unblemished lamb to atone for the wrong before the reunion.”*

The sacrifice is central in the life of the Acholi and once it is done, it is believed that all the curses and misfortunes spelt on an individual or community are averted and peace reigns in a family or community since all the ‘cooperate – community’ (the living and the living dead) are contented.

The practical aspect is also witnessed during a ceremony where everyone is involved. Therefore, the Acholi community’s organ revolves around collective responsibility. In case of anything that destroys their union, they respond as one people and find solutions to reconstruct it.

According to the quotation, it reflects that MBO’s knowledge and understanding of his tradition as an Acholi is not corrupted by Christianity despite the fact, he is one of the custodians of faith in the Anglican church of Uganda. This interprets that the traditional beliefs bear a lot of



impact on an individual regardless of the level of spirituality in Christianity. (However, there are no better means of measuring spirituality).

**Respondent 2: a clergy, Head Teacher and Chaplain  
Lira Palwo Secondary School (ROP, November, 2011)**

When asked ROP why some Christians among the Acholi of Northern Uganda are involved in syncretism the ROP gave the following responses.

*"...the Acholi fear sin ... in case one becomes a victim ... Cleansing is recommended by the elders."* (ROP, November, 2011).

The phrase *'the Acholi fear sin'*; it could bear some connotations that the Acholi people refer to God in Holiness and honor their good relationship with Him (the Acholi refers to God as 'Lacwec' – literally means the creator).

*"In case one becomes a victim"*, this is an expression that indicates an act of alienation in relationship; *"... cleansing ..."* a process of making one pure again and it is a revelation that Acholi as community is mindful of consequences of sinning that can only be put right through atonement.

*"... The elder recommends ..."* this phrase could be defined as a representation of authority or influence of elders in the governance and sustainability of the Acholi community. As in other African society, among the Acholi, the words of the elders seemed to be final, and the community obey without reservation.

Among the Acholi disobedience of senior members of a family or community is an abomination that calls for cleansing. It seems that in fear of avoiding further curses, an individual or community the offender surrendered to the authority of their elders. As of the above deductions, it seemed one ends up in upholding both Christian practice and Acholi traditional religion.

The Acholi believe the elders are the representative of God and the custodian of the community.

*"Among some Acholi Christians if one is not convinced with way of atonement in the church, he/she turns to Acholi way of Atonement and continues to be an active member of the church"* (ROP, November 2011).

In the phrase *"If one is not convinced"*, in this analysis, ROP seems to pre-empt that Christians theory and practice

of atonement lacks some element that is essential in the life of some Acholi Christian believers of which they seem to find it in their Acholi traditional religion. That compensates or bridges the missing link in their religious lives that Christianity cannot give. Then syncretism becomes the necessary evil in their Christian practice.

*"The blood is very significant in Acholi cultural and religious practices. Some Acholi do not understand what it meant by the ' blood of Jesus'. They are more able to interpret it vividly in Acholi way of atonement than in Christianity; for example, the actual blood that they use at time of atonement gives true satisfaction than the theoretical blood of Jesus. This makes some Acholi Christians continue to practice double standards in the Church"* (ROP, November 2011).

It appears that some Acholi Christians who are involved in syncretism could envision that, the idea of the blood of Jesus is a more rhetorical event and it lacks empirical aspects that embed the core life of the Acholi people. Yet, this could be one of the means that fulfills man's request for God and demand in their sacred life among the Acholi people.

This implies that some Acholi Christians have doubt in whether the church presents the real blood of Jesus Christ, or it is an abstract thinking of the church, which has a buried meaning. The Acholi understand and believe in the physical blood of goat, sheep, bull, cow or birds that are used for cleansing in their tradition. Therefore, the metaphorical blood of Jesus for cleansing does not perfect Acholi Christian anxiety for purification.

From the above analysis, some Acholi Christians of Northern Uganda tend to seek alternatives that gives them fuller understanding and satisfaction of the atonement but still uphold Christian identity and faith. This is mixing the two religions that have got different principles and practices. This is what the study called syncretism.

When ROP was asked to enlighten more on the meaning of blood in Acholi; he said,

*"Remo en kwo' (the blood is life) and bad life is restored by the flow of the blood of an animal or bird like chicken."*

Here, the Acholi hold the teaching of the Old Testament Lev.17:11, 16:15 and Heb. 9:12

This theory of 'remo en kwo' (the blood is life) seemed to have a profound engraftment in Acholi way of life. This is a sign that without application of blood in case of sin, the Acholi could believe that the aftermath of sin devours an

individual or community at large. Looking at blood as the only means of remission, probably, makes some Acholi Christian to encounter double standard.

Then he explained how the ritual was done to put more weight on his answer on the meaning of the blood and why some Acholi practice dual standard.

*“The blood is put on the chest of the offenders that needed cleansing and that expects that new life could be brought by the flow the blood ... this is what makes Acholi way of atonement exceptionally practical! That is why some Acholi Christians are drawn back to this kind of life.”* (ROP, November, 2011).

“The putting of blood on the chest of offender – (‘idog cwiny dano ma obalo’)” – it is a point that symbolizes the position of human heart and Acholi believes that it is the heart that gets defiled. Among the Acholi, the heart is considered as soul’s or spirit’s position of man. A spotless person among the Acholi is considered to be person with uncontaminated heart; one who does good to all and leads a blameless life, although the philosophy of being good is relative.

*“The Acholi way of atonement is easily evaluated because once it is not done as dictated by circumstances of the offense committed, the offender or the society continues to be tormented and haunted. The Acholi believe that the spirit is not at rest until appropriate means of atonement is conducted.”* (ROP, November, 2011).

From the above viewpoint, ROP proposes that means of atonement among the Acholi for a specific sin has got its own procedures of ritual and requires a particular element for it to be processed. In case the diviners or elders ordered that a black goat and a white hen be slaughtered, then it must be that there is no alternation. For this cause, all ought to be done in the right way to qualify one to be free of sin. Signs of satisfaction of the spirits are observed in the course of good harvest, healthy children and safe delivery during birth among others. This way of life makes Acholi Christians practice syncretism.

The Acholi way of atonement is costly, it creates reservations and reverence in the life of the people and no one dares to fall a victim compared to Christian atonement that is free of charge. This makes one not contented whether the offender has sincerely repented or not. Lack of contentment from the side of the offended and community, makes one set off to practice traditional way of atonement. This encourages syncretism in the church (ROP, November 2011).

Among the Acholi, in the past, if one murdered, the clan compensated with a girl, in such kind of event, the family remained in grief and in order to prevent such act, the Acholi try to avoid sin. Currently, one pays a lot of fine beside expensive ritual ceremony for cleansing. Acholi perceive that their way of atonement teaches one a lesson that sin is bad than the way it is in the church.

*“Christian atonement not expensive... it is free of charge”*  
This word ‘free of charge’ captured attention of the study because it looks as if the believers only look at costs or the penalty that are met by offenders than the sacrifice made by God to redeem man through the death of his son Jesus Christ on the cross. The Bible says, *“He was made a sinner and yet he did not sin”*. This is also a sign that some Acholi Christians did not understand the Christian teaching in John 3:16 – *“for God so love the world that he gave his only begotten, Jesus Christ that whosoever believe in him shall not perished but have eternal life”*.

The above argument by ROP also indicates that the gospel has not yet gained ground in Acholi land and salvation mysteries seemed not known. It seems double standards exist because some Acholi Christians did not and do not understand the Christian philosophy that enshrines the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

*“Passive nature of Christian atonement ... Its process and result are not felt in the community, the priest just declares your sin has been forgiven and that is all without active involvement of the victims (the offender, the offended and the community) because they were equally affected by the sin committed. This makes some of the Acholi Christians try another way to find justice from traditional Acholi way of life; however, they still uphold their Christian Identity.* (ROP, November 2011).

The Acholi traditional way of atonement is corporate - everybody is involved - after atonement people eat together. This gives assurance to the victim that he or she has been accepted in the community, this demonstrates practical love than in the church when one repented and the priest pronounced blessing, no one knows whether he has genuinely repented. On the other hand, it is difficult to determine if the offender had forgiven the offender compared to the Acholi way of atonement where everyone is a witness and a participant of the events as it unfolds.

ROP continued to say that:

*“for instance, during laying of hands on a sinner or sinners all*

*members of the church as a body of the believers should get involved. At the end the church congregation should also exhibit some sense of happiness for the one who has confessed and repented his or her sin. Where necessary like baptism, confirmation and wedding, there should be some celebration after repentance.”*

During the in- depth interview with ROP, he added that:

*“the Christians are not involved in the process of atonement, it is only the work of the priest so it bears no impact on the church as a community of believers compared to the traditional one, which is very participatory, operation of the church is not congregationally centered.”*

It is interesting to note how ROP, who is a clergy, laments on the issues that affect the church as if he is not part of the solution. It looks as if he is a sympathizer of his tradition and an advocate for amalgamation of Acholi traditional way of atonement into Christianity. His thoughts tend to interpret the phenomenon of Luke 15:7, 19, on repentance and collective celebration over one sinner’s repentance by the angels.

*“The holy communion that bears the central teaching of atonement is very restrictive .... Some Christians feel they are being discriminated for that matter they go to the traditional one, which is very inclusive for example twin rituals and cleansing, ‘mato oput ceremony and so on” (ROP, November, 2011).*

*“The Holy communion that bears the central teaching ...”* ROP was reflecting on the purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus that meant to reconcile man to God brings the true sacrificial image of the lamb, blood and body atonement in the life of a Christian.

*“Restrictive ... some people are discriminated ...,”* he seems to be pointing to the rubric that governed the celebration of the holy Eucharist; it emphasizes purity before partaking of the blood and body of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it seems that those who do not fulfill the

requirement feel the church is being unfair and discriminative in its operation.

ROP’s observation tends to point out that the church is not doing what it ought to do, for example, it should be home for the homeless, whole embracing, welcoming and show people the way they should go than denying them.

The above observation has a tendency of compromising with the core teaching of Christianity than to promote Christian teaching that makes Acholi Christians have comprehensive knowledge as expected of Christian believers. In other words, the church shall end up being governed by the will of Acholi traditions but not the scripture. This minimizes the authority of the scripture as an absolute tool in the Christian belief.

In the above presentation, ROP is challenging the church to redesign or review some of her policy and interpret the word of God to common Acholi Christians to enable them read, listen and comprehend it without indecisiveness. This will make them not practice syncretism.

*“If a sinner repented publicly, some people are stigmatized or isolated by some church members. To avoid such embarrassment, some Acholi Christians do not confess their sins in public or in the church as they fear that people could laugh at them. As a result, some Acholi Christians keep their status quo as Christians whereas they go to traditional confession because they want to hold their public image than to confess in the church and get embarrassed. This is what forces some Acholi Christians to practice syncretism” (ROP, November, 2011).*

The above means that the church seems to be insecure to some Acholi Christians since it does not offer them the protection, they need hence end up losing confidence in the church institution (Christianity) than their old religion. Has Christianity failed them, then?

*“Some Acholi Christians did not understand the depth of Christian doctrine” (ROP, November 2011)*

Observation in this phrase ... ‘did not understand the depth of Christian doctrine’..., it could be interpreted as the

church is either lacking a proper forum to handle and assess the exposition of basic Christian teachings as enshrined in the scriptures for effective Christian worship, mission and evangelism.

On the other hand, it seemed that some Acholi Christians do not take time to find out necessary information that could stimulate their Christian understanding, for example through Bible studies, fellowship, prayer meetings and Christian witnessing in the course of testimonies and sharing the word of God. So, with such obliqueness, they continue to live their old way of life in Christianity.

*“Judging other Christians as evil also motivates others to seek for atonement from the Acholi Traditional religion as a remedy for being righteous however he or she continues to be a member of the church”* (ROP, November, 2011).

The Bible tells us that if we say we have no sin we deceive our own self and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). From the study, ROP tend to advise the church that seeking self-righteousness or judging others is sin before God because judgment belongs to God alone (also read Titus 3:5).

“ROP, do some Acholi Christians who practice syncretism in atonement get permission from the church?” I asked.

*“Some do not even know that they are practicing double standards and that is why they practiced it openly. Others are aware of what they are doing because they are both leaders in Acholi religious beliefs and committed to the Church.”* (ROP, November, 2011).

ROP was holding the idea that some people do not understand or know the demarcation between Christian practice and Acholi traditional religion.

*“Christianity was not brought in respect to Acholi way of life”* (ROP, November, 2011).

In the above presentation, ROP was trying to assert that the Acholi should not be blamed for practicing double standard. *“You reap what you sow”* (in Acholi *donate an expression such as icamo anywari*) that seems to be his slogan because the missionaries ignored to learn some

of the basic concepts in Luo (Acholi) way of life, they ended up only recruiting people but not making converts to Christianity. So, an Acholi Christian is a product of the missionary work that left them half-baked hence they continue to practice syncretism.

### **Respondent three: Christian Religious education teacher in Lira Palwo Secondary school (OPB, November 2011)**

These were his responses.

*“It is not only ordinary Christians who are involved in double standard, even some Christian leaders are involved in the traditional way of worship because they are part of the tradition ...”* (OPB, November, 2011)

“... not only ordinary Christians...” it means that there are those who have sound Christian teachings of faith that are also involved in syncretistic practice.

In OPB’s counter reference to some Christian leaders as involved in the traditional worships is an indicator that there are some hidden values in Acholi traditional religion that pull some Acholi Christians back to their old religion although they still remain Christians.

When I ask him why some church leaders are involved in syncretism, he said that:

*“Ni cake iyi acaki pa dini me’ Christianity nyang i kit me pwony dini pa Yecu obedo tek bot Lukricitayo mukene iyi Acholi, weko gi dok cen ka woro Jok me tekarogi’ (The Christian religious philosophical concepts, symbols and language used from its advent were not understood by many Acholi Christians this makes them still go back to practice their old religion).”*

Like other religions of the world, it is worth to interpret that Acholi viewed Christianity as a foreign religion that came into their community with its own sets of teaching. For that matter they did not understand some of the missionary work in their community in terms of evangelism and bringing new converts into the new faith.

From the above viewpoint of OPB, it is pessimistic to learn how Christianity was introduced in the Acholi Land in terms of methodologies, contents and the contexts applied in relation to Acholi essential cultural and religious way of life. These inquiries are vital in examining how this new idea (Christian faith in particular) was introduced, conceptualized and nurtured in Acholi land, which still made the Acholi practice their religion alongside Christianity.

*“The idea of ‘remo pa Yecu’ (the blood of Jesus Christ) for the cleansing of sin in Christianity is not understood by some Acholi Christians. However, the usage of blood as a means of cleansing bears some trend of resemblance in the phenomenon of atonement among the Acholi traditional religion.” (OPB, November 2011).*

From the above point, the OPB was asked to explain what he understood by the phrase the ‘*blood of Jesus Christ*’ in relation to the Acholi traditional religious perceptive and Christianity.

He said,

*“The blood of Jesus Christ” if looked at from a lay man’s analysis focusing on Jesus Christ as a human being, means that Christianity practice human sacrifice which is not a practice among the Acholi people, ‘Acholi tio ki remo pa lee onyo winyo pe remo pa dono’ (the Acholi use the blood of animals and birds for cleansing but not that of a human being). ‘... kit pa dini pa Yecu pat kit pa Acholi...’ (literally translated in English as the concept of Jesus’ religion is different from the Acholi way of life).”*

From the above response, one can deduce that the Acholi Christians seem to have not comprehended the function of the blood of Jesus as a means of purification and sanctification of human kind.

*“Some Acholi accepted Christianity for social identity and status, they did not put much interest in studying the word of*

*God, and how Christianity is practiced or taught.” (OPB, November 2011).*

According to the researcher’s experience as a priest, some people are taken up by new things and when Christianity came, it was like a new political party or new fashion in life that came in the community and everyone wanted to identify with it but with time it lost its taste.

People wanted to identify with the white man and they attached some social benefits that could come a long as a result of a good relationship in the name of Christianity. For example, some “*Christians*” got free scholarships for their children, gained favor and commanded respect in community because they were associates of the missionaries. To sustain their statuesque; they paid allegiance to Christianity yet in actual sense they did not profess or practice Christianity in totality.

For the above reason some of the Acholi did not join Christianity because they loved the Christian God, but because of the fringe benefit attached to it. OPB to some extent is right to identify this early indicator as one of the reasons for the involvement of some Acholi Christians in syncretistic practices because they had either little or no idea about it.

*“Jo mukene waco ni, Lubanga rii ka gamo legi weko gi dok ikit pa Acholi Acholi ma adwogi ne tye pi oyot oyot – gin mito tam me tuku neko’ (literally could be translated as some people feel that God takes too long to answer their prayers in the shortest possible way). Some Christians seek for a substitute that can answer their problem and they return to their traditional religion (te kwaro gi) because their ancestors responded faster to their request” (OPB, November 2011).*

*‘Jo mukene Waco ni Lubanga gale ki gamo lega pa dano’ ... this shows that some Acholi Christians are impatient to wait upon the Lord as a Christian principle. OPB expressed it better in the Acholi word ‘tukuneko’ (literally means: to get an instant answer). They seem to bear little tolerance in with standing sufferings. Therefore, some Acholi Christians practice double standards in search of a balanced life.*

Furthermore, some Acholi Christians have little faith in God; this could be as result of personal sluggishness in

Christian practices. On the other hand, inadequate discipleship by the church that could have made them to strive on their own to find a means of success in life meant they became defenseless against any force that suppressed their Christian life. For the above reasons, they conclude that '*Lubaga gale ki gamo legi ca mukene ki ikanica*' (God takes long to answer their prayer).

The other reason could be that they do not fully believe in the power of the Christian God that is why they still go back to the Acholi traditional god to look for answers to troubles that affect their life.

In addition to the above, it seems that some Acholi Christians have little understanding on the Christian principle that stands on the 'will of God' but not man. They want it to be done according to their own will than God's will that is why they are not at rest in the church and conclude that the Christian God delays in answering their prayers.

*"I think ignorance and illiteracy are some of the factors that make some Christians among the Acholi of northern Uganda practice double standard in the church"* (OPB, November 2011).

The Acholi have got an oral tradition as a means of keeping their history and passing it on. Therefore, this means that originally, they did not have an art of written information as well as reading culture. Up to date illiteracy rate is still high. So, when OPB talked about ignorance I presume that he is anticipating that some Acholi Christians practice syncretism because they have inadequate Christian knowledge.

From OPB's comment I can deduce that:

Firstly, it is an indication that the Acholi Christians paid little attention to study the Bible or read any Christian literature on their own and secondly out of this ignorance I could imagine that they are unable to differentiate what Christianity upholds and reject from their traditions. In this confusion they end up in practicing syncretism without knowing its consequences from a Christian point of view.

### **Conclusion one, in-depth interviews**

The respondents observed that some of the Acholi Christians are involved in syncretism because the early missionaries did not value the Acholi culture at the

introduction of Christianity which left the Acholi tradition to remain strong in the life of the Acholi making Christianity less influential and the people remained ignorant of the Christian doctrine thus making Christianity an alien religion in the life of some Acholi Christians. The study observed that the Acholi of Northern Uganda practice syncretism because some Christian leaders are involved in syncretistic practices, God took long to answer prayers, and they did not understand the Christian concepts of atonement. Condemnation of those who practice syncretism also led to the raise of syncretistic practice among the Acholi of Northern Uganda.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research found out that practice of syncretism encountered among the Acholi Christian is as result of inadequate knowledge on Christian doctrine that presents a challenge in discipleship role of the church. The traditional religious influence remains a major challenge for some Christian to combat with to leave the practice of syncretism. To curb down further effect of syncretism and to promote sound Christian doctrine, the study recommends that the church at various levels such as parish, Archdeaconry, the Diocese of Kitgum and the Province of the Church of Uganda to take a positive role in transforming the situation at hand.

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Note: Bible reference have been taken from Good News Bible and New international Version.