

Towards an integrated pastoral care model for bereavement healing among Abaluyia

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Abstract

The central premise of this dissertation is that a pastorally sympathetic assessment of cultural bereavement healing approaches in the light of a biblically informed understanding of death, bereavement and afterlife provide a basis for the bereaved to cope with the angst associated with bereavement through death and engenders pastoral care among the Abaluyia. It is noted that although many Abaluyia Christians consciously or otherwise lurch back to cultural approaches for consolation and healing during bereavement, there is a lack of meaningful engagement between the Abaluyia culture and the gospel. The result of this lack of engagement has not been syncretism as commonly assumed but rather parallelism whereby, on the one hand, the gospel is held as though it were alien and whimsical in contrast with traditional beliefs and practices which are perceived as practical and consequential. On the other hand, cultural approaches are dismissed as being part of ancestor worship or superstition and thus contrary to the gospel. In view of these extreme perceptions, Abaluyia Christians often feel guilty for either engaging in or shunning cultural approaches thus raising a pastoral concern in relation to caring for the bereaved.

In response to the aforementioned pastoral concern, this dissertation firstly examines the role of cultural beliefs and practices in mediating healing for the bereaved among the Abaluyia. It is suggested that the persistence of cultural models is informed largely by their therapeutic value. Consequently, attention is put on the efficacious beliefs and practices employed by the Abaluyia which include community based approach to bereavement, rituals, systems of inheritance and care, conduct of the bereaved, procedures for forgiveness and reconciliation, hospitality, acts of benevolence and performances. Secondly, the identified cultural approaches are reflected upon in the light of the normative biblical teachings. The reflection is done in order to expose and isolate cultural beliefs and practices that are at odds with biblical teachings. The reflection follows a systematic analysis undertaken to establish the biblical understanding of death and the afterlife as well as a biblical hermeneutical analysis of pertinent biblical passages in order to draw paradigmatic biblical practices in bereavement. It is argued that the biblical ministry of healing in bereavement is rooted in the hope of resurrection and the conception of God as compassionate in his character. Lastly, an integrated pastoral care model, namely, *Circle for Pastoral Concern*, is proposed as a tool for bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. The proposed integrated model is cognisant of local cultural milieu in engaging in pastoral care for the bereaved. According to the *Circle for Pastoral Concern* model, the community of believers in their local setting, under the Triune God, form the context for healing.

Opsomming

Die sentrale vertrekpunt vir hierdie dissertasie is dat 'n pastoraal simpatieke beoordeling van kulturele rou en heling benadering in die lig van 'n Bybels ingeligte begrip van dood, rou en die lewe na die dood, 'n basis bied aan die wat rou om die angs wat met rou geassosieer word onder die Abaluyia in gevalle van dood met pastorale sorg te hanteer. Daar word kennis geneem dat alhoewel baie Abaluyia Chistene bewustelik of andersins teruggryp na kulturele benderings vir berusting en heling tydens rou, dat daar 'n beduidende gebrek aan 'n verband bestaan tussen die Abaluyia kultuur en die Woord. Die gevolg van hierdie gebrek aan 'n verband is nie sinkretisme soos algemeen aanvaar is nie, maar eerder parallelisme waarby, aan die een kant, die Woord as as vreemd en wispelturig en in kontras met tradisionele gelowe en praktyke waargeneem word wat as prakties en met konsekwente gevolge beskou word. Aan die ander kant word kulturele benaderings afgewys as voorvader aanbidding of bygeloof en dus in stryd met die Woord. In die lig van hierdie radikaal uiteenlopende persepsies, voel Abaluyia Chistene dikwels skuldig om of terug te val op kulturele benaderings of om die kulturele benaderings te verwerp wat lei tot besorgdheid met betrekking tot die pastorale sorg van die wat rou.

In antwoord op die voorgenoemde pastorale bekommernis, ondersoek hierdie diessertasie ten eerste die rol van kulturele geloofstelsels en praktyke in die bemiddeling van heling vir die wat rou onder die Abaluyia. Dit word aan die hand gedoen dat die voortbestaan van kulturele modelle grootliks volgehou word vir hul terapeutiese waarde. Gevolglik word aandag bestee aan die doeltreffendheid van gelowe en praktyke van die Abaluyia waaronder 'n gemeenskapsgebaseerde benadering tot rou, rituele, erflatings en sorg, gedrag van die wat rou, prosedures vir vergifnis en versoening, gasvryheid, dade van barmhartigheid en uitvoerings. Tweedens word die ge-identifiseerde kulturele benaderings ondersoek in die lig van normatiewe Bybel lering. Die ondersoek het ten doel om kulturele gelowe en praktyke wat in stryd is met die Woord bloot te lê en te isoleer. Die ondersoek behels 'n sistematiese analise om die Bybelse begrip van dood en die lewe na die dood asook 'n Bybels herneutiese ontleding van prominente bybeltekste ten einde paradigmas in Bybelse praktyk oor rou te identifiseer. Dit word beredeneer dat die Bybelse evangelie bediening oor rou gevestig is in die hoop van die opstanding en die begrip van God se karakter as genadig. Laastens word 'n internasionale pastorale sorg model, naamlik

Circle for Pastoral Concern, voorgestel as instrument vir gebruik onder die Abaluyia oor rou en heling. Die voorgestelde geïntegreerde model neem kennis van die plaaslike kulturele omgewing wanneer pastoral sorg vir die wat rou gegee word. Volgens die *Circle for Pastoral Concern* model, vorm die gemeenskap van gelowiges die plaaslike agtergrond onder die Drie-enige God die konteks vir heling.

Key words

- bereavement
- death
- funeral rituals
- healing models
- pastoral care
- Abaluyia

Kern woorde

- ontneming
- dood
- begrafnis rituele
- geneesings modelle
- pastorale sorg
- Abaluyia

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Chapter 1: Bereavement healing as a pastoral challenge among Abaluyia

1.1 Background and problem statement

1.1.1 Study background

Bereavement by death is a source of distress for relatives and friends of the deceased all over the world. Essentially, therefore, bereavement as a pastoral problem is a relevant study anywhere in the world. However, this study hinges on particular individual and corporate experiences and observations of the ravages of bereavement by death and the desire for healing among the Abaluyia of western Kenya. The stirrings for this enquiry begun as the researcher undertook pastoral duties as curate and school chaplain in the rural Anglican parish of Butere. Faced with the devastating effects of death like never before, the researcher experienced and was involved with the struggles that confronted many members of the congregation in their process of coping with bereavement.

The researcher's experiences and observations revealed an apparent conflict between Christian faith and traditional mourning rites within the Christian community. A concern derives from this conflict because Christians faced with bereavement often seek healing from the cultural beliefs and practices rather than from the pastoral healing ministry of the church. However, due to the suspicion of cultural beliefs and practices that exist within the church, the bereaved Christians who engage in them often feel guilty or resentful of being unduly judged. As a pastor and a member of the local community, the researcher listened to these Christians tell the story of their struggles, witnessed and experienced these struggles, mourned with those who mourned and sought to raise relevant questions in an effort to make a contribution towards this pastoral challenge.

1.1.2 Formulating the problem

Death is an inescapable reality for all human beings. It brings about a profound feeling of bereavement for close family members and friends. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the verb bereave as 'deprive', 'rob', 'dispossess of', or 'leave destitute' which aptly describe the feeling of the bereaved. Bereavement, therefore, is an objective realisation by a person of the loss by death of another who was significant in her life (Mbogori 2002:81). As Alexander (1993:9) laments, 'Death makes us question the meaning of life itself'. This question of 'meaning' compounds the experience of bereavement and the process of healing. Death is thus a source of personal, interpersonal and social conflict. According to Miller and Jackson (1995:225) the

emotional pain begins from the time a loss is anticipated, such as the diagnosis of a terminal illness, and extends through the period of the actual loss. Moreover, the survivors often experience substantial morbidity and an awareness of their own mortality. Clearly, bereavement affects people's well-being and thus necessitates healing.

Healing is a comprehensive concept which indicates health, well-being and the optimal development of life functions within specific structures which focus on a form of integration (Louw 1998:444). According to Egnew (2005), healing is an intensely personal experience involving a reconciliation of the meaning an individual ascribes to distressing events with his or her perception of wholeness as a person. Although this definition was made in the context of western allopathic medicine, it helpfully goes beyond the traditional confines of the modern medical focus on diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. It emphasises the fact that healing does not only concern the physical and the psychological aspects of a person but also the spiritual and social wellness. Befittingly, therefore, De Gruchy, quoted by Louw (1998:441), defines health as that which enables us to be fully human in relation to ourselves, our society and our environment. Mwaura (2000:78) explains that in African society health is conceived as more than physical well-being. It is a state that entails mental, physical, spiritual, social and cosmic harmony. Having health evokes equilibrium in all these dimensions. It is associated with all that is positively valued in life. It is also a sign of a correct relationship between people and their environment, with one another and with the supernatural world. Health is understood more in a social than in a biological sense.

For the bereaved, healing is of course not understood as a goal in itself. The pain of bereavement cannot be likened to a wound that can 'heal'. Therefore, 'bereavement healing' is used for the process by which the bereaved are able to work through their traumatic experience, adapt to their changed status and find new meaning. Bereavement healing can be and often is a life-long process. However, the bereaved family members actively or passively pursue and accommodate various healing models in their pursuit for wholeness. As Simfukwe (2006:1462) observes, each culture must respond to the reality of death in a way that enables the survivors to recover from the trauma of loss and live in hope. Among the Abaluyia, bereavement coping models are thus largely influenced by cultural beliefs and practices.

Lester (1995:71) observes that pastoral care has one of its goals the nurture of hope and therefore one of its responsibilities is attending to the hoping process. Since its inception, the church as a faith community has also been concerned with the healing and wholeness of its members. Initially, this was based in the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles. Later, the instituted church has found basis in the Bible to design liturgies to bury the dead in a dignified way and developed the ministry of pastoral care, conceived as a healing art

(Hunter, 1995:18; Louw, 1998:1). Louw (1998:396) defines pastoral care in terms of pastoral hermeneutics which links the story of salvation to the story of humankind's misery and hope in order to address the human search for meaning and the quest for the ultimate. He further argues that the objective of pastoral care is 'to develop faith in order to establish a mature approach to life and to foster spirituality which enfleshes God's presence and will in everyday life'. Crabb (1977:22) argues along these lines when he says that the goal of true pastoral healing is to free people to better worship and serve God by helping them to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to promote Christian maturity. Accordingly, as Oates (1976:1) observes, the aim of the pastor must be to make grief an avenue of constructive growth rather than an occasion for destructive deterioration of the personality.

The Bible uses various verbs to describe the concept of healing. The Hebrew word *shalōm* commonly translated as 'peace' has a root meaning of wholeness, completeness and well-being. The Greek term *therapeuō* which means to 'serve' or 'attend a person' usually indicate healing (Wilkinson, 1980:4-33; Louw, 1998:42-43). It is important to note that in the Bible, death is appropriately understood in the context of life which is a gift of God (Pickle 1988:7). As Anderson (1986:38) puts it, 'Life and death both belong to that existence which issues from God'. Nonetheless, he argues that the Bible has no clearly defined theology of death. Rather, it presents two approaches to death, one drawn from the Hebrew tradition and the other from the Greek tradition. In the Greek tradition, death is a friend while in the Hebrew tradition death is a natural limitation to our earthly existence. Pickle (1988:12-13) observes that in the early experience of Israel, the focus on individual death was absent. As a result, the importance of the corporate personality of the family, the clan, and the nation was primary. In this respect, the loss of an individual by death was not an over-whelming loss because the group continued to survive. This attitude towards death is similar to the traditional cultural view of the Abaluyia. Pickle (1988:19) suggests that the New Testament lacks a systematic doctrine of death. In his teaching, the Lord Jesus Christ did not view death as an obstacle to faith in God. However, Jesus did not negate the pain of bereavement. On the contrary, he identified with and consoled those who mourned and even wept at the death of his friend (John 11:35), thus providing a model to the bereaved.

The hope of resurrection, hinged on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a central Christian paradigm in bereavement healing. As Carson (1978:72) observes, the hope of life beyond the grave is not only a comfort in time of bereavement; it is the final answer to all our suffering. Writing on the art of consolation, Autton (1967:16) affirms, 'Sorrow there will be, for death means separation and loss, but joy there should be for the Redemption demands that the Alleluia of triumph shall be louder than the Amen of resignation'. He further identifies two basic principles in pastoral care which can serve as guides for bereavement healing. First, the

bereaved ought to be led to face the reality of death thereby affording them an opportunity to mourn. Second, they ought to be led to the resources which the Christian faith offers, that is, the realisation of the presence of God, the reading of the Bible, the assurance of the prayers of the faithful, the grace of the sacraments, the hope of resurrection and the fellowship of the communion of saints, at a time when they are able to appreciate it and so be helped by it (Autton 1967:19-20; Magezi, 2006:517). In spite of these resources available to the Christian, however, several questions persist: Why is the church in Africa less appealing than the traditional cultural community as a place where bereavement healing occurs? What attracts many bereaved Christians in Africa to cultural beliefs and practices sometimes in opposition to the Christian teachings and practices? What resources or tenets of healing are available within African communities that can be used to develop an integrated pastoral care model for bereavement healing?

The questions raised above make bereavement healing a priority area in the quest to engender pastoral healing in Africa. Unfortunately, cultural beliefs and practices related to death and bereavement have often been major sources of tension for African Christians (Sundkler & Steed 2000:558, 561; Sundermeier 1998:238; Kirwen 1979:221). Tension is experienced in relation to participating or failing to participate in the cultural mourning patterns and practices. This inevitably causes a feeling of guilt as a result of the oscillation between the realities of cultural beliefs and practices and the Christian practice (Mbiti 1969:3; Magezi 2006:514). The Abaluyia, in common with other African peoples, are often torn between the persistent traditional cultural beliefs and practices on the one hand and missionary Christian teachings and practices on the other. Alembi (2002:108), writing about the perceptions of the Abanyole (a sub-group of the Abaluyia) on death, observes that Christians seem to have a dual personality that makes them suffer on the event of death. The resultant tension presents a pastoral need for care and healing especially during bereavement by death. This research seeks to make a contribution to the easing of this tension. The research postulates that a sympathetic assessment of cultural bereavement approaches rooted in social and cultural order of the Abaluyia is crucial in pastoral response to bereavement healing. The basis for this sympathy is the conviction that pastoral healing entails a transformation of beliefs, values and perspectives through the gospel (cf. Magezi 2006:509). Forde (1954: xvii) correctly points out that there is need for a sympathetic appreciation of the attitudes and underlying beliefs which African peoples bring with them when they come under the influence of institutions such as Christianity. Not to do so is irresponsible and symptomatic of attitudinal challenges.

Among the Abaluyia the common term for bereavement through death is *amasika*, literally translated as 'tears'. As defined by Appleby (1943), this term refer to the period of mourning when relatives and friends are expected to pay visits of sympathy and respect, and to wail. It is

a time to accompany and mourn with the bereaved. Although there is a prescribed period of mourning, there is a sense in which the mourning period is open. As long as a relative or friend has not paid the ceremonial visit of sympathy after a death (*okhutsia amasika*), even if months or years have passed since the death, the first visit is regarded as the ceremonial one. During bereavement, the Abaluyia, like many other peoples of the world, engage elaborate beliefs and practices meant to honour the dead as well as to bring about healing for the survivors.

First, the cultural beliefs regarding death, afterlife and bereavement encourage healing for the bereaved. Among the Abaluyia, death is not seen as the absolute end of existence (Awolalu 1976:275; Malusu 1978:9; Mbiti 1969:159; Shisanya 1996:186; Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001:354). Life or consciousness, in some form, continues beyond physical death (Anderson 1986:23). In fact, it is generally held that the ancestors may 'call' someone for what is assumed to be a better 'life'. This is especially the case if the person is in great suffering or, more often, if the person is weak from advanced age. This belief is similar to that held by their neighbouring Luo community (Owuor 2006:9-10). Consequently, death is perceived as a gateway to life with the ancestors, especially for the elderly, and not a phenomenon to be dreaded. However, this belief does not by any means suggest that bereavement through death is not a painful experience to the Abaluyia. As Augsburger (1986:65) correctly observes, 'Death is common to all persons, and the dying process elicits review, grief, and separation anxiety in every culture'.

Second, apart from the beliefs about death, afterlife and bereavement, the elaborate rites, rituals and ceremonies related to death and bereavement also have therapeutic value. These practices are aimed at bringing consolation, healing and meaning following the death of a significant other. The therapeutic value of rituals is also not unique to the Abaluyia. As Reggy-Mamo (1999:8) observes, people in different places and over the generations have developed various rituals of working through the pain and suffering brought about by death. She further notes that in any aspect of human life where there is anxiety and stress, one can expect to find customs and beliefs whose function is to alleviate or at least decrease the degree of anxiety. Similar sentiments are shared by other writers. For instance, Mbogori (2002:126) holds that the purpose of the customs and beliefs is often to reach resolution or healing and to avoid the possibility of pathological grief. He points out that the curative value of rites derives from social interaction which brings people together to share in the grief.

In addition, there are prescribed sacrifices (*emisango*) made to avert further deaths or misfortune and thus help the survivors to cope and have hope for the future. This is often the case when a death occurs in circumstances that contravene the customary order or is considered a 'taboo death'. Taboo deaths among the Abaluyia include murder, suicide often by hanging or drowning and dying on a battlefield or in a foreign land. Other sacrifices involve ritual

bathing/washing, *ingokho yomukulukha* (burial hen), *ing'ombe yebiosio* (cleansing cow), *eshikalo* (the cow or goat which acts as a seal), and *ingokho/imbusi yeshinini* (hen/goat of the deceased's shadow). Special sacrifices and rituals are also prescribed following the death of a pregnant woman, a childless person or the unmarried (Wako 1985; Wako 1954; Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001; Malusu 1978; Mbiti 1969; Magesa 1997). Mbiti (1991:122) argues that by ritualising death, people dance it away, drive it away, and renew their own life after it has taken away one of their own. The therapeutic value of singing, oral poetry and other forms of performances cannot be ignored as they are often a part of ritual practices. Alembi (2002:103) acknowledges that because funerals are characterised by deep feelings, performances are useful avenues to let out pent up emotions that could easily be harmful to the health of the bereaved.

Third, the Abaluyia are encouraged to reflect and express their pain of bereavement through wailing, eulogies and the remembrance of the deceased. These practices and occasions avail opportunities for emotional expression, benevolence, reconciliation, performances and courage to face the future without the deceased. Wailing, for instance, announces the occurrence of death while eulogies which are often given and received before burial also serve to remember the dead. Other occasions for remembrance (*obwitsusio*) include *eshinini* (memorial) and *omuyimo* or *lisabo* (feast). According to Mbogori (2002:54), the feelings of being remembered act as a protection to the psyche of the living against the threat of death. It renders death less threatening, for one continues to live in the memory of the community.

Fourth, the conduct of and care for the survivors also form a crucial part of bereavement healing approaches among the Abaluyia. It is not uncommon for the dying, especially the elderly, to invite their children and other relatives to bid them farewell. After sitting at the deathbeds of many dying people, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1991:9 cf. Stott & Finlay 1984:73) confirms that the dying people know when death is approaching. She adds that if the dying person's call is regarded, as it often is, the survivors feel good to have had the opportunity. Other approaches involve set patterns for the care for widows, widowers and orphans. Malusu (1978:3) highlights the importance of the community in the bereavement healing process. He rightly mentions that ceremonies concerning death involve all members of the community. He aptly captures the people's approach to the observances related to death arguing, 'It is the last drama of life, the last human act, the last music played for those who can never again join in the rhythmic dance'. Similarly, Magezi (2006) underscores the centrality of the community in healing.

Finally, the battle of whether or not one will muster necessary resources for healing in bereavement among the Abaluyia is largely won, or lost, before the actual death occurs. This is because healing in bereavement largely hinges on the observance, by individuals and the

community at large, of the essential therapeutic cultural values expressed in beliefs, rituals and ceremonies in their everyday life. Mbogori (2002:77) explains that the relationships and tensions of dying have to be worked through before one can achieve resolution of grief in facing bereavement of a significant other. Among the Abaluyia, the following values are important for healing in bereavement: respect for human life, a sense of community, peace (with self, extended family or community and friends), confession and reconciliation, hospitality and benevolence, bravery, hard-work and possessions, fidelity, respect for one another and principles of democracy.

Certainly, the ministry of the church to the bereaved is plausible. Pickle (1988:3) commends the churches' response with what he terms a 'supportive presence' of its members in the burial ritual. However, he decries the practice where only few churches are providing a continuing supportive care to the bereaved following after burial. The same can be said of the experiences among the Abaluyia where a similar practice can be observed. Therefore, there is a tremendous need for an integrated model for the care and healing of the bereaved that takes into consideration the therapeutic cultural beliefs and practices of the people.

The need for an integrated model is exacerbated by the negative views concerning African cultures by early missionaries. This negative approach was largely informed by the so-called 'armchair' anthropologists. These were pioneer anthropologists who wrote extensively on African cultures without having spent time among the people they wrote about. As a result, they tended to emphasise the 'complex whole' which reduced African cultures to African culture in general terms. This school of thought had little respect for distinctive, autochthonous particular local groups. As Mbogori (2002:109) points out, the fallacy committed by foreigners was to regard Africa with all its diversity in ethnicity, culture and language en masse. From this fallacious viewpoint, African cultures and religions were deemed to represent the animistic, fetish or simply the awkwardly rudimentary levels of development. In his prolegomenon to the *Introduction to the study of African culture*, Ayisi (1992:xvii) comments that this pompous spirit was born of complacency and ignorance. Unfortunately, this view of African peoples and their cultures has had long-lasting impact over the years. The relatively corrective works of field anthropologists largely failed to change the initial perceptions which consequently informed the approaches of the early propagators of Christianity in Africa. Mwaura (2000:81) observes that generally the African worldview has not been taken seriously and often it has been totally ignored. For instance, missionaries condemned the African attitude and approach to sickness and healing. Unfortunately, these initial perceptions, which were influenced by Darwinism, also found expression in colonial policies of segregation and were embraced by some mission churches.

1.1.3 Problem statement

During bereavement when individuals experience immense pain that prompts them to seek help from diverse healing models, Christians are divided regarding cultural bereavement healing approaches which are often thought to be incompatible with the Christian faith. This division is often a source of tension and thus an impediment to pastoral care and healing for the bereaved.

Therefore, this research seeks to develop an integrated pastoral model in order to address the dangers of syncretism and parallelism in current cultural and ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia.

The following sub research problems that clarify the main problem could be posed:

1. What bereavement healing models are employed by the Abaluyia?
2. What bereavement healing models are espoused by the Bible and the church (Anglican Diocese of Butere)?
3. What pastoral issues and challenges arise from Christian and cultural bereavement healing models?
4. How may we develop an integrative pastoral model that addresses the limitations of syncretistic and parallelistic approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia?

1.2 Aim and objectives

The aim of the research is to develop an integrated pastoral model in order to address the limitations of syncretism and parallelism in current cultural and ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia.

In order to reach the aim, the following objectives are undertaken:

1. An investigation of bereavement healing models employed by the Abaluyia.
2. A study of bereavement healing models espoused by the Bible.
3. An assessment of pastoral issues and challenges arising from Christian and cultural bereavement healing models.
4. Development of an integrative pastoral model that addresses the limitations of syncretistic and parallelistic approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia.

1.3 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of the research is that a sympathetic assessment of cultural bereavement healing approaches alongside a biblically informed understanding of death, afterlife and bereavement provide a basis for the development of an integrative pastoral model (Circle for Pastoral Concern) in order to address the limitations of syncretism and parallelism in

current cultural and ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia.

1.4 Method of research

This pastoral study is undertaken from a Reformed Evangelical tradition within practical theology discipline. The Reformed Evangelical tradition invokes various doctrines for different individuals and groups; foremost being the gospel, the Trinity, the person of Christ, the cross and the doctrine of life, death and the last things. For purposes of this research, the Bible is normative for assessing teachings (faith) and practices (life). In this attempt, David Wells' book *The courage to be Protestant* is a helpful example of reaching back into the Word of God (Wells 2008:58).

Hiltner (1958:8-9) define pastoral theology as the branch of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings shepherding perspectives (healing, sustaining and guiding) to bear upon all operations and functions of the church and the minister, and draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations. He observes that this definition enables us to use a method that is consistent with the standards for any critical theological method. Heitink (1999:310) regards pastoral theology as a domain within practical theology. He argues against the use of the term pastoral theology which he considers more professionalised and thus a restrictive designation.

In designing this research, the practical theological method of Zerfass (1974) is adopted. Zerfass' hermeneutical model consists of three methodological procedures: the development of theory of the ideal praxis, an investigation of the existing praxis, and the construction of a change model. In line with Zerfass, Heitink ([1993]1999) developed the practical-theological theory of action which combines three interconnected procedures or perspectives for doing practical theology: (1) the hermeneutical circle (understanding) - that introduces theological content through understanding or interpreting human action in the light of the Christian tradition; (2) the empirical circle (explanation) - that introduces social-science theories through explanation or analysis of human action with regard to its factuality and potentiality; and (3) the regulative or strategic circle (change) - that orients action toward intentional outcome or change.

Methodologically, therefore, this research employs a dialogical interaction of basis-theory, meta-theory with empirical study and the practice theory. However, the researcher adapts Zerfass's model of doing practical theology to reflect the worldview of the Abaluyia which begins with what is familiar, that is, the cultural. This is in agreement with Darragh (2007:14 cf. Dingemans 1996:83) who argues that 'doing practical theology' involves 'discerning and articulating a current concern, attending carefully with our heads and hearts to the world as it is and to the

world as our faith traditions teach us it should be, asking “what must we do?” in the light of that attention, doing it, and then evaluating what we have done’. In view of this adaptation, the researcher firstly establishes the Abaluyia’s cultural approaches to bereavement healing (meta-theory). Further meta-theories are established through an empirical study of the current ecclesiastical (Anglican Diocese of Butere) approaches to bereavement healing – missionary, Revival Brethren, Mothers’ Union, institutional, liturgical and clerical. The researcher then seeks to understand the ideal praxis (basis theory) from the Bible with which he interrogates the established meta-theories and finally constructs a change model (practice theory) as follows:

1.4.1 Meta-theory

In order to understand bereavement healing beliefs and practices among the Abaluyia, literature analysis of information gathered through desk top research, investigation, popular facts and written literature including Chadwick Memorial Library's archival collection of St. Luke's Cathedral Parish (Butere) records is conducted. The archival collection was found in a discarded box in the vicarage and dates from 1917 – 1960. In the archival collection, the research focused on entries relating to deaths, burials, pastoral visits and church discipline procedures taken against church members accused of involvement in cultural practices related to bereavement. The literature study is interdisciplinary but largely depends on sociological approaches. It follows a critical description and analysis. Thus, meta-theoretical principles are formulated from the findings.

1.4.2 Empirical study

The researcher employs a combination of empirical research methodologies: in-person interviews, focus group interviews and direct and indirect participatory observations. The interviews were semi-structured while the choice of respondents followed a random selection of a representative sample from every deanery of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Diocese of Butere. All the respondents were baptised Abaluyia Christians who had been bereaved within one year prior to the interviews.

Data from the interviews was gathered mainly through note taking. The data was then transcribed, analysed and interpreted for use in the empirical theoretical constructions of the research. The constructs contribute to the resultant integrative model. The research findings also include the researcher’s reflection on the research material and personal memories stirred from his experiences growing up as a member of the Abaluyia community, his knowledge of the language and other aspects of the culture and interactions with the bereaved during his pastoral ministry as a pastor in the Diocese of Butere corroborated and validated in the course of the research. The observations and feedback from focus group interviews is employed to develop

concepts, generalisations and theories that reflect the intimate knowledge of the respondents (parishioners and pastors) on issues of bereavement healing. The theories of existing praxis act as a vehicle towards a new praxis.

1.4.3 Basis-theory

Stadelmann (1998:225) helpfully observes that practical theology's norm is not the results of the social studies but God's revelation. It is a theological discipline (Stadelmann 1998:219). Consequently, hermeneutical approach and systematic biblical analysis of Old Testament and New Testament references is done in order to clarify biblical teaching on death, bereavement and afterlife. The term 'hermeneutics' (Gk *hermeneuein*) is used to refer to the theory of interpretation (Heitink, 1999:179). It covers the text under investigation in its context as well as the presuppositions of the interpreter who lives in a different context from the original author (Douglas & Toon 1989:182). To achieve this, exegetical methodology is employed based on select lexicons (Louw & Nida 1989), commentaries and theological dictionaries.

In addition to the exegetical methodology, a systematic approach to biblical hermeneutics is utilised. Goldsworthy (2000:32) observes that the advantage of applying the method of biblical theology is that it enables us to understand the biblical teaching on any given topic in a holistic way. We are not dependent on a few proof texts for an understanding of the nature of some important concept. Thus basis-theoretical principles are formulated with basis in the Bible.

1.4.4 Practice theory

Through a hermeneutical interaction between the basis-theoretical principles and the meta-theoretical perspectives new practical-theoretical guidelines are established. According to Zerfass' model, practical theology has the task to lead in the process of change in a way that is responsible from the perspective of both theology and the social sciences. The examination of praxis is done in order to renew and improve the existing praxis (Heitink 1999:113; Heyns & Pieterse 1990:35-36). As Stadelmann (1998:222) observes, 'Practical theology is the theological theory of church practice. It is theory between practice and practice'. In this respect, possible aspects of change that can move toward an alternative praxis are established.

Therefore, this research contributes to pastoral theology essentially by providing an integrative model for bereavement healing among Abaluyia Christians. It makes this contribution through a biblical interrogation and transformation of current beliefs and practices that expose the bereaved to the dangers of syncretistic and parallelistic approaches to bereavement healing.

1.5 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations are made in accordance with the guidelines set by the North-West University Ethical Committee (NWU 2007:36-42). The main ethical concern is to endeavour not to cause any harm to any person or institution during or after the research. In order to guarantee the privacy and security of respondents who sought anonymity, their names and other personal data, which may lead to their identification, are kept confidential. Only issues discussed or personally observed are analysed in such cases.

1.6 Research Delimitations

In this study, the world of the Abaluyia (loosely, 'people of the same hearth'), a cluster of several closely related Bantu-speaking and cultural group of East Africa, is the basic context in which bereavement healing and individual growth after loss of a significant other to death takes place. The land of the Abaluyia lies to the north-east of Lake Victoria in Kenya and Uganda. However, the focus of this study is on the experiences and responses of Abaluyia Christians within the borders of the Anglican Diocese of Butere in western Kenya. The main sub-groups within the Diocese of Butere are the Abamarama, Abashisa and Abawanga. Other sub-groups of the Abaluyia in western Kenya include the Ababukusu, Abakabarasi, Abakhayo, Abalogoli, Abamarachi, Abanyala, Abanyole, Abasamia, Abatachoni, Abatiriki, Abatsotso, Abesukha and Abitakho. According to the 1999 national census in Kenya, the Abaluyia constitute the second largest language and cultural group in Kenya. There are also other sub-groups of the Abaluyia in Uganda. The various sub-groups, even those beyond Kenyan borders, are linguistically and culturally related. The representative sub-groups are hereafter referred to simply as the Abaluyia.

In developing the empirical theory, representative samples were drawn from all the archdeaconries of the Anglican Diocese of Butere. Some focus groups consisted purely of ordained pastors, Mothers' Union (MU) members and the Revival Brethren. The respondents were both male and female and of varying ages. In order to avoid the use of double pronouns, any reference to male pronouns in general references also include female pronouns and vice versa.

The study is undertaken in the field of pastoral care. It is therefore not a study in cultural anthropology or phenomenology of the traditional religion of the Abaluyia. Furthermore, the proposed integrated healing model excludes any mystical or occultic attachments. However, the study draws its relevance on the assumption that an understanding of the Abaluyia's traditional cultural approaches to death and healing in bereavement form a crucial meta-theoretical basis for an integrated Christian pastoral model. Such a basis is crucial if the model is to be an

acceptable and effective tool for pastoral care among the Abaluyia. Therefore, the pastoral care model sought is not simply in continuity with Christianity in its ultimate purposes but one that is informed by the living experiences of Abaluyia Christians as they seek to live for Christ within their cultural milieu.

1.7 Chapter divisions

The sequence of chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1: Bereavement healing as a pastoral challenge among the Abaluyia

This chapter introduces the research topic and articulates the study background, the problem statement and the research question. The aim and objectives of the study, the central theoretical argument and method and methodologies of research are also stated. In addition, a brief ethical statement is made and the study delimitations given. Finally, the remainder of the study is outlined.

Chapter 2: Cultural bereavement healing models among the Abaluyia

This chapter investigates the cultural bereavement healing models among the Abaluyia. This is achieved mainly through a literature study of anthropology as an ancillary subject. It begins with a brief introductory background study of the Abaluyia's general worldview, followed by a descriptive analysis of their understanding of the concepts of life, death and the afterlife. However, the main focus of this chapter is to evaluate the therapeutic components of cultural bereavement healing beliefs and practices within the Abaluyia's socio-cultural order. The therapeutic components investigated include the extended family or community support, therapeutic funeral rites, rituals and ceremonies, the principle of consultation, practice of hospitality and benevolence, eulogies and remembrances, performances and the conduct and care of survivors. Furthermore, the limitations of the investigated cultural approaches are highlighted before drawing meta-theoretical findings from the cultural approaches.

Chapter 3: Issues and challenges in pastoral care for the bereaved among the Abaluyia

In this chapter, further meta-theories based on empirical data are analysed. An empirical study comprising of in-person interviews, focus group discussions and participatory observation of parishioners and clergy of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Diocese of Butere was conducted to ascertain existing praxis. In this endeavour, several ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement are investigated to determine whether they engender or inhibit healing in bereavement. Firstly, the impact of the early missionaries' attitude and practice of the mission church is investigated. In addition, the role of the Anglican Church of Kenya (Diocese of Butere) in bereavement healing through its pastoral agencies, liturgical creation, guidelines, education

(training), advocacy and provision of health facilities in so far as it relates to bereavement healing is also investigated. The investigation extends to the Mothers' Union (MU) and the Revival Brethren's approaches to bereavement healing. The common ecclesiastical beliefs and practices for bereavement healing are also analysed. The empirical analysis is done with a view to identify issues and challenges accruing from both cultural and ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing. The issues and challenges identified inform the positive and negative critique of the persistence of cultural bereavement healing models and the apparent disengagement of the church.

Chapter 4: The concept of death, bereavement and afterlife within a biblical framework

In this chapter, basis-theoretical principles are formulated from Scripture and other theological literature. This chapter, together with chapter 5, forms the basis for the formulation of Christian pastoral integrated model of bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. The issues discussed include the biblical understanding of the concept of death, the state and residence of the dead (afterlife), the relationship between the living and the dead, the question of vengeance for the deceased who were offended or their victims and the biblical principles for bereavement healing.

Chapter 5: Exploring bereavement beliefs and practices within a biblical framework

This chapter provides further basis theoretical data. In this chapter focus is put on exegetical analysis of biblical bereavement beliefs and practices accruing from the analysed biblical passages. The biblical exploration seeks to discover how the biblical characters coped with their bereavement through death. Paradigms are then drawn for pastoral practice.

Chapter 6: An integrated pastoral care model for bereavement healing

This penultimate chapter discuss the components of the proposed integrated model. According to Zeffass' hermeneutical model, practical theology has the task to lead in the process of change in a way that is responsible from the perspective of both theology and the social sciences (Heitink 1999:113). In this respect, this chapter proposes possible aspects of change, theological and practical, in order to develop an alternative praxis which incorporates biblical paradigms and cultural approaches to healing in bereavement. The chapter content includes a brief re-statement of the problem and method, description of the adopted model of integration, final meta and basis theory, critical hermeneutical interaction and formulation of a new practice model with a view to engender pastoral care and healing for the bereaved among the Abaluyia of Kenya and beyond.

Chapter 7: Summary and conclusion.

In this final chapter, conclusions are drawn from the entire research. Firstly, the research

findings are stated and analysed. Secondly, final recommendations accruing from the findings and the proposed integrated pastoral care model for bereavement healing are suggested.

1.8 Schematic representation of the correlation between the research questions, aims and methodology

Research questions	Aim and Objectives	Methodology
How should bereavement healing models be understood in order to foster Christian pastoral care among the Abaluyia?	The aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of bereavement healing models in order to foster Christian pastoral care for the bereaved among the Abaluyia.	Zerfass model. This pastoral study utilise Zerfass's hermeneutical model of doing practical theology. This method consists of three interrelated procedures: the development of the theory of the ideal praxis (basis theory), an investigation of the existing praxis (meta-theory), and the construction of a change model (practice theory). The model is adapted as shown below to start with meta-theory, then move to the basis-theory and conclude with strategy for change.
What bereavement healing models are employed by the Abaluyia?	To investigate the bereavement healing models employed by the Abaluyia.	Meta-theory. Literature analysis of information gathered through desk top research, investigation, popular facts and written literature including Chadwick Memorial Library's archival collection of St. Luke's Cathedral Parish (Butere) records (1917 – 1960). The literature study is interdisciplinary but largely leans on sociological studies. A critical description and analysis of the information gathered is done. Thus meta-theoretical principles will be formulated.
What pastoral issues and	To assess pastoral issues	Empirical study. Direct and indirect

challenges arise from Christian and cultural bereavement healing models?	and challenges arising from Christian and cultural bereavement healing models.	participatory observation, in-person and focus group interviews within the Anglican Diocese of Butere are conducted to establish existing praxis. In addition the researcher reflects on his own memories stirred from pastoral and personal experiences. The information gathered through the empirical research is recorded, analysed and interpreted in order to develop concepts, generalisations and theories that reflect the intimate knowledge of the participants on bereavement healing models among the Abaluyia. The theories of existing praxis will act as a vehicle towards a new praxis.
What bereavement healing models are espoused by Scripture?	To study bereavement healing models espoused by Scripture.	Basis-theory. Hermeneutical approach and systematic biblical analysis of OT and NT references is done in order to clarify biblical teaching on death, bereavement and afterlife. To achieve this, exegetical methodology is employed based on select lexicons, commentaries and theological dictionaries. Thus basis-theoretical principles are formulated from Scripture.
How may we develop an integrative pastoral model that addresses the limitations of syncretistic and parallelistic approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia?	To develop an integrative pastoral model that addresses the limitations of syncretistic and parallelistic approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia.	Practice theory. The results of the entire research is utilised to formulate a practical, integrated bereavement healing model (Circle for Pastoral Concern) to address the limitations of syncretism and parallelism in current cultural and ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia

Chapter 2: Cultural bereavement healing approaches among Abaluyia

2.1 Introduction

This chapter constitutes a meta-theoretical study investigating the various bereavement healing models employed by the Abaluyia. The underlying assumption is that cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies prepare individuals for the eventuality of death and in effect bring about healing for the survivors after the actual occurrence of death. In particular, the necessity of cultural therapeutic values such as respect for human life and communal consciousness is highlighted.

Although some cultural healing approaches that are no longer overt today are mentioned, emphasis is put on those that persist and were observed in the course of this study. The past approaches are mentioned in order to ground the observable beliefs and practices and to provide a background for further analysis in subsequent chapters. The beliefs and practices of the Abaluyia no doubt keep taking on new meanings with the passage of time because no culture is static. As Forde (1954: vii) explains, it must be recognised that the unique mobility and capacity for communication of the human species have, nearly everywhere, prevented any population from remaining long isolated and static, culturally or socially, in an unchanging environment. The history of all human communities has been one of recurrent change in response to local discovery or, more often, to external contacts and the introduction of new ways of living and new standards of conduct.

In spite of the inevitable changes, Abaluyia's traditional cultural beliefs and practices related to death and bereavement persist. Don Browning (1976:73), in his book: *The moral context of pastoral care*, defines culture as a set of symbols, stories or myths and norms for conduct that orient a society or group cognitively, affectively and behaviourally to the world in which it lives. In other words, culture refers to the shared patterns of behaviours, interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned. Ayisi (1992:4) points out that culture informs a group of people's reality, that is, it represents their collective conscience. According to Mbogori (2002:121), the collective aspect of culture affords it the power to develop or nourish, to pattern, and to limit. Oduyoye (1992:9 cf. FAM s.a.:6) observes that religion is an integral part of African culture. Like other African cultures, this explains the pervasiveness and resilience of customs and rituals of a religious order and the hold they have on the Abaluyia's understanding of life.

The Abaluyia's worldview inevitably informs their cultural value system and consequently

impacts their bereavement healing models. Magezi (2006:510, 2007a:31 cf. Hendriks 2004:133) defines 'worldview' as the way people see or perceive the world, the way they know it to be. It is a people's idea of the universe. He further cites Michael Kearney who makes an important point about accuracy when he comments that 'The worldview of a people is their way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world'. In other words a people's worldview constitutes their motives, meanings and explanations of all of their life issues. It is the overall framework used to interpret life, a type of coping mechanism that a society develops and shares over time in order to give meaning to the people's total life. As Wagner (1970:448) aptly remarks about the Abaluyia, the emotional response to the occurrence of death is culturally shaped by the notions held with regard to the causes of death and its consequences for the living.

Following a thematic descriptive analysis of data collected through focus group discussions, individual interviews, corroborated personal observations and literature research, this chapter first explores the Abaluyia's cultural concept of life, death and afterlife, and how values connected with these concepts are learned. The second section further highlights and analyses various healing beliefs and practices within the Abaluyia's cultural worldview. Both sections explore how the beliefs and practices are utilised to bring about healing in bereavement.

2.2 Cultural concept of life, death and afterlife

The Abaluyia acknowledge a three-tier interrelated world. The world was brought into being by *Were Khakaba/Nyasaye* (God). God, who is believed to have assistants, created human beings to occupy the physical world. However, human beings depart this physical world through death to join the world of the ancestors (*emakombe*). According to the Abaluyia, there is continuous communion between these worlds especially between those who are alive in the body and those who exist among the departed.

In the described worldview, the underpinning value is the promotion of and respect for human life. The Abaluyia make prayers and perform rituals mainly to sustain human life. In other words, traditional beliefs and practices among the Abaluyia aim to preserve and promote human life. Life is believed to continue after death because death does not annihilate it.

2.2.1 The concept of life

2.2.1.1 Life as a sacred gift

Life, which finds its ultimate source in God, is the greatest gift bestowed upon humankind.

Before the coming of missionaries, the Abaluyia believed in a Creator God referred to either as *Wele* or *Nyasaye*. The address *Wele* is common among the northern sub-groups of the Abaluyia who include the Abawanga while *Nyasaye* prevails among the southern sub-groups like the Abamarama and Abashisa probably as a result of influence by the neighbouring Luo people. God, the Supreme Being, is the creator (*omulonji* 'potter') of the world and human beings. Wagner (1954:28) explains that the belief in *Wele*, the transcendent God, forms the basis for the whole worldview of the Abaluyia. God is upheld on the highest level. The Abaluyia are not allowed to say bad things about God. They are taught from a young age that God is not mocked (*Nyasaye shabalabalungwa ta*).

God, the originator of life, is the one who sustains everything in the world. He is thus *Were Khakaba*, God the beneficent source of life and all good gifts (Wagner 1954:28, Appleby 1943, Awolalu 1976:275). *Wele* is concerned with human's welfare. He shows his concern by supplying their needs. As Mbiti (1969:42) notes, the Abaluyia say that God sustains human life, so that without him there would be no life. The sun is held as the life sustaining radiance which emanates from the sky, the bright and luminous dwelling of *Wele* (Wagner 1954:51). The heat of the sun, during the dry season which precedes the rainy planting season, is said to be God's way of preparing the farms by killing destructive insects and weeds. As *Were Khakaba's* greatest gift, human life must be honoured, protected and promoted.

2.2.1.2 Physical life is desirable

Life is desirable and celebrated. As Malusu (1978:2) affirms, to be, to live, is extremely desirable for it is this world that matters. For the Abaluyia, life before death is essential. For this reason, the birth of a baby is an occasion for celebration. Giving birth greatly enhances the status of the parents especially the mother in this patriarchal society. In the past, the mother would not only be given gifts, but she would also receive protective charms both for herself and her new born child. God as the creator of life is the source of children. The birth of a child is a sign that God wishes to bless the couple. Fruitfulness, and not sterility, is from God. Children of both genders are highly valued albeit at different degree in different circumstances.

Long life is honoured. Like child bearing, long life shows that an individual is in good relationship with God, the ancestors and his neighbours. Old age may also indicate that one has been able to muster protection to counter the ever present threats against one's life through proper rituals, sacrifices and medicines. Wagner (1954:48) points out that one's ritual status is thought to be enhanced by persistent good fortune which is especially seen in advanced age. Old age carries with it prestige and authority, not only because seniority is one of the basic principles of the social order, but also because people who have grown old have successfully held their own against all disruptive forces of life, and have succeeded in maintaining their ritual status at a

high level.

2.2.1.3 Prayers for preservation of life

Prayers, which were presented only to God, were said every morning. There was no office of the priest. Therefore, every responsible male, head of the family, made the prayers (*okhwikayakaya*). Every morning, he knelt or stood facing east. In this posture, he would spit in the direction of the rising sun and entreat God saying: *Ee Were Khakaba, oukabanga amalayi kosi, okhufwindile obulayi* (Oh God, the granter of all good things, fill our life with goodness and scatter every evil from our paths by your light. Let the day dawn well). *Wele* is thus the one who saves or guides his people in safety. The prayers of the Abaluyia, like their rituals, basically aim to bring about their well-being and that of their animals and crops (Wagner 1954:31, Mbiti 1969:43, 61). Abaluyia Christians often pray in a similar manner either asking God for protection and provision or expressing gratitude for his sustenance in this life.

The direction of the rising sun, the east (*ebukwe*), is variously identified with life, health, good luck and wealth. This is in contrast to the west (*mumbo*) which is identified with illness, evil magic, misfortune and death. The north (*emasaba*) and the south (*emulambo*) are treated with indifference. In a number of rites performed for sick people, the illness is implored 'to go west' (*olumbe lutsie mumbo*) and the country of the dead is said to be not only below the earth, but also in the west. During the performance of *nyababa*, a rite performed to ward off drought, disease, failure, misfortune, disaster and death, people shout and beat high-pitched drums, tins, bells and sticks or brandish weapons of war like spears at dusk or early night, moving from the east end of their homesteads to the west end where they abandon some of the items as a symbol of driving all that is life-threatening to the west. As Wagner (1954:33) observes, the regard for the east incidentally finds support in nature. In the land of the Abaluyia, not only does the sun rise in the east, but rain comes from that direction and all major streams flow from the east or north-east to the west. The symbolic meaning attached to east and west thus receives support from the nature of the local environment.

2.2.1.4 Rituals and sacrifices for quality life

Veneration of ancestors is for the promotion of long and quality life. As Forde (1954: xvi-xvii) observes, the pattern of belief concerning supernatural forces or personalities is common to the Abaluyia as a whole. However, the ritual units are confined, according to context, to the household, extended family or the local community. In other words, although the ancestral beings are believed to protect the living and sanction their conduct, these are not the ancestors of the Abaluyia as a whole, but those of the several bodies of close blood relatives.

The veneration of the ancestors was centred on three sacrificial stones (*amachina kemisango*)

which constituted the main family shrine. As Kabaji (2005:35) observes, on all-important occasions in the life of an individual from birth to death and after, the sacrificial stones constituted the centre of one's relationship with the ancestors. The stones, which were at least a foot long, were erected on the ground in the yard of the homestead so that they formed a triangle (*okhuraka amachina*). In the middle of the three stones, a stick (*olusambwa*) from *olusiola* tree (*markhamia lutea*) was erected. In all rituals which serve to appease or invoke the blessing of the ancestral spirits, meat of the slaughtered animal was symbolically offered to them by being placed either inside the triangle or on top of the sacrificial stones (Wagner 1954:50). The head of the family would erect the stones and the upright stick opposite the door of his first wife's hut. At his death the sacrificial stones would be passed down to his heir, usually his firstborn son, who then becomes the head of the family and thus the one who makes prayers or offers sacrifices (*omumali wemisango*).

The ancestors or the dead are not worshipped but respected (cf. Mbiti 1969:26). For instance, the sacrificial stones were set up as a place where rituals and sacrifices could be made and the spirits of the ancestors (*emisambwa*) consulted, appealed to, and even scolded (Appleby 1943). As Wagner (1954:42 cf. Nürnberger 2007:71) explains, the dead are believed to possess the power to affect the health and general well-being of the living. They are, accordingly, thought to be a source of potential danger to the living. Because they have power in everyday life, they can be a source of wellness as well as a cause for illness, misfortune and even death. This notion appears to be largely derived from the reaction to the phenomena of death and bereavement. The spirits of the dead (*emisambwa*) were, therefore, consulted or at least notified of any important events affecting the life of the family or clan, such as the beginning of the planting or harvesting season. Their blessing was also invoked at the time of a marriage and their help sought in times of misfortune or death (Appleby 1943). Although the sacrificial stones (*amachina*) are virtually non-existent nowadays, people still believe that the ancestors have power to variously impact their daily life.

2.2.1.5 Marriage for procreation

To be unmarried and, therefore, not to participate in the life sustaining process of procreation is intolerable. Every grown up person is expected to enter marriage and to bear children who would survive him and thus keep him in personal immortality. Not to bear children is a threat to the torch of life which must be kept burning. To be unmarried is to remain a child because only children are not expected to marry (Mbiti 1969:26, 133ff.). In the past, young men often married at about the age of 18-20 years after initiation by circumcision while girls were married at about the age of 16 years. To be unmarried is comparable to a grave (death) in the popular proverb, *Nashikoko ashira eshilindwa* (A spinster is better than a grave) (Wambunya 2005:34).

2.2.1.6 Suspended death penalty

Among the Abaluyia, a death penalty handed to a member of the family or community is often suspended. As Malusu (1978:8-9) explains, the death of a killer was not insisted upon. If, for instance, a husband beat his wife to death he would be made to acknowledge it so that retribution can be made. If a person killed a relative, there was a taboo which prohibited the two affected households from meeting or sharing a meal. It was believed that, if the living members reunite without a special ritual cleansing ceremony, the spirits of the dead members of the clan would become angry, especially the spirit of the killed person, and could avenge his death by destroying the offender, their bloodline as well as accomplices (cf. Myambo 2007:41-42). The sentence for the killer was often banishment. The banished killer became an enemy (*omusuku*) of the concerned extended family (community). As an enemy, there would be no blood guilt if he is killed by a community member. There was also provision for reconciliation, following the exclusion, through prescribed rituals and sacrifices. Furthermore, there were no hangmen, for to kill or even to participate in the killing of a kin is to invite *eshisheno* (the avenging spirit of the deceased) to haunt (*okhushena*) the individual in life and ultimately to bring about his death. Such a death is believed to come about through a prolonged and painful sickness, mental sickness or murder. Those who seek and bring about the death of an innocent person are also thought to come to a similar end.

2.2.2 The concept of death

2.2.2.1 Death is inevitable

Among the Abaluyia, death is an inevitable event which removes humans from participating in the rhythm of life in this world. It is a complete physical transformation that usher human beings from this world to *emakombe*, the abode of the departed (*abafwa*). The dead is dead. This idea of irrevocable physical death is given expression in the saying '*abatsia batsia*' which can loosely be translated as 'those who have gone have gone' (Malusu 1978:2). The Abaluyia do not seek the revival of the dead. However, death often comes with excruciating pain and inevitably brings about suffering and grief for the bereaved.

2.2.2.2 Death is not blamed on God

Although death may be attributed to both natural and supernatural causes, it is never said to be caused by God by the members of the sub-groups under this study. God is never blamed for death. This is contrary to Mbiti (1969:156) who enumerates God as a cause of death. As Wagner (1954:43) explains, among the Abaluyia, the God ordained order which makes it possible for human beings to live in this world, is not thought to embrace the disruptive forces in nature and society which interfere with human being's happiness, that is, with the 'normal

course' of life and activities. In other words, God did not create the evil and disruptive forces along with the good, but the order of the world as established by him was perfect, endowing humankind even with the blessing of eternal life. God is not believed to vary the 'normal order of things' out of spite, but only to punish people if they themselves deviate from the order he has established. God is said to have given humankind a number of rules or taboos (*emisilo*). If the taboos are violated, misfortune may ensue. Misfortune, evil deeds, illness, and death must thus be due to forces that are opposed to the natural order. The concept of the Creator God is modelled on the pattern of a benevolent father. In addition, the concept of God as a judge is largely absent among the Abaluyia and *Wele* does not feature in Abaluyia's rituals, ceremonies and songs except in the morning daily prayer (Malusu 1978:17).

2.2.2.3 Death blamed on human agency

Death is said to be caused by disease or disillusionment (like in cases of suicide) both of which are often thought to be the result of witchcraft, sorcery or bad magic (cf. Mbiti 1969:155-6; 1991:117-8). Other causes of death include curses from a parent or an offended neighbour who may be dead or alive, failure to perform prescribed rituals or to make sacrifices in honour of the ancestors, a breach of taboos, or simply due to *imongo* (a suitable result for one's actions) in which case one brings death upon oneself. Beliefs in poisoning and non-specific causation of death are also common. Therefore, in common with other African communities, the Abaluyia do not look into the natural causes of death, but the unnatural, external or supernatural reasons for it. Someone is always responsible for another's death (Gehman 1999:8). Malusu (1978:7 cf. Magezi 2006:511; Mbiti 1969:156; Mwaura 2000:70) notes that the Abaluyia believe in witchcraft (*obulosi*) and it is unheard of that any person can die without their death having been caused by a living person. Irrespective of the immediate circumstances occasioning the death, some human agent is always involved. The underlying thought, even when death is through lightning, is that it is a result of commissions or omissions by the individual or the schemes of another person or group. Death does not just happen; it is always caused by someone.

Consequently, although the Abaluyia may identify immediate natural or organic causes for the occurrence of death, there is still an overriding belief in the supernatural or spiritual causation of death. Those who are very ill or are facing death or some other misfortune often consult diviners (*abaliuli*, from *liula* – hunt out charms or medicines that are said to have been hidden in a house or compound to cause illness or other bad fortune to the inmates), healers (*abasayi*) or sooth-sayers (*abafumu*) (Appleby 1943). These specialists (*abachesi*) advise the sick or their family on the necessary medicines, cautions to take or rituals to perform in order to restore health. In case of death, the consultations are often done in order to discover who or whose spirit was responsible for the death, what sacrifice must be made or what other steps ought to be taken to avert further misfortune. They also supply medicines and protective charms (cf. Mwaura

2000:79; Magezi 2006:511). Although western education and Christianity have done a lot in shifting the worldview regarding the causes of disease and death, the traditional worldview is still rife even among the well educated as well as the converted.

2.2.2.4 Death as a source of pain

The devastating results of death can be inferred from the titles by which the bereaved are known. The name for a widow and, less often, a widower is *omulekhwa* (literally, 'one who has been left behind' or abandoned). Death is like an impromptu journey that tears apart intimate partners, close family members and friends. This inevitably leads to bewilderment. A widow, wailing for her deceased husband, can often be heard rhetorically asking questions such as: 'Where will I go?' 'Why have you left me at the crossroads?' 'Why didn't you tell me that you would depart so soon?' '*Omwitsa wanje wundeshele wina?*' ('My partner, to who have you left me?') The orphans are called *abana abashisandu* which may loosely be translated as 'suffering children'. The word *abashisandu* is derived from *sanda* 'to suffer'. The implication, and often the case, is that these children are exposed to suffering as a result of the death of their parents. The proverb, *orphanage stinks nastily*, common among the Ababukusu, succinctly captures the terrible hardships that orphaned children often have to endure (Sifuna 2003:31). Death is perceived as the ultimate cause of their suffering as some end up with cruel people as foster or step-parents.

Death is cruel and undesirable. Although death is inevitable, it brings about great pain which is evident in the tears shed when it occurs. The cruelty of death comes out in funeral dirges which form part of the mourning (Mbiti 1969:157 cf. Mbiti 1991:121; Alembe 2002:136). This notion is often expressed in the popular proverb: *Otamba olafwa* (better poverty than death) (Wambunya 2005:49). Death disrupts the flow of life and brings human hopes to naught. It is a threat to human life because it cuts short relationships and activities which engender life. People plant their crops, but cannot enjoy the fruit of their labour because death takes them away often abruptly. The death of young adults is particularly undesirable as their contribution in society is greatly needed. People say 'death has cut him' (*olumbe lumukhalache*) (Malusu 1978:2). Death is a threat to the basic systems of the community in procreation and sustainability. It robs the community of a pair of hands to work the fields, an important activity in this society founded on agriculture.

2.2.2.5 Death as a welcome foe

For the weak and elderly, death is a welcome foe. The elderly desire to die in dignity and are sometimes heard saying that they are ready to join their forefathers. When an elderly person dies peacefully, people say he or she has 'slept,' 'rested,' 'left,' 'gone home' 'been called' or 'gone to the place of the dead' (*utsile emakombe*) (Mbiti 1969:156; Malusu 1978:1-2). Mourners

express regret for losing the elder's wise counsel. Due to the respect accorded to the elderly among the Abaluyia, their death also exposes some of their family members or relatives to harsh treatment. Such survivors express their disappointment saying, *Abele likaka*; because death has robbed them of a protector.

2.2.2.6 Sorcery abhorred

People who are suspected or known to have caused the death of someone else in any way and those who practice witchcraft or sorcery are reviled. When such people die many people are indifferent and only a few attend the funeral. Some, especially those who suffered as a result of the deceased person's malevolence, may even celebrate saying that death has knocked him down as in wrestling (*olumbe lumukochile*). In this case, death is paradoxically a necessary enemy who kills the hated tormenter (Malusu 1978:2). However, even such seemingly welcome deaths disrupt life and bring about grief especially for immediate family members.

2.2.2.7 Taboo deaths

Mystery surrounds the death of an albino. In former times, an albino (*litonde*) and a very badly deformed person or animal (*eshinamakabi*) would be carried and abandoned in a forest away from the village. Those families who did not throw away albinos at birth would bury their bodies in a forest at night in case of death. There were no elaborate burial rites and ceremonies for the albinos. It was taboo to view the body of a dead albino. For this reason it was commonly held that albinos do not die.

Death by committing suicide is abhorred. Such a death is thought to result from an inability to cope by the individual, the machinations of a witch (*omulosi*), a curse from earlier generations and neglected or incorrectly performed rituals and sacrifices. As Wabukala and LeMarquand (2001:355) states, that an individual comes to this end is believed to be a harsh judgment against the community which may have pushed the individual to take his own life. It is a serious taboo death with consequences not only in this life, but in the afterlife.

Death by suicide negatively impacts both nature and society. For instance, in the past a tree would normally be planted on the grave as a symbol of continuity of life. However, as Wabukala and LeMarquand (2001: 355-356) explain, the tree used by an individual to commit suicide becomes a symbol of death and is thus feared and avoided. It is not used for fuel, construction, medicine or as a shade from the sun. The tree used as an instrument of suicide is feared because it is believed that others in the community could be prompted to commit suicide by its presence. Some believe that the tree becomes a home for evil spirits (*ebisheno*) and, therefore, may bring more evil. Such a tree would be completely uprooted, cut into pieces and burned. The ashes would be collected and thrown into a flowing river to be carried away. The tree which

could be a source of a curse if left standing is, thus, totally obliterated and removed from the community. There are no ceremonies for those who die through suicide and their properties or debts are not accounted for. If the deceased had a family, they are rarely provided for except by a few close relatives. The relatives are careful not to upset the spirit of the dead who may have killed himself as a protest against his family.

2.2.2.8 Death as cause of ritual impurity

Death causes ritual impurity. It is believed that anyone who comes in contact with the deceased is made ritually impure. Among the Abaluyia, as Wagner (1954:49 cf. Mbiti 1969:155) explains, neither the individual nor the social group should adopt a passive attitude towards their ritual status. The elaborate system of rituals and observances has been designed to promote, maintain, or restore the ritual status of the individual or the group. The rituals done and sacrifices offered serve to promote the ritual status, for they invoke the blessing of God and the ancestors. Shaving (*olubeko*), for instance, was used not only as a sign of bereavement but also for cleansing from ritual impurity (Malusu 1978:14).

2.2.2.9 Death as a rite of passage

Death is both a separation and a reunion. The expressions used to describe the act of dying and death as 'passing away', 'going away or departure', 'journey' or 'going home'. Death is a passage from this world to the world of the spirits (*emakombe*) where the dead continue to live in some form of life. In other words, death stands between the world of human beings and the world of the spirits, between the visible and the invisible (Mbiti 1969:149). It is a complete physical transformation of an individual from a human being – *wane* (so-and-so) characterised by decay of the physical body to some spiritual entity, simply referred to as 'the dead' (*omufu*) or 'it', ghost (*eshisheno*). Death is a separation from the living in this world, but in the spiritual world the dead join the company of those who died before (cf. Malusu 1978:2). Mbiti (1969:157) explains that life is like a pilgrimage, the real 'home' is the hereafter, since one does not depart from there. Death causes a real cessation of part of the person at death so that he 'sleeps' but never to wake up again.

For the Abaluyia, therefore, there is an underlying paradox about death. Although they recognise its inevitability and the fact that a dying person is being cut off from living human beings, yet there must be continuing ties between the living and the departed. Relatives and neighbours come to bid farewell to the dying person and to mourn his departure, and yet there is continuity through his children and through rituals and ceremonies.

2.2.3 The concept of afterlife

2.2.3.1 Death does not annihilate life

According to the Abaluyia, and in common with other African peoples, death does not write 'the end' to human life. The spirit of the deceased person who has lived well and 'died a good death' continues to live as an ancestor in the abode of the departed spirits (*emakombe*). Death is a transition phase from the physical to the spiritual. It is a life occurrence that enables an individual to join *emakombe* (cf. Awolalu 1976:275; Shisanya 1996:186).

Burial rituals point to continuity of life. As Malusu (1978:9) explains, in the past some of the dead were buried in their houses or in little huts built for this purpose. This burial custom might be symbolic of the continued existence of the dead in some form or other and the expectation that the dead will come back to dwell in their old place for a while before they seemingly disappear from the memory of the people when the building collapses. Nowadays, the same thought informs the practice of not pulling down houses after a couple's death. The house is left until it crumbles under natural environmental elements. It is believed that those who have died only recently are not yet accustomed to the land of the dead. Some are said to have informed their surviving relatives through dreams that they are in the cold.

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2.2.3.2 The abode of the dead is vague

The idea of what the hereafter is like is vague. Although the dead are not present in material form, they are believed to be in this world of the living. They say, "*Abafwa shibali ehale ta*" (the dead are not far). They can appear to whomever and whenever they choose. As Mbiti (1969:159) confirms, some people hold that the next world is in fact geographically around the homes of human beings, separated from the present world only by virtue of being invisible to human beings. However, there are special places where the departed are believed to actually reside. These places include: the grave – for the deceased are said to have gone down into the ground (*batsia hasi/mwiloba*), huge rocks, or to reside in huge trees especially those with holes

in their trunks, and *emakombe*, the land of the departed or a mysterious 'faraway' place. *Emakombe* is neither in the sky nor down below the earth. It is believed to be a very long journey from where the people reside presently. This land of the dead is always described as an exact replica of the land of the living. Nobody has ever located it, or even tried to, but the rituals connected with the last illness, burial and memorial ceremonies are designed to help to prepare the dead for the journey (Malusu 1978:18; Wagner 1954:34-35; Mbiti 1971:157).

Admittance to *emakombe* is not automatic since it depends on a life lived well and proper observance of funeral rituals. Shisanya (1996:186-187) argues that this belief explains the concern of the Abaluyia to make sure that funeral rituals are scrupulously observed thus hastening the deceased's journey and incorporation into the spiritual domain of life. It is believed that failure to properly observe funeral rituals leaves the deceased in uncomfortable suspense or in a liminal status, where he is neither acceptable in the community of the dead, nor in that of the living. This situation may anger the deceased to the extent that he or she becomes hostile and a threat to close relatives by frequently haunting them.

2.2.3.3 No judgment after death

Until the advent of missionaries, the Abaluyia had no such categories as heaven and hell. Consequently, there was no such thing as eternal damnation or eternal joy after death suggested by the traditional Christian view. Malusu (1978:17) records that although confession of wrongs done either to community or to particular individual was known, it was not in the hope of a better life in the hereafter. The wicked person sought to reconcile himself or herself to the living community, who were the guardians of his or her memory in life, and life is what mattered. Confession of sin was often done publicly, but in some cases a private confession would be accepted. Even if the wronged person did not forgive, the one who had confessed was nevertheless absolved of his wrong doing. In some cases confession and forgiveness was followed by compensation. They believed that a person who concealed wrong doing would be a long time dying (*okhutorera khwisero*), to give him or her chance to confess. Then the bed-ridden sick person would die, reconciled, in peace.

2.2.3.4 The reality of spirits

In common with many African peoples, the Abaluyia acknowledge the immanent reality of harmful, malevolent spirits (*ebisheno*) which can cause disease, misfortune and death. These are the spirits of those who have been rejected in the spirit world and are left to roam around the community. Reasons for rejection include moral failure such as theft and murder, those who die by suicide and those who refuse to marry. In other words, outcasts in the afterlife are those who were outcasts this life especially if remedial rites were neglected. On the contrary, the spirits of those approved by society are received favourably in the next life. However, as Malusu

(1978:17) explains, even the outcasts are not totally doomed. It can be observed that what made them outcasts becomes overlooked by society with time. It is also believed that the outcasts who do not report back to the living that they are suffering are assumed to have been finally reconciled with the ancestors.

The ancestral spirits continue to have a relationship with the living. The spirits of those who have died most recently are considered most helpful. Care is taken to ensure that all the necessary after-death ritual requirements are fulfilled in order to facilitate a relative's reception in the world of the ancestors, thus making the deceased more beneficial to their surviving family. As noted before, the helpfulness of the spirits depends on blood relations. It is only the spirit of a relative who can be invoked with effect. The ancestors are ever present. They are believed to watch over human activities, punish misbehaviour and uphold the order and morality of the extended family or clan (cf. Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001:354).

2.2.4 Cultural modes of learning about death

Cultural beliefs and practices are passed on from generation to generation through the process of socialisation. Among the Abaluyia, death is neither liberally mentioned nor spoken about in ordinary life (Malusu 1978:7). For instance, people do not joke (*okhukhola tsimbalabalo*) about death or the dead. The occurrence of death often brings about deep personal silent reflection and mourning. At funerals, people normally speak in whispers. However, the deathbed and the occurrence of death provide opportunities for the members of the Abaluyia community to learn about death through observation, imitation, explanation and participation.

2.2.4.1 Dying at home

When a person is terminally ill or very old and frail, issues surrounding death begin to be discussed during family gatherings albeit in quiet, bewildered tones. If the dying person is far from home, he is often encouraged to return so that he or she may die at home. The discussions involve all extended family (community) members. Older members often explain to children that so-and-so may die anytime. Other common discussions involve issues of inheritance. As (Malusu 1978:7) explains, only in his last moment may the dying man divide his remaining piece of land and leave instruction as to who is to inherit his wife (wives) or look after his young children. In the event that this opportunity does not arise when the person concerned is still alive, a family gathering to decide on these issues is held after death or shortly after burial. Children are present at and involved in these gatherings. In this way, death provides an opportunity to hand on the baton in the relay of life.

2.2.4.2 Myths

The concept of death is also explained through myths. Among the Abaluyia misfortune, evil deeds, illness, and death are thought to be due to forces that are opposed to the natural order. This gave rise to the conception of death as a myth. A widespread myth relates that human beings became mortal only when they were cursed by the chameleon (*likhaniifu*), after they repeatedly refused its request for a share of their food (Wagner 1954:43, cf. Mbiti 1969:110). According to Mbiti (1969:77), myths are “means of explaining some actual or imaginary reality which is not adequately understood and so cannot be explained through normal description. Myths do not have to be taken literally, since they are not synonymous with facts. They are intended to communicate and form the basis for a working explanation about something.” Barbour, cited by Mbogori (2002:226), observes that myths have a psychological function of lessening anxiety.

2.2.4.3 Proverbs

Through proverbs, sayings and riddles, beliefs about death and dying are inculcated. For instance, people are encouraged to do what must be done lest they be overtaken by death. Procrastination is discouraged on the basis that *Inyanga yofwa shiomanyanga tawe* (no one can tell the day of his death) (Wambunya 2005:26). This forms the basis of the dominant understanding that death comes unexpectedly.

2.2.4.4 Mourning involves all

When death occurs, all members of the extended family (community), even children, are involved as much as possible in the grieving process. While the children’s understanding of loss and grief obviously differs with age, they are allowed opportunity to grieve, in spite of their age, alongside other members of the community.

2.2.4.5 Rites and sacrifices

Among the Abaluyia, loss through death is dramatised. The dramatisation is seen in postures taken while crying, attire, composing and dancing to dirges and other performances, suspension of some social contacts for a specific period and participating in prescribed rituals (cf. Ayisi 1992:92). These rites and performances impact the socialisation process of children who often learn through imitation. From an early age, for instance, girls join other female folk in wailing and other mourning performances. A daughter is often fondly referred to as ‘the wailer’ (*owoluhungu*). Parents who have daughters glory in the fact that they will be properly mourned because among the Abaluyia women lead in mourning the dead. On their part, boys learn restraint from men. For instance, men are not expected to cry following the death of a child and their expression of sorrow is usually limited to groaning (cf. Malusu 1978:3).

Apart from observation and participation, young men and women receive preparatory education about funeral rituals. In the past, initiation ceremonies provided young men and women with the opportunity to learn life-skills and cultural norms. For instance, the Abaluyia believe that unless the rituals are performed properly, the deceased turns to be an evil spirit (*eshisheno*) and does much harm to the bereaved family and community (cf. Matsuda 1984:29). For young men, such beliefs were explained during the seclusion period of circumcision. On their part, young women learned from older women. In the past, several young women slept in one hut (*eshibinze*) where they received most of their training through talks and folktales by their grandmother or another elderly woman.

2.2.4.6 Dreams

Dreams (*amaloro*) are also used in teaching the young about death and the afterlife. Dreams are believed to be a means by which the dead communicate with the living. For this reason, dreams are treated very seriously and often influence people's actions. Dreams are important, not only to the dreamer, but also to those around her and they are often used to bring about healing. Dreams must be recounted in the early morning. Traditionally, an unusual dream or one involving the appearance of a deceased person, would necessitate a visit to a dream interpreter or prophet (*omulakusi*), who would interpret the dream and say whether any sacrifice was necessary (Appleby 1943). It is also believed that if the cause of death cannot be identified or if it is just guessed at, the dead may reveal it to the living through dreams (Malusu 1978:9). The deceased are also believed to avenge their death by strangling (*okhumika*) the culprits in their dreams. Almost all the respondents in the focus groups attested to having received dreams after the death of a member of their family or a friend.

Early socialisation about death, which begins in infancy and early childhood, helps to develop an adequate philosophy of life which incorporates the reality of death and strengthens the people's ability to cope with the disruptive effects of bereavement. Children grow up around parents and within a community which accepts and involves them, to a degree, during bereavement. In this way their emotional pain finds expression alongside that of the mature members of the extended family (community). In his book, *The dynamics of grief: Its source, pain, and healing*, Switzer (1970:211) citing Wahl observes that children are capable of integrating into their being the concept of 'not-being', and are thus given a source of strength in dealing with the event of emotional pain. Mbogori (2002:68) also underscores the importance of early socialisation involving the knowledge of death. He argues that the implications of death only become real to a person upon bereavement and if, at an earlier stage of life, one's parents have not explained what is involved in such a loss, the needed resources for coping are lacking.

2.2.5 Summary

It is evident from the descriptive analysis above that the traditional understanding of life, death and afterlife has a great command among the Abaluyia in spite of their education, conversion or residence. For instance, some Abaluyia Christian pastors refuse to conduct funerals of people who commit suicide. Others allow the family of the deceased to carry out traditional burial and cleansing practices and only turn up to read the church burial liturgy (cf. Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001: 355-356). In formulating a Christian pastoral care model for bereavement healing, one has to seriously consider the overwhelming cultural understanding of human life, death and afterlife. As Mwaura (2000:73) explains, an understanding of a people's conception of the world they live in and the forces operating in it is imperative for it undoubtedly influences their understanding of health. Among the Abaluyia, therefore, such formulation ought to consider three essential traditional views. Firstly, life in this world is what matters most. Life has its source in God (*Were Khakaba/Nayasaye*) and must be respected, protected and promoted. God is not thought to embrace disruptive forces in nature and society that threaten human life. As such, care must be taken by humans through prayers (offered only to God), medicines and rituals for long life. Secondly, death does not annihilate life. Paradoxically, death is undesirable even though the individual continues to exist in the hereafter (*emakombe*). Due to the fact that disruptive forces are not blamed on God, some human agent is always involved irrespective of the immediate circumstances of death. Lastly, early socialisation on death helps to strengthen individuals for the disruptive effects of bereavement. Through the process of socialisation the therapeutic value of communal beliefs and practices is inculcated.

2.3 Cultural bereavement healing beliefs and practices

The Abaluyia's beliefs and practices provide key models to bereavement healing. This section begins with an analytical description of the extended family (community) as the context of bereavement healing. Focus is then drawn to the various therapeutic rituals, sacrifices, ceremonies, performances, conduct of the bereaved and care given to the survivors. Underlying therapeutic values such as the pursuit for peace and tranquillity with the self, neighbour and extended family (community), confession, forgiveness and reconciliation, hospitality and philanthropy, bravery, hard-work and possessions, fidelity, respect, and democracy are also highlighted.

2.3.1 Extended family (community) as the context of bereavement healing

Shorter (1998:83) defines 'family' as the smallest group of relatives that can operate effectively by itself in a given society. Among the Abaluyia, as Kabaji (2005:41-42) correctly observes, the concept of 'family' is understood at two levels. Firstly, a family is a social unit based on a marriage union between two adults of opposite sex responsible for raising children born to them.

This is the immediate or nucleus family level. The nucleus family may involve one male and one or more females who engage in socially acceptable sexual relationships. The family as a household is a unit of parents plus their own children from the smallest unit in economic co-operation. Traditionally, polygyny was not only acceptable, but desirable. A man with one wife was seen as a mono-eyed individual. More wives meant more children and thus not only more people to work the farms, but more survivors in the event of death.

On the second level, a family is a group of relatives by blood extended in space and time, and including the deceased as well as the unborn (Shorter 1998:84; Mbiti 1969:105, 107; Wagner 1954:42). The extended family is a closely knit identifiable unit comprising of several nucleus families often related by blood. As Kabaji (2005:41-42) explains, it is within this extended family that basic security and emotional satisfaction is provided. Within this larger family unit children are socialised and receive their earliest education.

It is within the context of the extended family that bereavement healing largely occurs. The centrality of communal awareness is well captured by Mbiti (1969:108-109) who states that in traditional life, the individual exists only corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations, his contemporaries and the unborn. He is a part of the whole and as such when he suffers, he does not suffer alone, but with the corporate group whether living or dead. Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. Therefore, the individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'. Magezi (2006:513) helpfully observes that the rituals that are performed to restore balance are performed in a communal context. And through rituals people regain self-acceptance and a sense of belonging by realising that they are not alone on the journey of life, and that there are people to support, encourage and confide in when trouble arises, a realisation which effects healing. Importantly, as Mbogori (2002:114) points out, this traditional milieu in which death occurs encourages healing in bereavement as it is contingent on two distinctive values associated with the well-being of the society, that is, co-existence of individuals in the society and God as the centre of all things.

2.3.2 Sickness and dying in the traditional milieu

The Abaluyia make time to care for their sick and dying members. The sick are looked after until they recuperate or die. In this regard, dying is not a private affair limited to the individual alone in a hospital ward, but, of necessity, involves the extended family (community). Members of the extended family, neighbours and friends are required to visit the sick especially when it seems fairly certain that death is coming. The visits are used to encourage the sick and the dying as

well as their immediate families. However, this communal approach to sickness and dying does not negate the fact that death comes to each person individually. As the Abaluyia admit, *Oufwa afwa lulwe*, death comes differently and at a different time to each person or, as Wambunya (2005:50) translates this proverb, everyone dies of his own disease.

Among the Abaluyia, it is on the death-bed that people make known what their will is concerning inheritance. Culturally, property is owned by men. It is important for a dying man to make his wish known concerning his properties, liabilities and indeed his wife/wives and children before he dies (*okhukhalaka omwoyo*). Dying men often speak in favour of those present by their death-bed. On the contrary, those who are absent are often excluded from the dying person's will. These verbal wills are absolutely binding and are strictly reinforced by the surviving members of the extended family (community). It is believed that to go against a dying person's will is to invite not only a curse upon oneself, but also an evil spirit (*eshisheno*) which may cause misfortune or 'bad' death. Malusu (1978:7) explains that failure to fulfil the dying person's request endangers the living, as the spirit of the dead person might visit them to see to it that his wishes have been fulfilled. And why delay the dead man's 'journey,' or even provoke his unwanted visit? Although the community has put in place avenues for appeal if a family member feels unjustly treated concerning the will, ruling often favours those who care for the dying. As Mbiti (1969:152) points out, after the dying man has given instruction concerning the distribution of his property and made his will known concerning other related matters, all the people sit around him, silently waiting for him to die.

Furthermore, the Abaluyia seek to please the dying person so that he or she may act favourably towards them after death. For this reason, those who visit dying members bring gifts and speak well of them. In some cases, the dying person makes demands concerning the gifts he would like to receive. People strive to fulfil these demands. They are, of course, not impossible demands and those who sincerely cannot afford them have nothing to fear. Only those who choose to be tight-fisted are believed to be haunted by the person after he dies.

In addition, a death bed provides an opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation. The dying person is encouraged to confess any feelings of hostility, aggression, unfair competitiveness or any other negative practices and to apologise for known or inadvertent offences he may have committed. On the other hand anybody who has anything against the dying person is expected to bring it up so that they can be reconciled before death. The gathered relatives, especially siblings, also often use this opportunity to reconcile with each other. Among the Abaluyia, forgiveness requested is often given and received. Death, therefore, avails an opportunity for reconciliation, as the Abaluyia say: *Akabiya kakasilibungwa mumasika* (Wambunya 2005:8). Reconciliation sessions which are normally accompanied by a ritual meal, often end in farewells

from both the dying and not only those gathered around him, but also others who may be absent with an apology. Magezi (2006:514) explains that reconciliation fostered through community rituals is invaluable in inculcating acceptance of one another despite their situation.

Relatives and other community members who refuse to visit a dying person are often suspected of having colluded against him in which case his spirit would be justified to take revenge after death. Absence is also regarded as showing disrespect for the dying family member (Mbiti 1969:152).

2.3.3 Funeral arrangement meetings

Usually several meetings are held by relatives and friends shortly after a death has occurred. In these meetings, issues concerning cultural beliefs and practices related to death are highlighted, burial decisions made and expectations drawn. The expectations include taboos to be observed and members' contributions towards funeral arrangements. The will of the deceased concerning issues like the place of burial is also considered. In these meetings, the principles of seniority, respect (*oburie*) and democracy are observed. As Wagner (1954:37) records, the principle of seniority is based on age, gender and descent. This principle upon which rank, authority and prestige are based is carried right through to the smallest social group, the individual family. Seniority sets an order of precedence in meetings, rituals and ceremonies, marriage, succession and inheritance and in virtually all social proceedings. However, a large family, possessions, wisdom and a 'gentle' character also confer rank, authority and prestige. Due to their seniority in age, elderly people are accorded the highest respect among the Abaluyia. They are also believed to have power to curse and to bless. Wagner (1954:48) further explains that the power which the ancestors are thought to have over the well-being of the living seems to be associated with the idea of seniority and thus to be related to the power ascribed to curses and blessings uttered by aged persons.

In the course of this study, the researcher attended several funeral preparation meetings. In one such meeting, he was asked to chair. His plea not to do so was overruled on the basis of his late father's age seniority. It did not matter that there were older cousins in attendance. During the meeting, many speakers referred to him by his late father's name. In essence, he was chairing the meeting on behalf of his late father. He, therefore, assumed his late father's senior status. In the meeting, the principles of democracy were upheld. Both male and female relatives in attendance spoke freely. Respect and tolerance to divergent views were upheld. Anybody who showed intolerance or nuisance (*oweindoboyo*) was asked to be silent or otherwise leave the meeting. On issues without obvious cultural prescriptions, there was consensus building through consultations. The consultations extended even to those who were not present at the

meeting. Another meeting was scheduled the following day where reports from the consultations were discussed and conclusions made. Weak proposals were dismissed often with a sense of humour – no wonder the Abaluyia say, *Batsekhangata kata mumasika*, for there is room for laughter even at a funeral (Wambunya 2005:12). Any dissenting voice, whether it was raised by a male or female, was seriously considered. The most culturally acceptable and practically workable decision accepted by the majority was adopted by the group. Once the decisions had been adopted, they were binding on the whole group. This is in clear contrast to Shisanya's (1996:188) contention that women are denied an opportunity to contribute to decisions about funeral arrangements among the Abaluyia. This decision-making process necessary for the funeral arrangements is a source of healing for the bereaved as they receive attentive care from the extended family (community).

Consultations in decision-making processes aims not only to bring all concerned people on board and so avoid blame for error, but also to seek specialised opinion if necessary. Specialised opinion is part and parcel of seeking well-being among the Abaluyia. In the past there were special people or, as Wagner (1954:37) prefers to designate them, 'departmental experts' who enjoyed a marked degree of prestige based on the belief that they wield superior powers. The specialists include the elders, 'rain makers' (*abachimba*), dream prophets, diviners, certain healers and to some extent, also iron-smelters and smiths (*aberany*). They are believed to have the ability to use their powers for the good or bad of the community (Malusu 1978:18). Therefore, the specialists are consulted in times of illness or other misfortune and following the occurrence of death. Their opinion is especially sought if the cause of death is disputed, the deceased put a curse on a member of the family before he died or has communicated through dreams. The specialists advise the individual or family on the appropriate rituals, exorcism, sacrifice, purifications or confessions to restore ritual balance for the people concerned. Among the Abaluyia, a curse is greatly feared especially if it is uttered by aged or dying persons. Medicinal concoctions (*amanyasi*) are often prescribed in addition to special rituals and sacrifices to remove a curse, counteract witchcraft or appease the dead.

2.3.4 Hospitality and philanthropy

During a funeral, relatives and neighbours to the deceased make their homes and houses available to offer hospitality to mourners who come to pay their last respects and to comfort the bereaved. As Malusu (1978:5 cf. Mbiti 1969:153) points out, on this sad occasion, the neighbouring villagers bring food from their homes to feed those mourners who have come from far away. If someone fails to bring food or refuses to show hospitality, he is suspected to be the killer. The relatives and neighbours are also expected to offer practical assistance like fetching water, splitting firewood and generally being available whenever their help is needed. A widow,

for instance, is not allowed to light a fire or to cook during the funeral and for a few days after the burial of her husband. Mbogori (2002:68) acknowledges that these family relationships and community support systems contribute to personal functioning in time of loss by death.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of the relatives, neighbours and friends to make sure that the bereaved are well catered for in their bereavement. They often offer hospitality and carry out these chores willingly because, as Mbiti (1969:2) records, to be human is to belong to the community and to do so involve participating in the beliefs and practices. This obligation strengthens the sense of community as the whole community is actively involved (Malusu 1978:5). Mbogori (2002:55) rightly comments that death occurring within the traditional milieu is catered for in terms of provisions made both in the material and spiritual welfare to the bereaved. It is the bounded duty of the extended family to support and maintain an on-going relationship with the bereaved. It is believed that the deceased can see those who come to his funeral and those who act kindly and generously to the mourners and thus rewards or punish them accordingly.

Greetings commonly form the first visible act of hospitality. It creates the first impression on whether or not the guest is welcome. The common greeting among the Abaluyia is *mulembe* (literally, *shalom/peace*). In spite of the pain of grief, the Abaluyia give priority to greeting one another. The person greeting say '*mulembe*', ('peace be with you'). The second person replies in a similar manner, 'peace be with you'. The greeting is often accompanied by shaking or waving hands. The Abaluyia are known as 'the people of '*mulembe*' (*shalom/peace*) from this common manner of greeting. This general greeting is appropriate especially in bereavement.

There exists a strong brotherhood consciousness of the extended family (*amwabolowomunzu yefwe*) in spite of the reorganisation of social relations in the contemporary society. This deep sense of kinship is reckoned through blood and marriage. Some villages or clans have formed welfare associations like Bukura Welfare Association with an aim of supporting its members in the event of death (cf. Matsuda 1984:30). In this spirit, the extended family (community) mutually seek solutions to the needs brought about by the crisis of death. Consequently, a big load is removed from the individual. As Kiriswa (2002:26) explains, because life in traditional Africa is communal in character, many stress-generating situations are solved before they overwhelm the individual.

It is clear, therefore, that no one is ever left alone during bereavement among the Abaluyia. As Magezi (2006:506, 512) observes, the bereaved always receive comfort through the presence of the extended family and friends. All the time, they have someone to talk to and are surrounded by family and friends who encourage them. In this way, the family and the

community at large play a key role in the process of healing in bereavement. Mbogori (2002:114) cites Ndeti who correctly observes that death in a family is not only the concern of that family, but equally, perhaps more, the concern of the whole village and clan, that is, all relatives who may amount to several hundreds. They singly or collectively, take over all the funeral arrangements including the after care of the bereaved. Mbogori (2002:100, 179) further explains that the knowledge that there are relatives and friends who can be relied on for love, esteem, and unconditional acceptance reduce anxiety and feelings of loneliness. Therefore, the traditional support which entails rallying of relatives and friends at the time of death help in attenuating grief.

In addition to hospitality and acts of benevolence, rituals perhaps provide the greatest meaning and coping mechanisms to the Abaluyia faced with death and bereavement. Therefore, it is important to consider some of the therapeutic rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies to which we now turn.

2.3.5 Therapeutic rituals and sacrifices

Rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies form a significant part of the Abaluyia's worldview. The various rituals and sacrifices are experienced at all stages of life which is marked by prescribed rites of passage. There are rituals and sacrifices related to the birth of a child, initiation into adulthood, marriage and most importantly, death. Rituals and sacrifices are about the promotion of human wellbeing. Edet (1992:36) observes that rituals are indispensable as they form the sacramental self-realisation of the individual or group. According to *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, the term ritual refers to a 'set form or system of rites, religious or otherwise; or the observance of a set form of rites, as in public worship.' Mbiti (1991:131) defines a rite or ritual as a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony – a means of communicating something of religious significance through word, symbol and action. It embodies a belief or set of beliefs.

Nwachuku (1992:57 cf. Stroebe *et al.* 1987:50) observes that the process of ritualistic expressions is essential for ordering individual survival and security and the life of the society. The in-built worship embedded in ritualism provides the internal locus of control and governs the people's total life activities. This is because rituals serve the social function of strengthening group solidarity, the reflection and shaping of social values, and the ensuring of continued social cohesion and social bonding. According to Mbogori (2002:127) rituals reinforce the group and reaffirm reciprocal obligations.

Rituals are developed and maintained within a community. According to Switzer (1970:213), the

community provides the symbols and rituals with the power both to strengthen the fellowship and as one aspect of its strengthening function, to dramatise the major events, including the crises, of life. Mbogori (2002:55) points out that the traditional family relationships act as nexus which binds human beings to the source of their being – God and the community. As such, the preparation of the funeral rituals occurs within the context of the clan. It is important to remember that among the Abaluyia the killing of animals or fowl during rituals is by no means always, or even predominantly, of sacrificial nature (Wagner 1954:50-51). In most of the rituals mentioned here, no offering or prayers are made to God, the ancestors or other spiritual beings.

The main purpose of the rituals related to bereavement through death is to engender life here and in the hereafter. For the bereaved, rituals serve to bring about healing and to enable them to adjust to life without the physical presence of a loved one. As Edet (1992:31) correctly points out, the goal of rituals is to separate effectively the living from the dead, to accomplish the transition, to bring about the incorporation of the dead into his proper place in the hereafter, and to reunite the mourners with each other and with the community. That this passage be satisfactorily completed is always a matter of community interest. Mbogori (2002:126) adds that rituals have a curative value to the bereaved. This value is said to derive from social interaction which brings people together to share in grief.

Among the Abaluyia, rituals connected with death are usually elaborate. Death comes to men and women alike, and apart from the absence of dramatic wailing by men, women's funerals are every bit as meticulously undertaken as men's. This is contrary to the thought that women, children and unimportant men cannot cause harm after death if funeral rites are not observed (see Gehman 1999:12). In the actual performance of funeral rites, men and women play prescribed but equally important roles based on their status in the family.

2.3.5.1 Rationale for elaborate rituals and sacrifices

Several reasons account for the elaborate death rituals among the Abaluyia. First, as Wagner (1954:44f.) suggests, there exists a very pronounced belief in a dichotomy of good and evil forces. Everything which deviates from the normal order of things as established by God, both in the natural and in the social world, is regarded as a manifestation of evil forces and thus dangerous. Death evokes reactions which outwardly resemble those caused by abnormal phenomena and greatly impairs the ritual status of the bereaved thus rendering them dangerous to themselves as well as to others. Anybody associated with death both indirectly through bereavement or directly as in the case of a warrior who has slain an enemy become ritually contaminated.

Second, death is often associated with witchcraft which threatens the bloodline of the deceased.

This calls for protective and cleansing rituals or rituals and sacrifices aimed at avenging his death.

Third, there is a strong belief in continuity of life after the physical death. The Abaluyia hold that the dead continue to be involved in the affairs of the living either for good or for evil. Wabukala and LeMarquand (2001:354) correctly note that as ancestors or spirits both men and women are equally powerful and any impropriety or improper rituals can lead to untold suffering. For this reason, all care is taken to ensure that all the necessary ritual requirements are fulfilled, in order to facilitate the relative's reception in the afterlife, thus making the ancestor more helpful to the family. The helpfulness of spirits depends on blood relations. It is only the spirit of a relative who can be invoked with effect. The ancestors are believed to be ever present, watching over human activities, punishing misbehaviour and upholding the order and morality of the extended family.

Last and perhaps most importantly, death rituals are utilised by the community for purposes of separation and union. By the rituals the deceased are separated from the living and united to the ancestors. On the other hand, the bereaved are reintegrated into the society after a major life crisis. They are enforced and monitored by the community. Wagner (1954:53) points out that emphasis is often put on purification rituals which are performed to restore the ritual status of the individual or group. As Shisanya (1996:187 cf. Mbogori 2002:114, 126; Oduyoye 1992:9; Mbiti 1969:149) observes, death rituals among the Abaluyia are intended to serve many socio-religious functions, like permanently separating the deceased from survivors and re-establishing social solidarity by reincorporating the mourners into the community. Death rituals are, therefore, designed to bring about wellness following the disruptive loss through death. They enable the bereaved to cope with their loss. This largely explains the persistence of cultural beliefs and practices over the generations in spite of external influence.

2.3.5.2 Pre-death rituals

The eldest son or brother of a dying man is expected to provide a bull which is slaughtered (*okhushenga*) and its meat eaten by relatives together with the dying man if possible. Mbiti (1969:152) observes that this animal is given as the final donation of the dying man to the ancestors, and as a means of requesting them to receive him peacefully. As Gehman (1999:11) explains, to neglect this last meal would mean punishment of the living by the ancestors. The ritual acts as a farewell ceremony. Apart from providing a passport for the dying for smooth entry into the world of the dead (*emakombe*), it serves as a certificate of good conduct kept by the survivors. The survivors bring this certificate with them into bereavement and are encouraged in the knowledge that they did not neglect the deceased, but did their best to care for his needs. It is important to note, as Alembe (2002:111) records, that living members who neglected the dead relatives often have a loaded conscience. They are guilty that they did not fulfil the duty of taking

care of their parents or other relatives. For this reason, Mbogori (2002:172) argues that when the relationship prior to death is not harmonious, grieving becomes difficult.

After death has occurred, several rituals are observed before, during and after burial. The rituals vary slightly depending on the nature of the death, age, gender and the social standing of the deceased. There are also slight variations from clan to clan. However, most of the rituals are similar across the sub-groups. For instance, there are no long rituals, ceremonies or mourning for children and prenatal deaths (cf. Malusu 1978:9). If the dead child is a twin, she must not be mourned by wailing. It is believed that wailing may bring about the death of the surviving twin (Wako 1985:38).

2.3.5.3 Pre-burial rituals

Among the Abaluyia, death is announced by wailing (*okhwikhuula*) which is the conventional way of expressing grief occasioned by death. On the death of a married man, his wife (or first wife) is expected to be the first to announce his death by making a sharp cry (*okhupa oluhungu*) after which she is joined by other people (cf. Shisanya 1996:187; Elverson 1920:47; Simfukwe 2006:1462). As Malusu (1978:3) points out, crying and drumming announce to the rest of the community that a member has been removed from their midst. Work stops and everyone nearby gathers at the home of the deceased to express their sympathy and provide emotional, spiritual and material help to the bereaved. A neighbour who does not come is accused of being the killer. The Abaluyia believe that the deceased can know if close relatives fail to attend his funeral and can punish them accordingly (Shisanya 1996:187). Others in far off places are informed through messengers (*okhuhalala*). Because marriages are patrilocal, if a man dies, the widow is expected to travel to her parents to announce his death to allow for the burial arrangements to proceed. She is expected to go and return on the same day.

The announcement by wailing follows a short session of restrained sobbing while the body is prepared – closing the eyes, mouth, washing, wrapping in a piece of cloth (*isanda*) or clothing, removing it from the inner room and placing it on a bed/bier in the lounge for ease of viewing. Customary respect (*oburie*) is observed in carrying out these activities. The bed bearing the body is later transferred, usually after a few hours, and placed under the eaves of the deceased's house or to a makeshift structure or tent (*eshiralatsi*) outside the house. Relatives and neighbours who get the sad news make haste as they would like to view the body while it is still warm (*nashitunduma*) and express their loss.

Viewing the body of a loved one is essential. This explains the need to inform as many relatives as possible and as soon as possible after the occurrence of death. Relatives who receive the sad news after burial are often outraged and demand an apology from those who failed to

inform them. Writing on the rage of bereavement, Ironside (1996:18) states that seeing a dead body does ram home the message that our minds and our bodies quite naturally resist: that the dead person is dead. It is one thing to know intellectually that someone has died and quite another to accept it at a deep, unconscious level. Alexander (1993:35) adds that viewing the body of the person who has died can be a help in beginning to acknowledge the loss.

On the first night after death, a ritual fire (*omuliro kwamachenga*) is lit in the deceased's compound by a man from his lineage (Shisanya 1996:188). The fire, literally 'blazing embers', is made on the right-hand side from the main entrance into the homestead for a male and on the left-hand side for a female. According to traditional customs, all attendants of a vigil are not expected to leave the home of the deceased even when the vigil is held in the rainy season (cf. Matsuda 1984:28). The ritual fire provides light and warmth for those who gather for the night vigil. Formerly, the night vigil was kept in order to look out for the sorcerer who might come to see the result of his wicked doings, to ward off the possibility of witchcraft which is always suspect in deaths not caused by old age, to ward off wild animals (*amanani*) so that they do not carry away the body, to appease the dead and most importantly, to comfort the bereaved family (cf. Mbiti 1969:153). It is believed that anyone who may have participated in causing the death in any way is destroyed by the warmth of the ritual fire. Any such person would therefore avoid sitting around it. Only those who are guiltless in this regard sit around it. In addition, the embers of the ritual fire symbolise the dying flame of the deceased person. This explains why the fire is left to burn for several days after burial.

The ritual fire provides a temporary shrine. Shisanya (1996:189) explains that the fire is believed to have a religious meaning as it is lit for ancestors who belong to the sacred world. In the past, a ritual fowl (*ingokho yeshilindwa*) given to the grave diggers was killed by strangling and roasted over the ritual fire. As Wagner (1954:33) points out, the fowl given to grave diggers, like all ritual animals and fowl used for ritual purposes, must be of single colour preferably white or cream white but never black. Nowadays, the ritual fire is used to singe the feathers of the ritual fowl before it is cooked and eaten only by those who dug the grave.

2.3.5.4 Burial rituals and sacrifices

Burial is normally conducted on the third day after death. In the past, the funeral of a man lasted four days while that of a woman lasted three days (Wako 1985:31). However, due to medical improvement and as a matter of necessity, bodies are increasingly being kept for longer periods. This is done primarily to enable family members who work and live in distant places to be present at the funeral. Times of burial are also enshrined in the customs. Respectable elder and warriors are buried at dusk 'with the red sinking sun' (Malusu 1978:11). Other men and women are buried in the afternoon while children may be buried in the morning. It is considered a curse

for one to die in childhood. Those who commit suicide are buried at night with little or no burial rituals. Among the Abaluyia, proper burial is a sign of respect to the deceased and to their family which include the ancestors and the unborn.

The acceptable disposal of the body among the Abaluyia is by burial in a grave. A man is buried in his father's land. However, a man who has bought a piece of land may be buried in it if he requests it before he dies, or if he is fully established in the purchased piece of land. A woman who has children born to her by her husband is buried in his land. The children incorporate her into her husband's extended family (community). On the other hand, a barren woman or a newly married woman with no children may be returned to her parents for burial. However, such a woman is buried in her husband's land if dowry (*ikhwe*) has been completed. Dowry, mainly in form of cattle, was a token of gratitude on the part of the bridegroom's family to that of the bride, for their care over her and for allowing her to become his wife. It is a gift, but above all it is an offering – a sign of respect and commitment. Dowry is thus an important part of the marriage union. It is the basis for a woman to join the clan of her husband with dignity, recognition and assurance for protection and provision from her husband and his clan. If a man kills his wife he is said to have disclaimed her and the body is returned to her parents (relatives) for burial thus exposing him to the curse of blood guilt and the vengeance of the deceased. A child belongs with the father and therefore he must be given to the rightful biological father or blood relation for burial (Malusu 1978:5-6; Keya 2003:13).

Only circumcised men are allowed to dig the grave and to bury the dead. A woman or an uncircumcised person may not dig the grave or bury a dead person. A father cannot dig a grave for his son or daughter, or husband for his wife (Mbiti 1969:153). As Malusu (1978:6) points out, only circumcised men may touch the dead in their last moments to the grave. Only these men have the privilege of digging the grave and burying the dead.

The circumcision rite is said to put men at peace with the dead. The Abaluyia believe that the blood that trickles from the cut onto the ground binds the initiates with the ancestors. The cutting of the foreskin in circumcision also marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. With circumcision comes a licence for a male member of the community to marry and to own property. Circumcision thus means the start of new responsibilities. Following this rite of passage, one is an adult. He has moved from one status to the next, higher status in life. He must strive to exhibit qualities befitting of an adult. These include cleanliness, bravery, honesty, confidentiality and respect especially for elders. In circumcision, one also finds a new identity within an age group (those who shared a circumciser's knife with him). The age groups provided the basis for social solidarity. Above all, he is expected to participate in the sustenance of the community through marriage and procreation. Alembi (2002:126, 148) aptly draws a connection

between birth, initiation and death. He explains that young members of the community are circumcised as a preparation for marriage. They marry to procreate. They procreate to fight death that threatens to annihilate the community.

The grave's position is predetermined. Often the grave is positioned on the right-hand side from the main gate if it is for a male and on the left-hand side if it is for a female. In cases where a couple is buried in a family graveyard, the husband's grave is closest to the outer fence of the homestead. The belief is that even in death, men continue to protect their families from external attack (Alembi 2002:58). As already noted, the orientation of the grave and position of the head is crucial. This varies slightly from clan to clan but the general direction is the east-west orientation with the head on the eastern end (facing the rising sun). Among the Abawanga, graves are sometimes dug and the deceased positioned along the south-east to north-west axis with the head on the south-east end. One elder explained that this represents their latest migration route.

An elderly family member undertakes the grave-marking ceremony bearing in mind the established custom before it is dug. This brief ceremony is however full of symbolism. Among the Abaluyia, as among other African communities (cf. Sitshebo 1998:29), anyone who builds a house (*okhwikula olukala*) does so only with the approval of an elder in the family, often his father or uncle. In a similar way grave-marking is done by an elder not only to show the important role played by elders but also indicate that the dead is still considered a member of the family. The grave is often referred to as departed person's house and those who dig the grave go away saying that they have made so-and-so's house. Care is taken in the preparation of the grave. Perhaps, this explains why the deceased's 'house' ought to be on their ancestral land.

Only one person may be buried in a grave. As Wako (1985:38) explains, if a woman dies while pregnant, the child has to be removed and buried separately. It is taboo for two people to be buried in one grave. In earlier times, when a man died he was buried in the house of his first wife, but if his first wife died before him, then he would be buried in the house of the woman who came in her place (*eshibeyo*). The house would be deserted once all burial rituals had been completed. Previously too, each clan had a cemetery or burial grove (*eshihembekho*). This was a grove of trees where chiefs and other important men (at one time it was all men who had been circumcised) were finally buried. The body was first buried for a period of about a year in the hut of the man's first wife before the bones were dug up, washed and reburied within the burial grove. Beer and portion of the meat from sacrifices was taken to the *eshihembekho* for the spirits of those buried there to share (Appleby 1943; Hobley 1896:368). Due to factors such as Christian missionary influence, high population growth and land sub-division such burial sites

are rare. Moreover, the ritual of re-burial is no longer performed as part of the burial rituals.

An elderly close relative of the deceased, except all those with any relational *oburie*, prepare the body for internment. In the past, the body would be stripped bare of any clothes and ornaments before burial. Mbiti (1969:155) records that this 'naked' state symbolises birth in the afterlife. Nowadays the body is often well dressed and wrapped in white clothes (*isanda*), but no ornaments are permitted and a tie must be loosened before burial.

Before one is buried, any outstanding rituals which ought to have been administered, but had been overtaken by death, have to be performed prior to burial (Wako 1985:30). For instance, after marriage a wife is expected to prepare a ceremonial meal for her husband as part of the rituals to consummate a marriage. For this meal, it is required that she collects foodstuffs from her parental home. If her husband dies before this ritual is observed, his brother or close relative has to go for a meal prepared by the widow at her parental home before burial is conducted. The brother or relative takes the deceased man's jacket which is put on an empty chair during the meal. He is said to have gone 'to wash hands' (*okhusaaba*). Again, before burial is conducted, the *eshikalo* (the bull/cow or goat which acts as a seal) is given to the deceased's uncles to stop them from making further demands (cf. Wako 1985:34). This mandatory gift is shared among the uncles present at the funeral. The uncles, on their part, have an obligation to bring foodstuffs for the deceased's children (Wako 1978:35). Nowadays an equivalent in monetary form is, though less desirable, acceptable. This practice is very rampant. In the course of this research, a burial service of a man was delayed for over six hours as his uncles waited for this 'gift'.

On the day of burial a bull or cow is slaughtered at dawn. The Abaluyia have an obligation to kill at least one animal as a sacrifice (*omusango*) to their ancestors to facilitate the incorporation of the deceased into the ancestral world (Shisanya 1996:189). This ritual is taken so seriously that even poor families have to borrow the animal to fulfil the ritual. Malusu (1978:9) explains that if the animal is not killed the spirit of the dead person will be restless and angry and will come back to kill the animals in the home in form of an epidemic, or thunder bolt, or some other catastrophe. Even if there are no cattle in the home, one must be found, either bought or borrowed from another relative. It is believed that blood needs to be shed in the home to prevent further misfortune. The meat also provides food for the mourners. A portion of the meat is shared out among the family members. The sharing is done on the basis of seniority which also predetermines the part of the animal that the meat is carved from (Wako 1978:34). Some portions of the meat are preserved for any person for whose benefit the rite is performed if they happen to be away at the time of the ritual distribution. This predictability is helpful for a grieving person.

During burial the immediate family perform a farewell ritual of throwing soil on the corpse or coffin. As they do so, they announce their acceptance of death as the lot for all humankind saying: “don’t worry brother/sister, we too shall follow you because where you are going is our real home” (Malusu 1978:9). The makeshift shelter (*eshiralatsi*) where the body would have been lying is then dismantled and the branches and leaves placed in the grave. This is why the Abaluyia talk about the dead as those who have pulled down their houses and relocated (*basambula*). In the past, the homestead would be abandoned (*likunda*) except for periodic visits. In a similar way, if the dead person was a renowned warrior, a clan or family head, or an elderly respected man, the burial was preceded by the ceremony of ‘breaking the pot’. A pot previously used for cooking his meat or to serve beer, usually preserved by his first wife was ceremonially smashed under the eaves of his hut by a grandson of the dead man while singing a befitting traditional dirge. This ceremony symbolised the deceased’s disappearance from this world and thus the loss incurred through death. He has now no need of it; for *Abafwa babula olutseshe lurera* – the dead have no clear drinking straw. No other man, even the one who would inherit his wife, could use this cooking pot. It was a symbol of him, of his manhood. So when he died it had also to ‘die’ (Malusu 1978:12; Mbiti 1969:154; Wambunya 2005:7).

Absolute silence is observed by those present while the grave is filled with soil. It is unacceptable to wail at this point in the process of burial although one may sob quietly. It is believed that to wail as the body returns to the soil would cause the spirit of the deceased to be rejected for still clinging to the material world (Malusu 1978:13). This explains why during eulogy (*obuloli*), the bereaved often end their speeches by saying that they ‘release the deceased’ so that he can depart without any hindrance. This conclusion may also be as a result of the traditional practice where before burial, a short ceremonial speech was addressed to the deceased imploring him not to bear grudges against the surviving relatives (Wagner 1970:472). Wailing resumes after burial and it is not uncommon to hear the bereaved wailing several days or even months later. Relatives and friends are expected to be present at the funeral. Magezi (2006:518) notes that the tradition of being present when a member of the community is suffering makes care imperative.

When the grave is half full with soil, freshly cut *olusiola* (*markhamia lutea*) poles are erected, one in each corner of the grave. They are used to mark the grave. In the past, the poles were believed to link the dead and the living. In this way the dead could keep in contact with the living especially through dreams (Alembi 2002:133). The *olusiola* tree has to be found for this purpose. It is important to note that this is the same tree which was used for the pole at the family ritual shrines (*olusambwa*). It was common for prayers to be made at the family ritual shrine (*amachina kemisango*) during funerals in order to secure peace for the deceased (cf.

Mbiti 1969:59).

If a member of the family is thought to have died after a long period of disappearance or if for some reason his body could not be recovered for burial, a symbolic burial is conducted. All burial rites are observed. The only difference in such a case is that in the place of a human body, a cut banana tree (*likoko*) is buried. The eulogies and prayers during this funeral focus on the deceased (lost) person. This symbolic burial gives the concerned family an opportunity to mourn and begin the process of bereavement healing. In addition, the grave remains as a linking symbol between the living and the departed (cf. Sitshebo 1998:27).

2.3.5.5 Post-burial rituals

Burial marks the start of purification rituals and ceremonies. As Gehman points out, many ceremonies and customs related to death are an effort to restore balance and well-being among the bereaved (Gehman 1999:18). Immediately after burial, those who participated in the burial wash their hands, face and feet at the grave site. Alembi (2002:136) explains that carrying fresh soil from the grave into a home will be inviting the spirit of death into that home. Ritual washing symbolises an end to one phase of life and the beginning of a new phase. It marks boundaries and recognises that death disrupts life, but it does not end it. They are also given a fowl, a cock if the deceased was male or hen if female, known as *ingokho eyomukulukha* (burial fowl). In the past, the fowl was killed by being hit on the freshly covered grave until it died. Its blood splashing over the grave was believed to be a token of thanks to the deceased man for the fame and wealth he has left the family (Mbiti 1969:154). It is then roasted or singed over the ritual fire, cooked and eaten by those people who buried the deceased only (Wako 1985:30-31, 34).

Two or three days after burial, the hair shaving ritual (*olubeko*) is held by the grave site (Wako 1985:31; Malusu 1978:16). This is not inconsistent with Wagner's (1954:52; 1970:485) record that this ceremony is held three days after death. It has to be borne in mind that in the past, burial was often done after one night of vigil or within a few hours after death. Nowadays there are better body preservation facilities which make it possible for the bodies to stay longer. In the past, it was believed that a dying person's breath could stick in the hair of the attendants causing suffering and even death. All men, women and children who made contact with the deceased while dying or laying in state participate in this ceremony. It is a sign of their bereavement (death) and cleansing (new life). A fowl or goat is killed, and those taking part in the ceremony share in eating the meat.

The shaving ritual still persists today. It is either done immediately after burial or a day after burial. This is to allow relatives who have to return to work to leave. Nowadays, however, the

participants in this ritual rarely shave all the hair, but rather shave the neck and forehead, leaving a sharply defined edge to the hair (*lituma*). As Alembi (2002:109) observes, the shaving of hair symbolically means that one phase of life has ended. But the hair will grow again marking a new beginning. Death is not the end of human life. The same interpretation of the shaving ritual is recorded by other scholars. Mbiti (1991:121-122) explains that the shaving of the hair is a symbol of separation, showing that one of the community members has been separated from them. It is also an indication of the people's belief that death does not destroy life, since the growth of new hair indicates that life continues to spring up.

The shaving ritual is followed by other cleansing rituals. In the past, the bereaved would go to a flowing river for a ritual bath. They would also take with them the deceased person's clothing for ritual washing. After the ritual bath, clay would be painted on the face as a sign that mourning was continuing before returning home (Wako 1985:32-33). Nowadays, the bereaved are discouraged from taking a full bath or wearing perfume before burial. The ritual bath was believed to make the bereaved ritually clean and ready for a new start. Wagner (1954:51) explains that flowing water is regarded as a purifying agent 'because it carries the evil things away'.

Another cleansing ritual shortly after burial was sweeping of the house. All work before burial was discouraged. Rubbish was swept from the house for the first time following death after burial had taken place (cf. Wagner 1970:452). As Alembi (2002:136) explains, once death occurs in a home, dirt is not swept out of the houses. Each time the house is cleaned, dirt is heaped in a corner until the day set for ritual sweeping. Ritual sweeping also symbolises a new start. Generally, cleansing rituals imply that the ritual impurity caused by death is not permanent since after the prescribed cleansing, normal life is resumed (Mbiti 1969:154-155).

After burial, the grave site, like the ritual fire set up after death, becomes the shrine where family rituals happen. The grave is believed to be the abode of the dead or more accurately, the gateway to *emakombe*, the abode of the ancestors and other spirits. Mbiti (1969:155) notes that the grave is paradoxically the symbol of separation between the dead and the living, but turning it into a shrine for the ancestors converts it into the point of meeting between the two worlds.

The rural-urban labour migration and other reasons for travel have meant, as a matter of course, that some people die away from their birthplace. When this happens, and since the Abaluyia adhere to the custom which restricts burial only in the ancestral land, efforts must be made to take the body to the home village for burial. For the Abaluyia, in common with other African communities, the ancestral land has a religious charge, mystically uniting past and present generations (Mbiti 1969:160). When this need arises, there is a great sense of

cooperation for transporting a deceased migrant's body back to the home village mainly done by the extended family and clan members (Matsuda 1984:28). On reaching home, rituals are observed for entry into the homestead and exit of those who brought the body. The vehicle or people carrying the body enter the home through a gap broken in the hedge (*eshibanga*). This is meant to protect family members who use the main gate so that they do not meet with death like the deceased. The logic is that like produces like. If a vehicle was used, those who brought the body home often travel back soon after burial. They take a ritual fowl on this journey. This fowl is released and abandoned midway. It is believed that just as the abandoned fowl cannot find its way back, so the spirit of the deceased is limited to its new home (the grave) and not disturb former colleagues and friends.

The ritual of bringing home the spirit, literally 'bringing back the shadow of the deceased' (*okhwenda eshinini*), is performed if a person died while living away from home. After the deceased is properly buried at home, the immediate family members (widower or widow and children) and a few relatives return to his former residence for the ritual of bringing home the spirit. They stay in the house for a short period (some for only one night) before returning home to complete the ritual. Matsuda (1984:29) explains that this ritual originated in the purely traditional religious need for shutting up the possibility of the return of the dead as an evil spirit (*eshisheno*).

After the funeral, a deceased man's married daughters return to their marital homes with a view to coming back within a few weeks for a special ceremony called *obukoko*. They agree among themselves and set a day for this ceremony. The ceremony is meant to ensure that their widowed mother is not left alone for a long period without provision following the death of their father. They are expected to bring foodstuffs for this ceremony. Previously, as Wako (1985:35) records, each one of them was expected to return with a goat as a gift from her husband. This goat was referred to as the 'goat of the deceased's shadow' (*imbusi yeshinini*).

Another important ritual involves a thanksgiving ceremony after the funeral. In this ceremony, relatives, neighbours and friends gather for a meal. The bereaved family prepare the meal to mark a return to daily routine and to thank all those who helped during the funeral. The ceremony is often preceded by a family gathering. In the past, a bull or cow, literally a 'cleansing cow' (*ingombe yebiosio*), would be killed and eaten on this occasion (Wako 1885:34).

The concluding ritual happens during the ceremony simply referred to as 'the feast' (*lisabo* or *omuyimo*), performed primarily in honour of a deceased ancestor. This ceremony may be held either six months or one year after burial, but it is often delayed for several years. If several members of the same family die in quick succession, the ceremony is held in order of their

seniority and date of burial. Failure to observe the correct order may nullify the sacrifices and thus lead to misfortune. This ceremony reaffirms relationships, allows for the dispersal of possessions formerly belonging to the deceased and brings to an end the period of mourning which is characterised by fear of pollution and a sense of chaos imposed by death. It thus marks the end of ritual impurity and prohibitions brought about by death. Nowadays, *lisabo* is used as an occasion for constructing the grave which is a recent addition. Other families plant a tree by the grave or let the sticks used as grave-markers to sprout. On the actual day of the ceremony, a bull (or cow for female) is slaughtered at the deep of dawn just like on the day of burial. Malusu (1978:10) observes that without this last ritual, the dead person will keep pestering the living and this is something to be carefully avoided. After the ritual, the deceased is believed to disappear and only appears on very rare occasions to communicate extremely important messages to the living. Then the dead person becomes a full-fledged member of the spirit world.

2.3.6 Special burial rituals and sacrifices

There are prescribed rituals observed in connection to those considered cursed or those who die through taboo deaths. Traditionally, the special rituals involved the uncircumcised men, bachelors and spinsters, barren women (couples) who die without ever bearing a child, the deformed (including a hunch-back person or an albino), those who are killed by lightning, sorcerers, murderers, those who practice homosexuality or bestiality (*eshiruchi*) and those who commit suicide especially by hanging oneself (*okhwimika*) or drowning. Malusu (1978:6 cf. Mbiti 1969:154) points out that those who bury the outcasts receive ritual protection from the spirits of the dead. In the past, outcasts were buried in river-beds and forgotten.

As already noted, circumcision is an important rite of passage among most sub-groups of the Abaluyia. Every male is expected to be circumcised. This initiation rite not only marks a transition from childhood to adulthood, but it is said to put the initiates at peace with the ancestors. An adult male who dies before circumcision must be circumcised before burial (cf. Malusu 1978:6). The circumciser who performs the operation is not only paid his due circumcision fee, but he must be given a young bull for ritual cleansing.

The death of a bachelor (*omusumba*), a spinster (*nashikoko*) or a barren woman (*omukumba*) demand special cleansing rituals before burial. Like circumcision, every grown up person is expected to marry. A deceased bachelor would have a thorn (*litsoi*) thrust into his buttocks as a sign of the community's disgust at his refusal to participate in the process of procreation. It was seen as refusal because, as Malusu (1978:5-6) explains, to fulfil the expectation to marry, an impotent man or those with any other physical and mental impediments would marry and have

children sired to them by a brother or another close relative. If a man refuses to marry or is incapable of doing so, he becomes an outcast. If refusal to marry means that the man dies without ever having got a woman pregnant, he is thought to be impotent. He is thus seen to have run off before completing his duty as a man. He is buried with the thorn in his flesh and he is believed to remain cursed in the afterlife where he is destined to join the restless spirits rather than the ancestors. This restlessness is symbolised by the thorn in the buttock. He is said to have 'died with his head' (*afwire nomurwekwe*), meaning that he is soon forgotten as he has left nobody to remember him.

A spinster is buried in the banana plantation usually in the back garden of the homestead. She is thus symbolically buried away from people's view and often quickly forgotten. Among the Abaluyia virginity is highly prized. In a number of rituals in which girls perform minor duties, it is important that they should be virgins. In addition, brides found to be virgins on their wedding day were highly honoured (*yali noluyali lwe*) (Wagner 1954:51). A song of virginity (*olwimbo lwolukhana*) used to be sung by the party of girls carrying news of a bride's virginity back to her home (Appleby 1943). However, if a woman died while still a virgin, with her hymen intact, she had to have the hymen ritually broken before burial. This symbolised the opening of the stream of life. The operation was normally performed by an elderly woman using a horn (cf. Malusu 1978:6). The operator, like the circumciser, required ritual cleansing after the operation.

Suicide is abhorred and those who commit it are considered outcast. As Wabukala and LeMarquand (2001:354-355) explain, that a member of the community would be so unable to cope with life as to take his own life is considered a judgment on the community for not caring for one of its members. Suicide, therefore, is not considered the fault of the victim alone. All blood relations are implicated in the death. The entire community shares in the shame and all become the object of the curse that this death brings as well as the derision of the living. The person who has resorted to suicide is said to bring a curse. Curses are usually passed within families related by blood, and are thought to have great power. Blood which binds people in blessing also binds them in a curse. Since death by suicide is thought to be a result of the community's failure to recognise its own weakness and prevent the factors which could lead to such a death, the curse turns upon the community. Because of the threat of the curse, extreme measures are taken by way of rituals in order to deflect its power.

The person who discovers the body does not touch it, but hastens to report the matter to the immediate family. Relatives, related to the deceased either by blood or marriage, may not remove the body. Instead, a foreigner is hired to take the body down or to remove it from the scene. Before being brought down, the body is whipped by an elder as a sign of disgust at the taboo act. The hired foreigner utters words to exonerate and free himself from being haunted or

coming under a curse. Those who stumble on a hanging body and those who bring it down are provided with a sheep for ritual cleansing. A grave is hurriedly prepared and the body buried at night stripped of dignity, mourning or any funeral rites. As Wabukala and LeMarquand (2001:355) record, a bull or cow is slaughtered not as a gift for the dead relatives as would be customary, but rather as an appeasement to the spirit in order to prevent trouble for the survivors. Like in other rituals, the meat is consumed jointly by all the persons concerned. Wagner (1954:50) rightly adds that great importance is attached to the presence of all persons whose status has been directly or indirectly impaired.

2.3.7 Eulogies and remembrances

The occurrence of death necessitates the gathering of family (community) members who talk about the occurrence, remember the deceased in various ways, and seek to comfort the bereaved. During the night vigils, for example, men sit around the ritual fire chatting to each other and telling stories often in reminiscence of the deceased. In case of a man's death, the widow, the first wife within the widespread polygyny, usually sits by the body of her deceased husband relieved periodically by her co-wife, sisters or another widow. Others, especially women, sing dirges and dance to the music composed in memory of the deceased.

For the Abaluyia, a funeral is incomplete without a time for eulogy. The main opportunity for eulogizing is often on the day of burial. On this day, mourners gather in the homestead of the deceased or at the grave site for the funeral service. A brief life history of the deceased is given. This includes the perceived nature of illness and cause of death. The bereaved also briefly explain what their experiences were during the period of nursing if the deceased had been ill for a while. Only the truth, what was actually witnessed or heard, is to be said. As Malusu (1978:6-7) explains, tradition insists that only the truth be told about the dead person's life. It is better to keep silent than to tell a lie. It is believed that the dead person may strike the speaker dead at that very moment or shortly afterwards if she consciously tells a lie. However, both the good and bad qualities are laid bare. The intimate nature of the life history (*obuloli*) makes it necessary that it be told by the deceased's close relatives. Alembi (2002:120) correctly points out that once a person is dead, they assume a higher status. They become spirits and the living dare not besmirch them for fear that it will bring the wrath of the spirit on their heads. In this spirit, private or secret dealings (*akamasirisi*) are revealed. The revelations are made so that the wrongs can be confessed on behalf of the deceased. It is believed that if such confession is not done, the deceased's acceptance among the ancestors may be refused and his bad habits like stealing will surface through his children. The truth told in eulogy is said to liberate and heal.

If a deceased man had any children out of wedlock, the children must be presented and

introduced during the time for eulogy. Any child not introduced at the burial service is usually not recognised as belonging to the dead man and as a result he cannot be a beneficiary in his will. All his wives and children are thus introduced to the mourners. In addition, his properties, liabilities and will are exposed. This public exposure is deemed important as it makes sure that there will be many witnesses in case of any dispute (cf. Wagner 1970:486). As Malusu (1978:7) explains, if the deceased man has left any debt it is reported at this time and the person who will pay it for him is also indicated. This same person may be the one to receive any property due to the deceased. Usually, the dying man designates this person, who may be his eldest son, brother or any other close relative. However, should a person die abruptly without telling those left behind about the money or animals he owes anyone or is owed to him by anyone, then it is during eulogy that those who are affected speak out. In this way, tradition ensures that both the social and the legal responsibilities previously held by the dead man are not neglected. During the time eulogy, sympathy to the bereaved is expressed.

The Abaluyia encourage patience and long suffering during the mourning period. The bereaved sometimes say and do things that can irritate and ruffle a well-meaning community member or friend. The mourners are expected to make allowance and not to take the negative words or actions to heart. On the other hand, widows are often recipients of nasty comments especially from their sisters-in-law. Although the comments ought to be made without overstepping the understood boundaries of propriety in mourning, they are often harsh. The comments are meant to bring out what they really feel about her relationship with their late brother. They are also made in order to encourage forgiveness and to provide an opportunity to forge new and honest friendships. The widow needs these relationships to be true especially after the death of her protector (*likaka*). She is thus being encouraged to be strong. Patience and longsuffering continue to be shown in offering supportive care for the bereaved as long as it is needed. This continued care is important as the bereaved learn to cope with their loss. The time of eulogy is thus a time of remembrance, benevolence, reconciliation and looking forward to the future without the deceased.

In their eulogies, the bereaved often request the extended family (community) to support them as they make changes in their life to adapt to their new status as widows, orphans or simply as neighbours who have lost a friend. They also acknowledge the emotional strength they feel by being surrounded by many people who share their loss and are willing to continue to help them in the process of healing. It is also not uncommon for the bereaved to express their disgust at the deceased if, for instance, the deceased was abusive to their spouses or had abdicated their responsibilities as parents. Often, children are also encouraged to talk at funerals. Mbogori (2002:179) explains that talking and thinking about the deceased lessens pain.

Among the Abaluyia, children are often named after deceased relatives, ensuring that the relative is remembered and somehow survives through the child (Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001:355). The more important and morally upright the relatives were, the more children will be named after them. The children are thought to emulate the qualities of the dead relative after whom they have been named. This privilege is thus not given to the outcasts such as a sorcerer (*omulosi*), one who dies by suicide, a murderer or a notorious thief. In such cases, the living would like to forget the deceased as quickly as possible. The outcasts have nothing worth imitating because of the way they lived, or ended their life. Such people are a threat to social order and thus the need to forget them. On the other hand, the good are named after in order to preserve their memory and their good acts (Malusu 1978:2-3, 19; Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001:355).

After burial, there are several rituals and holidays whose primary goal is to remember the deceased. Remembrance (*obwitsusio*) is often an item in most rituals where the ancestors are invoked. Children and outcasts are rarely collectively remembered. In the past, two memorial services were held to remember a deceased married woman (with children). One was held at her marital home. On the occasion of this memorial feast a goat (*eshifunyo*) is killed. The second memorial (*eshikunene* or *eshinini*) was held at her father's home. This memorial was also held for a man who died either at the home of his wife's people or anywhere else away from his home (Appleby 1943).

The most important remembrance ceremony for men is *omuyimo* or *lisabo* ('feast'). This ceremony is often held one year after burial. On this day, sacrifices are made to appease or settle the spirit of the ancestor. Like on the day of burial, a bull (or cow for a female relative) is slaughtered as a sacrifice and for ritual feast. As Alembe (2002: 152) explains, the blood of the slaughtered animal is allowed to flow freely and soak into the ground. In this way, the spirits of the ancestors are invited to partake in the ritual. During the ceremony, people dance and sing dirges just as on the funeral day. However, emphasis is now put on remembering the good qualities of the deceased. Those left behind and are present at the ceremony or absent with apology, those named after him and those who have died after him are mentioned. Thus a long chain of relationships is established and the memory of the ancestors is revitalised. The communal meal and beer at the grave site which follows reaffirms these relationships within the extended family (Malusu 1978:9-10).

The extended family and community at large gather for the feast (*lisabo*). The oldest member of the family performs or supervises the acts of remembrance on behalf of the entire family (Mbiti 1969:26). The children named after the deceased are usually the guests of honour as they are the ones who continue the memory of the dead person in a special way. They are told stories

about the person whose name they carry. The ceremony goes on till late. As it comes to the end, young couples hasten home so that a new 'so-and-so' (the deceased) may be conceived. The festive mood of this remembrance ceremony is clearly captured in the terminology. The term *emiyimo* refers to the games and feasting in honour of a man who has died. The word is also used in a more general sense for any festival including sports gatherings (Appleby 1943).

The Abaluyia shun talking evil about the deceased, but rather concentrates on the good qualities. As a result, those considered bad and outcasts are never named after and thus they are quickly forgotten. On the other hand, the good people are named after in order to preserve their memory and their good acts (Malusu 1978:19). Mbogori (2002:266) explains that the cherished memories held in regard to the departed are critical in providing a base for healing. They anchor the fluidity of thoughts. What is memorable creates a new meaning and a new beginning. It is a buffer to protect the psyche from searing and tearing apart.

The ritual of bringing home the spirit, literally 'the shadow of the deceased,' (*okhwenda eshinini*) is also a ritual for remembrance (Matsuda 1984:29). As already pointed out, close relatives return to the deceased person's urban residence after burial for this ritual. During their short stay people often talk about the deceased and remember what sort of person he was. Nowadays, this occasion is also used by Christians for fellowship and prayers.

Dreams are another way through which the deceased are remembered. It is believed that through dreams the deceased keep in contact with the living. Those deemed good are believed to bring about good dreams to encourage or warn people of impending danger. It is also reported that they may reveal medicinal plants or items to relatives who are ill. Malusu (1978:17) points out that should a person die before revealing his wrong doing, or should he overlook some, he will come back to the living through dreams and ask them to make retribution for him. In this way, the living helps the deceased, by ensuring that their going away is a safe journey. Such dreams reveal that the deceased may suffer temporary rejection by the ancestors as a result of neglected wrongs, but then full acceptance takes place once reconciliation has been made. Wrongs cannot just be wished away. If the living hides something they have done against the deceased, it is believed that the deceased will not rest until justice is done. The deceased will make this clear through disturbing dreams and other appearances or misfortunes. In such a case, the concerned person or party must go to the grave of the deceased to ask for forgiveness and to offer sacrifices to appease that particular dead. A sheep was often sacrificed in such circumstances (*okhwitisa* or *okwitutuma*). As Malusu (1978:18) explains, the dead can be rendered powerless by the medicine or sacrifice of the living.

Mbiti (1969:25-26) mentions the centrality of remembrance of the ancestors whom he refers to

as 'the living-dead' in the worldview of the African peoples. He defines a 'living-dead' as a person who is physically dead, but alive in the memory of those who knew him in his life as well as being alive in the world of the spirits. He explains that so long as the living-dead is thus remembered, he is in the state of personal immortality. Unless a person has close relatives, preferably his or her own children, to remember him or her after physical death, then he or she is considered a nobody and simply vanishes out of human existence like a flame when it is extinguished. The living-dead sink beyond the horizon of the 'now period' when there is no longer anyone alive who remembers them personally by name. Then the process of dying is completed. They now enter into a state of collective immortality. This is the state of the spirits who are no longer formal members of the human families. In common with other African cultures, as Gehman (1999:65) points out, a man's prestige and honour was increased by the number of his children who would remember him when he died. This explains the emphasis put on marriage and child bearing.

There is a paradox inherent in these remembrances. On one hand, there are beliefs and practices which encourage people to remember the dead. On the other hand, as Malusu (1978:19) points out, the dead is never mentioned or rather should never be mentioned directly unless it is absolutely necessary. Ultimately, tradition points people to the future without overlooking the past.

2.3.8 Performances as therapy in bereavement

The elaborate beliefs and practices during bereavement are dotted with functional performances. Performances provide an opportunity to express one's feelings in the event of death and attempt to interpret its causes, meanings and effects. As Alembi (2002:103) explains, performances are useful avenues to let out pent up emotions that could easily be harmful to the health of the bereaved. Thus, they provide an alternative opinion and expression in the bereavement process.

There is no formal training for the performances in bereavement. People learn by informal observation and participation (Alembi 2002:104). Through interest and practice, people develop into proficient performers as lead singers, composers, narrators, dancers and players of various musical instruments. Song and dance are at the core of the different genres of performances in bereavement among the Abaluyia.

Both men and women demonstrate strong, emotional grief following the death of a loved one. For instance, men, women and children engage in sporadic crying as soon as a loved one is pronounced dead. However, women follow a sustained pattern of wailing. For the women,

wailing is at the same time spontaneous as well as dramatised. As they wail, they either keep both hands at the back of the head or crossed on their backs or stomachs while standing or walking; throw the hands about from time to time in a show of desperation or sprawl themselves on the ground. They also tie a shawl around the stomach area. Men are often strangely subdued and groan while tapping their walking sticks on the ground. Among the Abaluyia, men's walking sticks are often made from the *olusiola* (*markhamia lutea*) tree. This tree, also used for the sacrificial pole (*olusambwa*), is a symbol of masculinity. The strong tapping on the ground is believed to symbolise an affront against death. Death is an enemy, represented by the earth, who is ready to 'swallow' (*okhumira*) a member of the family (community) (Kabaji 2005:35). Death is thus shown to be a source of great pain, desperation and even dread which are expressed freely by the bereaved through the various performances.

Because the tradition of wailing by women is so strongly rooted among the Abaluyia, an inability to wail 'properly' can be considered an offence. For instance, a woman who does not cry or join in the dramatised wailing is often thought to be evil or suspected either to be happy or to have played a part in the death of the deceased (cf. Gehman 1999:12). This is also suspected of any relative or neighbour who avoids the funeral. The Abaluyia say: *Amasira nobwayi* (and *Olumbe shinolwa mulala*) for death comes to everyone and misfortune is not a reserve for one person. Bereavement comes to all often unannounced (loosely, grief is like grazing; we take turns) (Wambunya 2005:11, 40). The underlying logic is one of reciprocity – today you cry for us, tomorrow we will cry for you.

As they mourn the dead, women often sing and dance to dirges (*tsinzikhulu*). On their part, men often chant and groan while standing motionless with bowed heads. Dirges are often instantaneously composed and sung, especially by women. The dirges are sung in honour of the deceased and for the consolation of the bereaved. The dirges composed may be new or an adaptation of a composition sung elsewhere if it is suitable. A new composition is often sung by the composer while a familiar dirge may also be sung by a group of mourners in unison. Musical instruments (*obukhana*) such as horn (*olwika* used as a trumpet or *eshitsiriba* used as a flute), harp (*indongoli* or *litungu* if small), drums (*ing'oma* or *isukuti*), hollow reeds (*likale*) and shakers often accompany the songs. Wagner (1970:461) observes that the dirges give vent to the feeling of loneliness and helplessness of the bereaved. As Malusu (1978:4) observes, a woman whose husband has died composes her own original dirge expressing her life with her husband which others learn and join in singing. The dancing and singing lessen the bitter feeling of loss experienced by the bereaved members apart from being essential to the ritual of burial.

Singing and dancing reach its peak during the night vigil before burial. Performers sing and dance with gusto joined from time to time by the bereaved family members. This performance is

comparable to any happy celebration held in the community. As Alembi (2002:107) explains, the partying is consistent with the belief that the dead person has been born into the world of the ancestors.

In the midst of the singing and dancing, *okhuchesia* (cause to travel, lead) is performed. The performers, accompanied by the bereaved family members, walk around the homestead and on adjacent footpaths frequented by the deceased. Along the way, they sing and dance while playing various instruments which may include: drums, horns, fiddle, shakers, sticks and more recently guitars. This performance is aimed at taking the spirit of the dead to bid farewell to his or her neighbourhood for the last time before fully joining the world of the ancestors (cf. Alembi 2002:124). This performance is repeated on the day of burial.

On the day of burial, after a time of eulogy and a last opportunity for mourners to view the body, pallbearers take the coffin bearing the body from the temporary structure/tent (*eshiralatsi*) and join a procession led by an elder. The procession goes through the main gate before turning back. It then slowly makes its way to the burial site where the grave has been dug. Three times, the procession is stopped and silence observed while the leader pronounces sentences asking the deceased to 'go well' and to show favour to the survivors. This, like the night procession (*okhuchesia*), is believed to give the spirit of the deceased a chance to bid farewell to his homestead. People avoid meeting or crossing the path used for the funeral procession as doing so may lead to misfortune. It is important to note that this last procession was not performed if the deceased was a barren woman (*omukumba*) or an unmarried (*omusumba*) or childless man. These were instead carried through a hole made in the wall of their hut for burial. Symbolically, they are shown to have escaped this life without fulfilling humanity's main purpose for existence, that is, procreation (Wako 1954:38).

Immediately after burial, the bereaved sing while rotating the grave (*ingara*). After this performance, the bereaved family members lay or plant flowers on the grave before a prayer is made and they are led by the singers to their respective houses. In the focus group discussions, it was doubtful that this is a traditional practice among the sub-groups under study. Its meaning was equally elusive. However, one cannot fail to see the role of the message in some of the songs sung for this performance. For example, the possibility that the deceased has gone to a good place consoles the bereaved. If the deceased has suffered a lot prior to death some of the songs indicate that she is now enjoying as there is no more disease and suffering in the abode of the ancestors. Alembi (2002:116) argues that these messages drastically lessen the tensions in mourners and the pain of losing a loved one.

A special performance called *eshilemba* ('cattle drive') is observed a day after burial to honour

respected elders and warriors (Malusu 1978:13-14; Alembi 2002:124-129; Shisanya 1996:190; Wagner 1954:51-52; 1970:453; Mbiti 1969:154-155). For this performance, the community is gathered, death is personified and domesticated animals (cattle) and plants are symbolically involved in the process of mourning. As Mbiti (1969:155) observes, even the ancestors are involved, for it is they who will receive the new-comer. Death thus impacts more than living humans.

For this ceremony, cattle are gathered and decorated with creepers especially *omulandila* and *libombola* (a variety of saxifrage). The performers paint their faces with soil or chalk and wear war regalia of cow-skin (symbol of wealth) or leopard skin (symbol of fearlessness) or grasses and creepers (for camouflage) over most of the upper body. Some wear masks of leopard face especially if the deceased was a warrior. They wear jingles on the ankles, sisal skirts around the waist and are often bare footed. In addition, men wear a headgear of a hat or band adorned with feathers and carry weapons of war such as spears, small axes, sharp machetes, clubs, sticks and shields. The cattle, besides being adorned with creepers (*emilandila*), some have bells (*eshikhutu*) around their necks which jingle as they run. Each clan drives, in turn, its cattle into the homestead of the deceased as they sing in guttural voices, raise war cry as they perform mock battles while brandishing the weapons of war. Even though, most of the songs express the dilemma of death, they also inspire the mourners to face it with courage.

The songs include war songs, marriage songs, dirges, praises to the deceased man and appreciation for the contribution he made to his community while the 'cattle drive drum' is beaten by two or three brothers or members of the deceased man's age-set (*olubaka*). They blow horns, possibly to flush out malevolent spirits. In addition, the ceremonial attire of the performers is more than a decoration. It is thought to disguise their identity and to repel the malevolent spirits assumed to be responsible for the death (cf. Alembi 2002:228-9; Elverson 1920:48-53). The cattle-drivers may also enact a mock wrestling (*libwi*) especially if the deceased was a renowned wrestler.

As the *eshilemba* comes to its peak, the performers run berserk. They beat or cut down banana trees, bushes or roof of the house leaving a trail of destruction behind. Others, especially women and children, scamper for safety as they continue to lament, chant and weep. Similarly, death lays us bare, it attacks and destroys our lives and livelihood and, like the *eshilemba*, leaves the survivors utterly shaken and in need of a new beginning. In Malusu's (1978:14) words, if death were a human being it would be 'slaughtered or cut down' in a similar way.

The view among the Abaluyia, dramatised in the *eshilemba* performance, where it is believed that death can indeed be confronted, is evidence against the notion that there exists a fatalistic

belief in the African thinking (Mbogori 2002:229). On the contrary, the cultural models create a platform where one can argue with the reality of death with statements like “why did he have to die this time?” “O death, why are you not satisfied? Why take the father and his son?”

The *eshilemba* is intended to drive away death (malevolent spirits) so that it does not linger around the homestead and cause further misfortune as well as to pay homage to a highly reputed elder (cf. Wagner 1970:453). As Alembi (2002:125) explains, the slashing of bananas is symbolic. It means that although life has temporarily come to a halt, but it will resume as the plants regenerate. It reinforces the belief that death does not annihilate human life. The deceased, like the slashed bananas, will live again in the next world. At another level, it means that the extended family (community) does not end with the death of an individual but will thrive again through procreation. It is also believed that the performance serves to expel spirits of death and assure that members of the bereaved family can live in peace and security (Alembi 2002:137). Talitwala (2002:66) adds that the *eshilemba* is a way of expressing emotions in order to avoid depression and other harmful complications. This performance reinforces the fact that even in death and destruction, there is hope.

Eshilemba is performed for and by the ritually clean. The performance is not done for one who has no son, even if other respects may be accorded to him. The deceased must also have led a ritually clean life. As Alembi (2002:129) observes, men who lived unfaithful lives were not honoured with this performance. The implication of this requirement is that every member of the community must be careful on how they conduct their social life as this greatly influences the kind of rituals that are performed in their honour when they die. In this regard, it can be said that death dictates the kind of life members of this community must lead. On the part of the performers, it is required that the lead performer be ritually clean too. This means that he must be circumcised and if any of his parents is dead, he must have completed all the important burial rituals (*emisilo*). It is believed that if he goes ahead to lead the performance in spite of being ritually impure, he may die on the scene or shortly afterwards. Therefore, his well-being is linked to his obedience.

In the past the wife of the deceased man, in whose honour the *eshilemba* was being performed, had to meet the performers carrying her late husband's spear. For her to participate in this way, she must have been faithful to her late husband. It is believed that if she had been unfaithful, but still went ahead to meet the performers, she would die instantly before the company of the performers. If she knew that she had been unfaithful she hid herself as the performers arrived in the home. Lack of fidelity in marriage was a source of great shame. As Alembi (2002:129) explains, proper conduct must be observed by anyone who participates in death rituals. Otherwise, the spirits will be annoyed and often avenge against the offender.

Performances are designed not only to entertain, but for the healing of bereaved family members and friends. Alembi (2002:107) explains that the communal wailing, singing, chanting and dancing provide emotional support to the bereaved family who must know that they are not alone. Through performances, mourners express solidarity with the bereaved family. At the individual level, performances help in releasing tension and pent up emotions which if suppressed could hold health risks for the bereaved. Performances are, therefore, not put on for fun. There are sound reasons behind the actions. Through these performances, the attention of the bereaved is diverted from the gloom of death and they are encouraged to see the bright side of things. Performances provide an opportunity for expression and reflection both of which allows for the isolation of internal focus and the external connection with others. As the performed symbols of bereavement are shared with others in the extended family (community), they promote individual healing as well as collective well-being. The participants also demonstrate elements of cooperation, creativity and interpretation. Performances in honour of the deceased, like *eshilemba*, are believed to avert future calamities or the consequences of a restless or avenging spirit. Performances are meant to bid farewell to the deceased as death is believed to be a transition from the physical world to the spiritual world. For the living, performances related to death are also regulatory as they encourage ritual cleanliness.

2.3.9 Conduct of and care for the survivors

Due to their ritual status occasioned by death, the bereaved observe certain prohibitions and restrictions. The bereaved are expected to conduct themselves in ways that will restore their ritual status to neutral. Ritual neutrality is a state where one is at peace with oneself, the extended family (community which includes one's ancestors), the environment and God. The prohibitions involve daily activities such as work, general movements and visitations and sexual relationships.

Work stops when death is announced and does not resume until at least two weeks after burial. Even domesticated animals like cattle, goats and sheep are tethered most of the time rather than being taken to graze freely in distant fields. If a death occurs during the weeding season, weeds are left to grow uncontrolled. Death indeed disrupts the circle of life and threatens human livelihood. It is commonly held that returning to work before the deceased is buried is a sign of disrespect towards the deceased. Consequently, all work is strictly forbidden (cf. Mbiti 1991:121; Wagner 1970:482). It is also believed that one may be seriously hurt if he insists on going to work during or shortly after the funeral.

There is great honour coupled with fear (*oburie*) towards one's parents-in-law and certain other

relations. For this reason, there are various restrictions on behaviour and on conversation. These restrictions are maintained even when the person dies. This restriction is important in helping to avoid taboo relationships.

The bereaved are also restricted in their movement especially before burial and the end of the funeral (*amasika okhweya*). It is believed that death (*olufu/olumbe*) can be spread around. For this reason, the bereaved are not free to visit other homes or participate in daily happening in the community before all cleansing rituals associated with the death have been completed. The rituals take at least six months to be completed. The final ritual is the memorial feast (*lisabo*). For instance, before one holds a memorial feast for his deceased father or mother, he may not partake of the meat prepared at a similar memorial feast within the community. It is believed that doing so would be to invite the wrath of the deceased relatives something the bereaved are happy to avoid. In addition, the bereaved, especially spouses, are expected to lead quiet life during the mourning period lest they be suspected of having desired or caused the death of their spouse (cf. Wagner 1970:497).

The restrictions are mainly designed to give the bereaved time to mourn and to recuperate. It must be remembered that immediately after death there are many rituals, ceremonies and performances which make it practically impossible for the bereaved to rest fully. After burial, the bereaved are encouraged to take time to sleep and recuperate. The extended family and neighbours continue to visit the bereaved to talk with them and to do domestic chores like fetching water, splitting firewood and cooking for them. Others continue to take ready meals for the time of the restricted activity.

Older widows are assigned the role of introducing a newly widowed woman to her new status of widowhood (Shisanya 1996:191). In this way, the newly widowed are assured not only of support and comfort, but also guidance in the process of bereavement and the required rituals. Men, on their part, find continued help from their age group and especially from those with similar experiences.

Most of the burial rituals and performances are accompanied by feasting. The Abaluyia slaughter at least one bull or cow and several chicken at any funeral or memorial ceremony. Traditionally, the Abaluyia work the farm and keep animals for subsistence. Food rich in protein content is served during funerals and the bereaved are required to partake of the ritual meals. This helps with their physical well-being. Mbiti (1991:121) explains that the feasting which follows funeral rites is used partly to comfort the bereaved and to bring life back to normal, and partly to thank those who officiated in the funeral rites.

The death of a spouse marks another stage in the life of the surviving partner. Among the Abaluyia there are no elaborate separation rituals performed to terminate the coital rights of the deceased partner. A widower is encouraged to obtain a sexual partner soon after the shaving ceremony. Unlike among the Asante of Ghana, the acquisition of a sexual partner is not done 'in order to disgust the spirit of the deceased wife, who will then never again visit him' (Oduyoye 1992:15). For the Abaluyia, it is believed that it will in fact make the spirit to rest in peace. Wako (1985:31) records that in the past a young unmarried woman would untie and remove her late sister's skirt before burial. The young woman (*eshibeyo*) automatically stepped in her dead sister's marital position if dowry had been completed and the man had treated his late wife well. It is held that these sororate unions were meant for stability and continuity as a sister is thought to be best suited to look after her late kin's children. It is also argued that having someone the children are already acquainted with contribute to a steady healing process for them following the loss of their mother.

In a similar way, a widow is expected to remarry following the death of her husband unless of course she is advanced in age with grown up children and has no need for a partner. In the exception, however, brothers-in-law and the widow's children have an obligation to look after her. The practice of widow remarriage is often referred to as wife or widow-inheritance. In the past, the late husband's brother, cousin, or son by another woman, was expected to marry the widow. This was done in order to keep alive the name of the deceased and also to retain his wealth (measured in herds of cattle, sheep and goats) within the same kraal. However, the widow was at liberty to marry a man from another clan but in such a case the man had to give marriage cattle to the heirs of her deceased husband (Wagner 1970:488). The person who inherits the wife and the children of his deceased relative is expected to perform all the duties of a husband and father (Mbiti 1969:144; Reggy-Mamo 1999:8 contra Mutongi 2007:43). Like in the case of a widower, a widow's remarriage followed after purification rituals especially by shaving. Wako (1985:32, 36) explains that if the deceased was a polygamist, his wives would be shaved together with the men chosen to re-marry them (*okhukalusia* literally, 'to return') starting with the first wife. Nowadays, processes of ritual cleansing and wife-inheritance have undergone several changes in view of contemporary realities.

The separation ritual to free the widow from her deceased husband is marked by the ritual of 'cutting the banana fibres' (*okhukhalaka amakhoola*). As Wako explains, women who lost their husbands would wear well knit banana fibres until the day they re-married. On this day, select men would be escorted to the houses of the women with whom they had been shaved. After the men had been taken to the appropriate houses, the doors would be shut. The responsibility of cutting off the banana fibres worn by the women, literally and in a euphemistic way, now rested on these men. A goat was slaughtered for every re-married woman. *Eshikulamuliango* (literally,

‘the door opener’) was the ritual goat given by a man who ‘entered the deceased man’s house’, that is, became the husband in the place of the deceased kin. This was the one who had the honours of cutting the banana fibres (Wako 1985:36; 1954:45). ‘Cutting banana fibres’ literally meant removing the banana fibre skirt that was worn by widows and is euphemism for consummating the new marriage relationship through sex. Re-marriages are encouraged mainly for the birth of children, but also for sexual intimacy, security and provision. In this way, the Abaluyia acknowledge that the bereaved have bodily needs which require attention.

Inheritance was an important way of ensuring that the bereaved are cared for. As Wabukala and LeMarquand (2001:355) explains, through accounting for the dead person’s property and debts, the extended family (community) is able to make sure that the surviving members of the family are cared for. Reggy-Mamo (1999:8) acknowledges that in most African traditions, when a man died, the dead husband’s family cared for the widow, except in rare case. In this way, widows did not experience isolation and loneliness, but remained valued and respected members of the community. The system of inheritance was thus designed to ensure that the survivors are assured of basics such as food, clothing, shelter and protection. This assurance is undoubtedly crucial for the survivors’ healing for they do not have to spend too much time worrying about their basic survival needs.

The principle of seniority is followed in regard to both succession and inheritance. As Wagner (1954:37) explains, seniority (both in age and descent) sets an order of precedence. A man’s rights and privileges, as well as his estate, are passed on upon his death first to his brothers as his senior relatives and then to his eldest son, who acts as the guardian of his younger brothers. Among the Abaluyia, women do not inherit property especially land. Malusu (1978:6) correctly adds that a widow finds security through her son or re-marriage to a relative who incorporate her in her husband’s lineage. Those who marry a widow are under obligation to care for them and to manage the deceased man’s estate for the benefit of the widow and that of the deceased man’s children. The children (sons) take responsibility once they are of age (after marriage).

The deceased’s property is not just limited to the immediate family. As Shisanya (1996:192) points out, the Abaluyia observe the ritual of distributing the deceased’s property among relatives. The idea is to keep the deceased’s spirit among them. The spirit is believed to protect relatives from malevolence and to ensure that favours are granted them. A part from *lisabo* being a remembrance ritual, it also plays a crucial role in settling disputes concerning issues such as the deceased man’s debt or the inheritance of his property especially land (Matsuda 1984:29). On this occasion any outstanding issues on succession and inheritance are concluded.

In case of the death of both spouses, the care of orphans is often the responsibility of grandparents if they have survived their children. Orphans are also cared for by uncles and aunties under the family based welfare system. This means that the orphans live close or in their homes with relatives known to them before the death of their parents. Consequently, the transition shock is minimised. Nowadays, the high orphan levels occasioned by contemporary realities such as HIV/AIDS pandemic (cf. Magezi 2007a:48) and population growth have put pressure on the relatives. The relatives are under pressure to deal with the pressures exerted on them by the need to fend for themselves due to economic problems, but also those of the many orphaned children. The problem is made worse as the care givers struggle to manage adequately their own bereavement following the deaths of their relatives. This has led to the loss of stage appropriate roles. On one hand some children have had to fend for themselves as family heads. This is captured in the proverb; *an orphaned chick fends for itself*. The circumstances orphans often find themselves in force them to learn to do things for themselves (Sifuna 2003:31). On the other hand, many grandparents (especially grandmothers) have to care for children again in their advanced age. Mbogori (2002:97) warns that lack of social support in the community can alienate the bereaved. In spite of the challenges, family based welfare system of care is still a source of healing for the bereaved among the Abaluyia. This underscores the fact that, death does not end communal relationships established and reinforced through other rites of passage such as birth, circumcision and marriage.

2.3.10 Summary

This section has clearly delved into the traditional worldview of the Abaluyia in relation to death and how the people cope in their bereavement. Several coping approaches have been highlighted. Firstly, the Abaluyia's hope following their loss through death finds expression in the belief that although death disrupts life, it neither ends it nor destroys it. Instead, death is perceived as a gate through which people enter into the world of the ancestors. Furthermore, death does not sever the departed from being an important member of their family. Death is therefore approached not as an end but as a new beginning. As Mbiti (1971:131) puts it, 'death transposes the music of life from one key to another switching it from the rhythm of the physical to the spiritual world'.

Secondly, death is confronted within the extended family (community). Members of the extended family (who include relatives by blood, marriage or adoption whether living or dead) participate in supporting, caring and affirming one another in the quest for the meaning of life after the disruption caused by death. Death affects all and is confronted by the whole community. When one is bereaved all share in the bereavement. Within the community, the bereaved are assured of support and comfort which largely eases their pain following the death

of a loved one.

Thirdly, meaning is embodied in the communal beliefs and practices. Therefore, the outward displays of grief and the underlying beliefs form significant models for bereavement healing. Death impairs individual and communal ritual status which must be restored. The desired restoration is made possible through ritual performances within the context of the community and as such, no ritual, no healing. The cultural beliefs and practices also inform the nature of any successful helping relationship. Consequently, to neglect cultural beliefs and practices is to exacerbate suffering and to complicate grieving. Furthermore, rituals serve both the dying/dead as well as the living as the means of separation, union and reintegration. The rituals also relate to the protection of life and the fear of death. They provide meaning in the face of the paradoxes of death. These paradoxes exist in relation to the physical and the spiritual or the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Lastly, remembrances and performances anchor the survivors' thoughts and thus foster healing. The deceased, though physically dead, are reckoned to be alive in the world of the spirits (*emakombe*), in the memory of the living and present with the living through appearances in dreams and in the children named after them (*abakulikhwa*). Remembrances are often expressed through performances like song and dance and especially by honouring the customary obligations and observances which include care for the survivors.

2.4 Limitations of cultural bereavement healing approaches

Whereas it is important to underscore the value of traditional beliefs and practices in bringing about consolation and healing in bereavement, yet for the purposes of this research it is equally important to point out areas that can be a stumbling block among Christians and thus in need of a total makeover to conform to biblical teaching or abandonment.

2.4.1 Image of God

The Abaluyia understand God (*Were Khakaba* or *Nyasaye*) only as transcendent. *Were Khakaba* is nearly absent in the daily events of humankind although, of course, his existence and sovereignty is recognised particularly in the daily prayers (Wagner 1954:28, 31 cf. Mbiti 1969:43, 61; Malusu 1978:17). *Wele* is not thought to have anything to do with the pains of daily life otherwise blamed on some human agency (Malusu 1978:7 cf. Mbiti 1969:156; Mwaura 2000:70; Magezi 2006:511). As such, God is like a benevolent aging father who has given his sons their share of inheritance and sent them off to fend for themselves (cf. Wagner 1954:28, 43; Moreau 1990:101).

Although the transcendence of God may seem to create room for a mediator, it is important to note that among the Abaluyia, there are no intermediaries between God and the people. No deities or spirits are believed to act as a bridge between God and human beings. However, the image of God as held by the Abaluyia does not lend itself to the category of God as loving and immanent. Consequently, the idea of God entering into a relationship with human beings and being present with them as taught in the Bible is radically different from the view of God held among the Abaluyia.

2.4.2 Ancestral veneration and ritual sacrifices

Among the Abaluyia, the dead are believed to maintain more or less the same status they had in life. As elders, the ancestors retain their high status and roles. Their mediation is between themselves and the living family members. Their place in the family is not diminished by death. In fact, it is believed that their potency increases in death. Death is thus looked at as the gateway to an existence in which larger powers are available, usually for revenge (cf. FAM s.a.:6). As Appleby (1946 cf. Wagner 1954:42; Elverson 1920:48) observes, the dead members of the clan are considered as really present and considerably more powerful than those still living. Although they may use their power for the good of the living, this power often seems to be shown in bringing illness or other bad fortune. This negative exercise of their power is reinforced by the popularly held idea that most troubles have a supernatural origin – either witchcraft or the spirit of a person who has died (*omusambwa*). This ambivalence necessitates ancestral veneration and appeasement.

Traditionally, the ancestors would be appeased from time to time through ritual sacrifices. However, in addition to the ambivalence in the ancestors' potency, there is also ambiguity in their relationship with living members of the family. As ancestors are family members, the ritual sacrifices are confined to the nucleus family, extended family or several extended family units of those related by blood (cf. Forde 1954: xvi-xvii). This is why the Abaluyia say that the dead often target their relatives (*Eshisheno shisira omwikho*). As a result, the ancestors are not only honoured, consulted, appealed to and dreaded but also dared. They are dared and even rebuked when they are believed to be the cause of illness, death or some other misfortune in spite of the prescribed ritual sacrifices having been offered. However, the people's desire for protection is more real during bereavement through death. In such times, people not only seek protection from the threat of death but also from malevolent spirits or avenging spirits of dissatisfied ancestors as well as evil human agents. This explains the high concentration of rituals and sacrifices during the burial rites and seems to bring into question the assumed potency and intervention of the ancestors.

One ritual that persists today among the Abaluyia whether they are Christians or non-Christians, is the slaughtering of a bull or heifer on the event of the death of their family members. This is often done on the day of burial. For many people today, however, the ritual is said to be void of the traditional sacrificial details. Culturally, each family has an obligation to kill at least one bull or heifer following the occurrence of death in the family. The meat is used for the practical purpose of providing food for mourners. Traditionally, however, the animal was offered as a sacrifice to the ancestors in order 'to facilitate the incorporation of the deceased into the ancestral world' (Shisanya 1996:189, cf. Malusu 1978:9). The blood that comes out of the slaughtered animal is supposed to drain into the ground thereby linking the living and the dead, a fellowship that is important when death occurs. Alembi (2002:108), citing Shisanya, observes that Christians suffer from an identity crisis and ambivalence as they perform most of the traditional rituals associated with death in secrecy and express themselves as Christians who do not involve themselves in cultural practices in the open. As Nwachuku (1992:72) puts it 'there is today a great deal of ambivalence or dualism among African Christians when issues touch on life-threatening traditional beliefs or superstitions'. Shisanya (1996: 186-187) suggests that the fear of haunting explains why the Abaluyia observe a myriad of rituals in the event of death. The rituals are intended to serve several socio-religious functions, like permanently separating the deceased from survivors and re-establishing social solidarity by re-incorporating the mourners into the community. She further decries the practice whereby married daughters are expected to request their husbands to provide animals to be killed during the funeral arguing that the pressure put on the deceased's daughters is so great that the whole event portrays women as little more than wealth-getters for their brothers (Shisanya 1996:189).

2.4.3 Priority of the extended family (community)

It has noted that the Abaluyia feel comforted by the knowledge that they are not alone in their bereavement. Bereavement is primarily a communal affair and care for the bereaved is the concern of the entire community. During the empirical research, one respondent observed that this communal help was all that he had following the death of his elder brother. Having been orphaned as a child and unemployed, this death in the family made their situation desperate. The brother died while undergoing treatment in hospital. Their immediate need was to find money to pay the hospital bills and means of transporting the body to their ancestral home for burial in accordance to the Abaluyia's cultural practice. He cited a great sense of peace which he felt when a distant relative called to inform him that he was on his way with a hearse to collect the body for burial. Similarly, he acknowledged that the practical and emotional help from the extended family, friends and the community at large was invaluable in his healing. He said that their burden was lightened by the communal help they received. He reported that the entire community wept and mourned with them and literally provided a shoulder for them to lean on in

their grief.

Furthermore, he observed that the presence of elders greatly compensated for their ignorance. They felt that they were able to cope as a result of the reliable guidance willingly given by the elders who are considered the custodians of cultural wisdom. In particular, the elders called their attention to incorrect practices. For instance, a cousin of the deceased who had taken most of the deceased's clothes and was already clad in them was castigated by the elders for his insensitivity and asked to remove the clothes until the appropriate time when they could be worn. The elders also helped them to be reconciled to those people they felt had been mean to them as well as those who felt that they had been offended by them. This forgiveness and reconciliation happened during a post-burial family gathering. On the whole, he reported that he felt no guilt of acting inappropriately or for overlooking cultural essentials for burial because of the elders' presence and guidance. This case is typical among the Abaluyia where the community is of great help in coping with bereavement.

However, the priority of the extended family or community often means that individual considerations are neglected. Therefore, there seems to be ambivalence in the priority of the traditional sense of community in bereavement healing. In view of this ambivalence, Magezi (2007b) argues that the community performs either a constructive or destructive role in the process of coping (cf. Magezi 2006:26, 516, 519; Mbogori 2002:100, 114; Matsuda 1984:30; Malusu 1978:5; Mbiti 1969:2). He aptly observes that the communal priorities can put undue pressure on an individual or a group to indulge in inappropriate or retrogressive practices that may be contrary to biblical teachings.

2.4.4 Retrogressive beliefs and practices

Some cultural beliefs and practices were observed to be retrogressive and repressive. As such, they are a threat to the wellbeing of the people. Edet (1992:25) particularly laments the plight of women in most African communities. She observes that 'the death of a husband heralds a period of imprisonment and hostility to the wife or wives. This treatment may or may not be out of malice, but in all cases, women suffer and are subjected to rituals that are health hazards and heart-rending'.

Among the Abaluyia, for instance, *okhwichera* is a practice in which a surviving spouse sprawls over the deceased spouse in a simulation of the sexual act. This demeaning gesture, though obviously not a common practice today, was recounted by some respondents during the empirical research. It was observed that this 'simulation of the act of love' puts the surviving spouse in good state with the deceased. It was further explained that the gesture releases the

spirit of the deceased so that it does not interfere with any future sexual union entered by the surviving spouse. As such, the gesture acts as a form of ritual cleansing.

Shisanya (1996:190 cf. Reggy-Mamo 1999:3ff.) singles out cultural practices that adversely affect women. For instance, she decries the cultural demand that a married woman cook food for her husband as part of the ritual to consummate a marriage (*okhusaaba*, 'to wash hands'). For this ritual, the woman usually collects foodstuffs from her parental home. If the husband dies before this ritual is observed, the widow is expected to go to her parental home, collect foodstuff, cook food and symbolically feed the deceased before burial. This ritual, like *okhwichera*, can be a source of mental torture for the surviving spouse.

The ritual of 'cutting the banana fibres' (*okhukhalaka amakhoola*) was culturally connected to wife inheritance. As already explained, women who lost their husbands would wear well knit banana fibres until the day they are re-married. On this day, select men would be escorted to the houses of the women to be inherited after which the doors would be shut. The responsibility of cutting off the banana fibres worn by the women rested on these men. A goat was slaughtered for every re-married woman (cf. Wako 1985:36; 1954:45). Nowadays, this traditional ritual of widow inheritance is a source of many practical problems and contradicts biblical teachings on sexual morality and marriage. Shisanya (1996:192 cf. Mwaura 2000:96; ACK 1993b) laments that widows are often raped under the pretext of the required cultural widow inheritance ritual. She suggests that the widows need to be given an opportunity to decide whether or not they need a second marriage. She encourages them to reject the ritual of widow inheritance as a way of protecting themselves from health risks such as HIV/AIDS. In addition, Nwachuku (1992:71) observes that the concept of widow inheritance, pushed to its extreme by human greed, leads to forced cohabitation of the widow with a select kinsman of the husband. If she refuses, she risks being ousted from the matrimonial compound or her paternal family being forced to repay dowry in order to earn her independence. Furthermore, the woman is forced to forfeit custody of the children as she can under no circumstances claim the children who belong to the husband in this patrilineal society. Customarily, she would have no right to take the children to her natal home or to her new husband but had to leave them with their paternal uncles.

Wife inheritance among the Abaluyia is related to the ritual of property inheritance and distribution. Shisanya (1996:192) observes that despite the good intention of the ritual distribution of the deceased's property among relatives, the practice has been greatly abused. Many widows lament the demand of the deceased's personal belongings like clothes, household property, flock, fowl and the grabbing of the most valuable assets like land. These acts of greed leave the disinherited widows and children especially the girl-child economically

handicapped as well as bereft (cf. Wako 1985:34). This is reinforced by the fact that land is inherited patrilineally from father to son or to other male relatives if the deceased had no son. Nwachuku (1992:61) argues that this is a form of enslavement of widows through financial and property disposition by male relatives of the deceased.

During the funeral and for a few days after burial, the ritual fire (*omuliro kwamachenga*) is kept burning. As Malusu (1978:13-14) records, the bereaved and other mourners, mostly men, sit around the ritual fire talking about the valour of the deceased or the just concluded burial. However, during these post-burial vigils, young men and women play music and dance to their latest love songs and often disappear every now and then in pairs into dark, secret places arguing that another 'so-and-so' (the deceased) must be conceived. This is also the case during the post-burial ceremony of the return of the deceased's daughters to their paternal home (*obukoko*). The nocturnal song and dance, therefore, provide opportunities for acts of promiscuity. Such permissive behaviour often leads to unwanted pregnancies and infections. This may shed light to the strict reaction at the St. Luke's Parish council meeting of 2nd July 1934, chaired by A. J. Leech. In this meeting, a communicant, Samuel Onyango of Butere was excommunicated for six months for allowing people to hold cultural dances for two days following the death of his wife.

In addition, fatigue often results from lack of rest and sleep as the bereaved are expected to participate actively in various pre and post-burial performances. Furthermore, performances which require prescribed cultural ritual cleanliness can be a source of humiliation. For instance, if a widow fails to meet the *eshilemba* performers, she is suspected of infidelity. Performances such as *okhuchesia* which purport to take the spirit of the dead to bid farewell to his neighbourhood and *eshilemba* in which the ancestors are thought to participate alongside the performers in confronting death often instil the fear of the dead and thus encourage ancestral veneration as they believe that such performances avert future misfortune and appease avenging spirits.

Other retrogressive practices that impede healing in bereavement by death include seclusion of the bereaved especially the widow, the rigidity of the belief that committal has to be by burial in the deceased's ancestral land and the insistence that if a man dies before constructing a house at his ancestral home a makeshift structure must be constructed where the widow sleeps for the period of the funeral. In the later case, sleeping in a freshly built mud house can be a health hazard. Such a house is cold and often mosquito infested.

As noted in the case of the priority of the extended family or community, participation in retrogressive cultural practices is often blamed, at least in part, on pressure from the community,

that is, from outside of the individual or single family units. Nwachuku (1992:57) points out that negative 'traditional ritualistic processes and practices have become resistant to contemporary social changes as a result of habit, fear, or wanton insistence on known patterns for maintenance of tribal or ethnic identity, social cohesion, and the established status quo'. Carers ought to identify what the nature of the external pressure is and to what extent it is really from outside and to what extent it is invited, or at least passively accepted by the individual. For instance, some respondents decried cultural rites only because they were expensive and not because they were intrinsically bad or contradictory to the Christian faith.

2.4.5 Cultural stigmatisation

Apart from the overt retrogressive cultural beliefs and practices, cultural stigma against spinsters, bachelors, the physically or mentally challenged persons, family members of those who commit suicide and widows who are not inherited or choose not to enter second marriages is also a source of angst for the bereaved.

Culturally, a woman lived in a state of ritual impurity following the death of her husband until she was inherited by the dead husband's brother or other kin. The St. Luke's Parish Council minutes discussing the plight of Gidioni Meso's widow, Ludiya Omukuyia, in a meeting held on 9th October 1944 is a case in point. Because Ludiya, a Christian, had not agreed to the practice of widow inheritance, no male from her husband's relatives or her local church was willing to repair her house or take care of her. The stigmatisation of young widows who choose not to remarry is also witnessed when other women suspect them of having affairs with their husbands if they are friends with them. Furthermore, a man seen visiting a widow is often thought to be romantically interested in her or, in cases where the deceased husband was wealthy, in her late husband's property. As a result, widows lead a very lonely life (cf. Halperin 2005:108).

Marriage is a very important institution among the Abaluyia. As such, anybody who does not enter the institution of marriage is stigmatised. The stigmatisation is both in life and in death. Spinsters including girls who give birth out of wedlock, those who are divorced or separated who die are usually buried at their natal home behind their parents' house in banana plantation either near the homestead's fence or outside the fence. The grave site stigmatises a section of women as outcasts (Shisanya 1996:189). The Abaluyia treat the body of the deceased with dignity and respect. This informs their general rejection of post-mortem operations which they consider as mutilation. However, men who die without marrying are buried with a thorn (*litso*) thrust in the buttock as a societal disgust against them (cf. Malusu 1978:5-6). Like their women counterparts, bachelors are stigmatised and often their close family bear the brunt of this stigmatisation.

2.4.6 The burden of mourning

The title of this subsection was inspired by a respondent describing the high cost of a funeral of her son. Times have changed and the cost of living has soared beyond the means of a majority of the Abaluyia. However, the cultural beliefs and practices related to death and bereavement seems not to change with the times. The cultural ritual expectations still hold strong. Therefore, the economic burden of cultural funerals and care for the survivor, widows/widowers and orphans, is a major challenge to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. This is worsened by the high number of death due to population explosion, the spread of HIV/AIDS and the general failure of the church as an alternative community with acceptable alternative rituals.

High poverty levels among the Abaluyia have meant that the community's contributions towards the cost of funerals has significantly decreased. Traditionally, for instance, when death occurred, relatives and friends provided the meals for the mourners (*okhutura*). It was a taboo for fire to be lit in the house of the deceased for the period of the funeral. This communal generosity meant that the cost of a funeral was shared among many members of the extended family and friends making it less burdensome to the immediate family. This being no longer the case, the occurrence of death spells a greater burden on the family which has to pay for most of the expenses. In many cases observed, families entered debts in order to meet the funeral costs.

During the research, it was observed that the basic foodstuffs for a single funeral lasting three days include at least 1 bull or cow, 20 chicken, 180 kilograms of maize (two sacks), 180 kilograms of maize flour, 90 kilograms of beans (1 sack), 100 kilograms of cooking fat, 2 large sacks of kales or cabbage, 50 litres of paraffin, 50 kilograms of sugar, 5 kilograms of loose tea leaves, 4 kilograms of salt, 100 loaves of bread, several heads of firewood, 60 litres of milk. This is in addition to the costs of a coffin, new clothes for the deceased, wrapping cloth (*isanda*) and a goat or bull for the uncles (*eshikalo*). The costs increase significantly if the death occurs in hospital or away from home. In such cases, the costs include hospital and mortuary bills as well as the cost of transporting the body of the deceased and the immediate family to the ancestral home. The bereaved are often overwhelmed by these demands and deeply frustrated if they are unable to meet them. It is seen as failure to accord the deceased a decent send-off.

2.4.7 Disintegration of family welfare system

The family based welfare system was cited as an important factor in bereavement healing. However, the highly valued family based welfare system of care among the Abaluyia is increasingly under threat. In his research, Mbogori (2002:262) points out some of the adverse effects that the weakening or lack of social support systems has on the bereaved.

In the course of this research, several factors were cited to negatively impact the capacity and ability of family based welfare systems to provide care for the bereaved. Firstly, the society is slowly but surely gravitating towards the individualistic western lifestyles. As a result, the traditional high regard for the extended family system is dwindling with more focus on the individual and the nucleus family. For instance, traditionally a woman who lost her husband went around the village collecting millet (*okhusolola*) from the extended family to brew beer for the post-burial communal beer ceremony. The members of the extended family were obliged to make a contribution. Linked to *okhusolola* was the practice where after the occurrence of death in the community, relatives and friends voluntarily contributed (*okhutura*) towards the funeral expenses. Although the later practice is still widespread, social and economic contemporary challenges have greatly restricted the number of contributors and their contributions. Secondly, the disintegration of family based welfare system has been blamed on the harsh economic realities characterised by high inflation rates, national and global financial crises, chronic unemployment, high population and therefore relatively more deaths, land scarcity and subdivision which leads to low productivity and food insecurity. Thirdly, labour or economic migration to cities or other countries has also impacted the family welfare system. The economic migrants often experience pressure from relatives who feel entitled to their help. Lastly, higher frequency in deaths and a high number of orphans has strained the family welfare system.

2.4.8 Reciprocity in hospitality and philanthropy

In their practice of hospitality and philanthropy, the Abaluyia not only uphold the concept of brotherhood but also reciprocity. Because *amasika nobwayi* – all are confronted with bereavement, one's support for another assures him of his own support when need arise. The principle of reciprocity is used to reinforce the obligation of hospitality and acts of compassion. The principle of reciprocity is widespread among the Abaluyia. In relation to hospitality, this principle is best captured in the proverb *Omucheni wolashiachenih shiomupilakhwo omukhasi*, that is, do not pick a fight with your wife for not properly hosting a visitor who has not hosted you (Wambunya 2005:14). Therefore, to claim that African people extended generosity without attaching any conditions or without expecting reward (Mbiti 1969:1; Gathogo 2006:39; Sichula 2007:11) is perhaps to overly romanticise the African past. However, among the Abaluyia the principle of reciprocity is not blindly applied. Those who are genuinely hospitable and hardworking but are unable to host others due to their limited means are still shown hospitality and receive benevolence by the more able community members. The principle applies to the thrifty, miserly and lazy individuals who refuse to come to the aid of those in need and yet expect to be received and provided for by other community members. To belong to the community is to be welcoming and philanthropic and it is unthinkable not to belong. In addition, sometimes acts of hospitality and benevolence among the Abaluyia are motivated by the belief

that the dead can see those who are kind or mean to their surviving relatives and reward or punish them accordingly. Therefore, in spite of the great comfort achieved through the cultural practice of hospitality and benevolence, Christians ought to shun reciprocity and the fear of the dead as motivators.

2.4.9 Summary

It is clear, therefore, that lurching to cultural belief and practices which promote these limitations may endanger healing in bereavement. The noted limitations can be a source of pathological or burdensome grieving. In addition, they are largely contrary to the biblical norm.

2.5 Meta-theoretical findings on cultural bereavement healing approaches

Mbiti (1991:122) helpfully affirms that by engaging with various beliefs and practices, people are able to come to terms with the agonies, sorrows and disruption caused by death. Similarly, Berinyuu (1989:63) observes that in African traditional societies the purpose of therapy is to bring about individual ritual purity. In spite of their limitations, the following meta-theoretical principles may be identified as crucial in encouraging bereavement healing among the Abaluyia.

2.5.1 Death does not annihilate life

Central to the Abaluyia worldview is the belief that life is sacred and it cannot be annihilated. Life issues from God (*Were Khakaba*). For the Abaluyia, human life is holistic rather than departmentalised. In this sense, life is conterminously physical and spiritual. Although life in the physical world is desirable, yet there is a sense of peace that comes from the knowledge that death does not annihilate it. Death is understood as a gateway to life with the ancestors.

The envisaged afterlife is thought to be just like the present one, only better. The afterlife is thought to be better because the dead do not take with them the worries and troubles of this world. In addition they are thought to have a higher status and more power. The higher status and power gained through death moves the living to keep a cordial relationship with the ancestors through rituals, ceremonies and remembrances.

2.5.2 Death socialisation

The Abaluyia are exposed to the concepts of dying, death and afterlife early in life. This exposure involves both conscious instruction of the young members of the society and knowledge that accrues from their experience through visitations and care for the dying and the bereaved, participation in performances and rituals. The early socialisation or education about dying, death and afterlife means that issues around these concepts are faced before the actual

occurrence of death and bereavement. As a result, death and bereavement does not overwhelm the bereaved individuals.

2.5.3 Communal support systems

The community plays a central role in the support of the bereaved among the Abaluyia. The community mysteriously includes the living, the dead and the unborn. The dead are believed to be concerned with the living and indeed to participate in their daily life. The unborn on their part point the living to the future of the community. The underlying urgency of maintaining proper burial rituals serve to underscore the importance of the relationship between the living and the departed. It also points to the strength of family ties between past, present and future generations and to affirm an even greater belief in the promise of life, and its ultimate victory over death.

The concept of community finds its essential expression at the family level. The family is crucial in the socialisation of individuals and care in times of suffering. As such, the family based welfare system was cited as one of the key factors in bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. Furthermore, the extended family or community fosters a deep sense of belonging and concern for the welfare of all its members. This sense of belonging fosters the 'willingness to stand and suffer together' (Sindima 1994:144). This willingness is seen in the communal support systems that deal with bereavement at the physical, psychological and spiritual levels. The community makes sure that its members die and are buried with dignity, all required burial rites and rituals are observed and that the survivors are cared for through various forms of hospitality and systems of inheritance, remembrance and care. It also provides support by engaging in therapeutic performances. The community is also important through other practical and emotional means such as financial and material help (*okhutura*) and processes of forgiveness and reconciliation. In addition, the elders play a pivotal role in the healing process. It is clear, therefore, that all the traditional means of support draw meaning from and take place within the extended family or community.

The communal support among the Abaluyia is holistic attending to the whole person physically, psychologically and spiritually. Healing begins with the knowledge of communal values, rituals and ceremonies which are preserved in the collective memory of the community members. These virtues are also taught and observed by the community as a whole. The bereaved are not left without help. Thus, the provision of care and the experience of healing take a communal model (cf. Mwaura (2000:93; Magezi 2006:513).

In spite of the various valid concerns accruing from the likely undue pressure on individuals or families to hold to beliefs or indulge in practices they deem inappropriate which ought to be

borne in mind, the extended family or community is as a crucial component in bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. The community is present with and concerned for the bereaved. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that for meaningful and sustained bereavement healing to occur among the Abaluyia, the curative role of the circle of extended family members or community has to be upheld. Healing is largely a community issue of which the individual is an important part. Life is lived within and validated by the community.

2.5.4 Rituals for meaning and healing

Among the Abaluyia, life is marked by ritual from birth to death. The Abaluyia engage in rituals in all life stages but especially in time of grief and suffering. The rituals are not only a source of solace and fullness, but they are also used to find meaning and thus come to terms with the mysteries of life. Rituals involve the whole community, that is, the living, the unborn, the dead and God. Rituals are expressed in word, deed and other symbolic forms and materials. As Kiriswa (2002:30) observes, there is a belief that without a ritual performance a person would not experience healing. Rituals confirm that a person has received the necessary attention and healing. Sindima (1994:143) concurs arguing that it is only natural that a people whose life is marked by ritual from birth to death should find meaning and satisfaction in life through the performance of rituals.

In the course of this research, it was noted that the bereaved feel comforted if all necessary burial rituals are carried out. Where they were neglected or poorly administered there was a sense of restlessness and feelings of guilt. This was the general view both in relation to cultural rituals as well as the correct use of Christian rites (cf. Edet 1992:36). Anderson (1977:100) rightly observes that African rituals often deal with the people's fears and worries about everyday challenges including sickness, infertility, witchcraft and death. These fears and worries indicate real needs that cannot just be wished away or overlooked but rather demand faithful biblical instruction.

2.5.5 Remembrances

In view of the literature reviewed, responses given and observations made in the course of this research, it is clear that many of the bereaved remembered their loved ones in one way or another. It was also observed that the bereaved were concerned about the future of their loved ones as well as their own future. It was noted that the assurance of being remembered after one's death protects the living against the threat of death (cf. Mbogori 2002:54). Among the Abaluyia, those who die without bearing children are greatly pitied primarily because they have no one to remember them after they die. Memorial ceremonies are thus important in coping with their bereavement.

Among the Abaluyia, names are important and are often used for therapeutic purpose. Firstly, children are often named after their deceased relatives and this serves to remember the deceased. Secondly, some children are given special names related to the circumstances surrounding their birth or conception. For instance, if a child is born following several still or infancy deaths, he would be removed from the house immediately after birth and strategically 'abandoned' along a foot path. An elderly woman, privy to the 'abandonment' would go to pick up the infant and give him to his mother. Such a child would be named *Makokha* (rubbish), *Matendechere* (worn-out basket) or *Eshiokhunjira* (a thing found on the road). This enactment was an attempt to disguise the child and thus deceive the agents of death into believing that this is not really a member of the family, but just a rubbishy thing picked up on the road and not worth killing (Appleby 1943). This naming system is deemed therapeutic not only because it seeks to promote life but the name is a memorial of the nameless stillborns or those who died in infancy.

2.5.6 Systems of inheritance and care

One of the most important functions of the Abaluyia's cultural systems of inheritance and care is to help people to face death, cope with bereavement and bring back normality after the devastating effects of death. Among the Abaluyia family members, relatives and friends are normally expected to pay visits to a dying person in order to encourage him as well as to be involved in the matters arising from his condition. Top on the discussion list, once the possibility for recovery has been ruled out, are often issues of inheritance and care for the survivors.

Traditionally, a dying man would normally give information about his properties, liabilities, wives and children. The dying man would, if possible, issue instructions on how his property would be distributed and make arrangements for the repayment of any debt owed. If his wife or wives were still able to marry, he could bequeath them to a preferred brother or close relative if he so wished. Although this practice is fading out quickly, this bequeathing of a widow-in-waiting was often done to ensure that she would not be re-married by a careless person especially if she still had young children. The dying person's will is treated with great respect and every possible effort is made to honour it. The practice of giving specific instructions especially on the distribution of land and other properties helps to avoid or minimise rivalries that so often come up among siblings after the death of their parents.

The system of widow remarriage ensured that they were comforted, protected and provided for. This care was not limited to the remarried widow but it was expected that the late man's children would also be looked after properly. Remarriage was therefore designed to meet the physical needs of the surviving spouse and children. In addition, remarriages were encouraged for the birth of children in order to sustain the lineage of a deceased man and to meet the emotional

needs of the survivors. Elderly widows were not required to be remarried. Those who could not re-marry found care among their grown-up children or other relatives (cf. Kapolyo 2005:131). This system contributed to the survivor's ability to cope in their bereavement.

2.5.7 Therapeutic performances

Most of the daily activities among the Abaluyia are accompanied by one or more genres of the performed arts. In particular, singing is at the core of the Abaluyia's performances. They compose and sing songs for all occasion and can be heard singing in the fields as they work the farm or tend their flock. As such, performances are central to the Abaluyia's daily way of life. Other genres of performances include dance and oral poetry. These performances are learned largely by observation, imitation and participation. Performances are not simply for entertainment, even though this is important, they are also helpfully therapeutic. Performances as therapy are especially important in time of grief.

Performances form part of the ritual practices. They are used to dramatise the ritual and thus embed it on the mind of the performers. The dilemma of death and the loss through death is often dramatised by the postures taken by the mourners, the costumes of the bereaved especially the widows and of other performers of certain performances and the suspension of certain social indulgences and contacts. In this way, performances engender the agenda of rituals which often is to sustain life, restore health, explain the life issues and re-integrate individuals into the community following an isolating occurrence.

Performances are avenues through which pent up emotions that could be harmful to the wellness of an individual are released. Loss through death is often accompanied by the emotions of pain and if not managed properly can lead to pathological reactions such as depression and other harmful complications. Functional performances express the individual's feelings, interpret its causes, meaning and effects. For instance, singing and dancing lessens the bitter feeling of loss. The message of the songs often drastically lessens the tension and pain occasioned by the death of a significant other and encourages the bereaved to face their loss with courage and hope.

2.5.8 Acts of hospitality and philanthropy

For the Abaluyia hospitality (*okhwinjisia abacheni*, literally, 'welcoming visitors') entails open-hearted reception and unconditional love, care and generosity for a visitor whether he is a well known relative or a stranger. The young are socialised through observation and active participation in the practice of hospitality. From an early age they learn to forfeit their own comforts for the good of those visiting them. This general socialisation happens within the extended family as the children often get opportunities to visit their relatives and receive the

benefits of hospitality. Hospitality is also reinforced by purposeful teaching not only through rewards and punishment but also subtly through proverbs and sayings that encourage the virtue of hospitality and benevolence. Some of the popular proverbs include: *Omucheni shiyarirungwa iyafuka* (A cooking pot is not broken on account of a visitor) and *Omucheni yaleta mwenetala* (A visitor rescued the host). These proverbs point to the expected treatment and perception of the visitors.

The practice of hospitality is particularly therapeutic in bereavement. Death impacts the whole community. It is the concern of the entire community and automatically inspires communal response that brings to the fore the rich quality of hospitality. Once death occurs, the extended family members and neighbours willingly open their homes and houses to the mourners. Arrangements are made for provision of all the necessary needs for proper hosting during the funeral. In addition to hosting visitors, relatives and friends also care for the bereaved by making their homes and other facilities and resources accessible to them. Furthermore, the members of the deceased person's immediate family are often relieved of domestic chores which are taken up by other relatives and friends. Due to the socialisation, the bereaved feel that all those who have given up their time to be with them are their guests. They often inquire about the visitors and make every effort to make the guests feel cared for. Thus they consider it their responsibility to look after the mourners who visit their home. They feel obligated to be hospitable even in their bereavement. As such every help in providing hospitality is greatly appreciated.

Closely linked to the practice of hospitality are deeds of compassion and philanthropy. The Abaluyia are socialised to bear one another's burden. This practice is especially expressed in times of bereavement. Monetary assistance is often given towards medical bills, specified funeral costs and towards the orphans' education fund. Apart from the monetary contributions, the community members contribute (*okhutura*) other material items especially foodstuff, furniture and utensils for use at the funeral. In addition, they make themselves available to run errands as need arise. Their availability, care and support contribute immensely to the wellbeing of the bereaved by reducing anxiety and feelings of loneliness. The communal practice of hospitality and deeds of philanthropy means that the funeral costs are shared among many members of the extended family and friends. This makes the expenses less burdensome to the immediate family members.

Through the practice of hospitality and acts of philanthropy, the bereaved are enabled to perform the required burial rites irrespective of their economic status. As already pointed out, burial rites are considered essential among the Abaluyia. As such, failure to bury a member of the family with dignity for whatever reason would be a source of anxiety. This anxiety is often alleviated by the commitment of other community members to the practice of hospitality and

deeds of benevolence which ensure the wellness of the bereaved. It is also not uncommon for close relatives or friends to take orphans with them after the funeral to live with their family (cf. Kapolyo 2005:131). In such cases of long-term hospitality, the needs of the orphans are provided for like any other member of their new families. In some cases these relatives or friends are identified (*lama*) by the dying parent. Even though, these social support structures have been threatened by factors such as modern individualism, rural-urban migration, high poverty levels, high death rate, low life expectancy and high inflation rates, yet it is still hugely evident and efficacious among the Abaluyia.

2.5.9 Predictable boundaries of propriety

Among the Abaluyia, there are set guidelines concerning what the bereaved ought to do or avoid in the process of bereavement healing. The bereaved are helped to come to terms with their loss through death by following a predictable procedure. The procedures include boundaries of propriety in mourning, committal procedures, cleansing rituals and ceremonies and performances.

More importantly, the survivor's healing is impacted by their conduct in relation to the deceased. For instance, a widow who was ever unfaithful to her husband is barred from participating in some rituals and performances in honour of her deceased husband. Likewise, the man with whom she cheated on her husband is threatened with sudden death or some other misfortune if he participates in certain rituals including marking the grave or lighting the ritual fire (*amachenga*). As already noted, ritual cleanliness is required in order to participate in most ritual performances and ceremonies. Therefore, proper conduct is deemed paramount for the restoration of ritual balance and re-integration into the community following death.

Communal re-integration is systematic and gradual. This is assured through certain time bound prescriptions and prohibitions. For instance, work is completely halted during the funeral and for a few days following burial. This deterrence is said to be in honour of the deceased and for the safety of the bereaved. It is thus believed that working while a relative is laying dead (*Wane nashili khwisero*) is only not dangerous but adversely dishonours the deceased and his family. In addition, the Abaluyia observe rules related to taboo relationships (*oburie*) even in bereavement. The observance of these rules of conduct and communication is to ascertain that prescribed social distances are kept especially when the emotional defences have been adversely compromised by the event of death. This helps to avoid compromises that may result in shame and regret. The rules of conduct are intended to afford time and space to the bereaved to grieve and to begin the process of healing and re-integration that may go on for a long time after the burial of a loved one.

2.5.10 Forgiveness and reconciliation

Among the Abaluyia, peaceful co-existence especially with the dying is prioritised. The extended family members (community) try as much as possible to care for the dying for to be mean to them is to invite a curse on oneself. Rituals are often prescribed and performed either to engender an already existing cordial relationship that has been enjoyed or to reconcile the dying person with the living. One such ritual is *okhushenga* (literally, 'to cut'). This involves killing a bull in honour of a dying man. Traditionally, this ritual was believed to reconcile the deceased with the ancestors. The meat from this animal is eaten by all members of the family as a sign of honour and reconciliation.

Even in cases where the ritual of *okhushenga* is not observed, the death bed still provides an opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation between the dying and the members of his family or community as well as between siblings and other relatives. In this way, the dying had an opportunity to be reconciled and thus die in peace. The funeral also provides further opportunities for confessions, forgiveness and reconciliation. Such opportunities arise during times of eulogy and remembrance ceremonies. At the individual level, reconciliation points to acceptance of loss as part of the reality of life. At the inter-personal level, reconciliation is sought in order to foster and start new healthier relationships for the good of the survivors. This new relationships make it possible for the bereaved to look to the future without the loved one with hope.

Death through murder often brings about shock and deep feelings of anger. Although the death of the murderer was not required among the Abaluyia, yet the enmity that such a callous act caused was often deep and long lasting. However, there were mechanisms in place to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation. Elaborate rituals were demanded and medicinal concoctions (*amanyasi*) prescribed before members of the victim's clan could associate in any way with the members of the murderer's clan. At the centre of these elaborate ceremonies is a desire to protect and promote human life.

2.5.11 Elders as carers

Among the Abaluyia, elders are held in high esteem and have a guiding and caring role within the extended family or community. During bereavement, an elderly person of same gender as the bereaved, who has gone through a similar experience is usually assigned to assist the newly bereaved in the process of adjusting to their new status. They are also at hand to guide and counsel the bereaved. The elders' role is reinforced by the fact that they are the custodians of the wisdom of the community and therefore the enforcers of the cultural ways. Furthermore, the presence and guidance of elders is a reliable compensation for ignorance especially of the younger mourners. Their presence and involvement either eliminates or reduces the feeling of

guilt which may arise due to engaging in wrong rituals or in the right rituals wrongly or overlooking essential ones. It is comforting for the bereaved to have this reliable guidance which is willingly given.

As a result of their experience, elders are best placed as helpers. Their experience makes them more perceptive. Among the Abaluyia, age confers seniority and thus authority and prestige. In their senior position, the elders have power to curse or bless. This power reinforces the high respect accorded to them. They form the highest regarded group of specialists in the circle of communal organisation. They are consulted at all stages of life. The elders counsel is particularly sought for in matters pertaining to cultural prescriptions and prohibitions related to death. They are involved not only in the practical issues such as the marking of the grave for the burial of the deceased but they also help the bereaved in the process of coping in bereavement. This explains why the Abaluyia say they have lost their *likaka* (literally, 'fence') when an elder dies as they are a source of security expressed clearly in their wisdom and care. The elders' specialised role is communally upheld and honoured.

Chapter 3: Current ecclesiastical bereavement healing approaches among Abaluyia

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, pastoral issues and challenges accruing from the existing church approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia Christians are analysed. The analysis presents further meta-theories for pastoral bereavement healing based largely on empirical data. The empirical data was drawn mainly from in-person interviews, focus group discussions and participatory observations among bereaved Abaluyia Christians. These modes of data collection rather than questionnaires were preferred in order to allow the researcher to interact with and to observe the respondents in their natural settings. All respondents were baptised Christians of the Anglican diocese of Butere who had been bereaved within a period of twelve months before the interviews. This is the minimum mourning period among the Abaluyia.

Interviews and discussions during the research were semi-structured. In line with the research aim, the following five questions were formulated as a springboard for the interviews and discussions:

- i. How has your church's response or lack of response to your bereavement affected you?
- ii. What interventions were helpful to you (during the funeral of your loved one and in a few months after burial) in coping with your bereavement?
- iii. What interventions were unhelpful to you (during the funeral of your loved one and in a few months after burial) in coping with your bereavement?
- iv. What, in your opinion, should the church do in her pastoral care to engender healing for the bereaved?
- v. To what extent, in your opinion, do traditional cultural approaches to bereavement healing persist among Christians?

In almost all interviews and discussions, the questions were asked in vernacular (*Oluluyia*). No responses were given entirely in English. In some cases the questions were re-phrased to accommodate different experiences and states. In this way, misunderstanding was minimised. As Hofstee (2006:132) explains, 'Semi-structured interviews allow for digression from a set format, either in the questions or the answers, depending on the circumstances'. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews were found appropriate as both the researcher and the respondents were relaxed as opposed to having to respond to an impersonal questionnaire. The respondents were also accessible and willing to give examples and offer further explanations. As Huysamen (1994:144) points out, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to gain

additional insight on some issues that were not thought of prior to the interview.

The sample of the empirical study included a representative sample from each of the six deaneries of the Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Butere as well as a representative sample from each of the focus groups – the Mothers' Union, Revival Brethren, ordained clergy and lay leaders. A sample of one hundred (100) respondents was selected through simple random sampling technique (Babbie 1998).

The responses were collated thematically under two overlapping focus areas: either as issues and challenges accruing from Christian or ecclesiastical interventions or from the Abaluyia cultural coping models. In addition to the in-person interviews and observations, discussions were done focusing on the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Provincial Synod's guidelines to funerals (ACK 1993a), St. Luke's Parish Council Minutes 1932 – 1945 found at Chadwick Memorial Library archives in Butere and on the office of pastors as carers.

3.2 Ecclesiastical bereavement healing approaches

In this section emphasis is laid on church (Anglican Diocese of Butere) approaches to bereavement healing as observed by the researcher or as expressed during in-person interviews and discussion. An analysis of the identified church interventions is done followed with a discussion of the proposed means of bridging the ensuing gaps. The approaches discussed are: the missionary model, Revival Brethren's model, Mothers' Union Model, the Anglican Church of Kenya's institutional model, liturgical model and the clerical model.

3.2.1 Missionary approach

This nomenclature refers to the approaches to bereavement healing used by early missionaries to Butere and continued by the early mission church. Discussions pertaining to this approach focused on the missionaries' attitude towards African culture and inferences from St. Luke's Parish Council Minutes with entries from 1932 to 1945 held at Chadwick Memorial Library Archives in Butere.

3.2.1.1 Early missionary view of African culture

Church Missionary Society now Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries led by Walter Chadwick established a mission station in Butere in 1912. As attested to in the emergence of Christian communities in other parts of Africa in modern times, the people who were first attracted or sent to the mission centre at Butere were those from the lower echelons of society such as the poor, the orphaned, the displaced and the outcast. Therefore, among the Abaluyia there was consistent suspicion and scepticism to the advent of Christianity especially by those

who were considered to be well-off. However, in spite of the initial mistrust of the alien white missionaries and the Christian teaching, slowly but surely, local people increasingly joined catechism classes and were baptised.

On their part, the missionaries were also impacted by their encounter of what was to them an equally alien culture. From the beginning, the missionaries exuded superiority informed by the prevailing forms of enlightenment in the eighteenth century Europe. For instance, the Darwinian theory of evolution which influenced other theories such as the theory of religious development influenced the minds of the missionaries who came to Africa (cf. Sindima 1994:103). The ensuing mistrust born out of suspicion from both the local people and the modern missionaries was not limited to Butere. Many early Christian missionaries in other parts of Africa in modern times were largely intolerant of African traditional beliefs and practices. Temu, cited by Fiedler (1999:21), writing on British missionary work in Eastern and Central Kenya up to 1929, expresses the missionaries' negative attitude by observing that 'the missionaries failed miserably to adjust their religion to the African milieu but proudly believed, for example, that their own forms of marriage and burial, their theological approach, their narrow concept of family and individualism, were the best ...'. Fiedler (1999:21) also cites Rotberg who shares similar sentiments in his writings about early missionaries to Zambia. Rotberg observes that the 'missionaries were not slow to condemn the habits, the customs and the beliefs of the indigenous people ... they had after all gone to Central Africa to offer a backward people the benefits of a European Christian civilization ...'. The situation in Butere was not very different. The older generation of the Abaluyia, for instance, remember Rev. A. J. Leech with mixed feelings. Many respondents pointed out his rigidity towards the traditional culture citing his condescending attitude. As Fiedler (1999:22 cf. Sindima 1994:105-108) observes, a number of missionaries doubted if an African could remain a faithful Christian in his village without having stayed for an extended period at the mission station. As a result of this thinking, they developed Christian villages for the early converts in order to protect them from the influence of their communities. African cultural values were denied, degraded or entirely rejected as meaningless or, at best, superstition. This initial and largely negative view of African cultures informed the missionaries' resolve to bring about the assumed necessary social development and transformation especially through education.

However, as it is true of other missionaries in other parts of Africa, the missionaries in Butere used some of the traditions, especially the strong religious and moral character of the people, as 'a sounding board' for the Christian message (Sundkler & Steed 2000:557 – 558). In fact some missionaries openly exhibited an appreciation for the Abaluyia and their culture. Miss Leonora Louise Appleby (18.8.05 – 2.12.96) locally known as *Shimwenyi*, 'the one who is always smiling', stands out as one who learned and appreciated some of the tenets of the local

culture and used them for the good of the church.

Shimwenyi was a CMS missionary to Butere from 1931 to 1971. As Cole (1996) eulogised, her faithful and diligent service to God and the people of western Kenya as educationist, linguist, deaconess, administrator and architect among other talents touched many lives and made her a household name. She was greatly loved and worked among the Abaluyia with fond acceptance. As a teacher at Butere girls' school, established in 1916 by Miss Elizabeth Chadwick, she highly regarded those who taught under her. For instance, she remembered Miriam Wandai as a 'strong minded young woman, very intelligent, and devoted to her work' and Festo Olang' as 'a tower of strength'. She inspired them to high heights of achievement with her dedication and respect. Writing on etiquette among the Abaluyia, she concluded that 'the principles underlying most African etiquette are dignity and respect'. Leonora also undertook the monumental tasks of developing a composite orthography of the local dialects and translated the entire Bible (*Ibibulia*) into the newly developed and adopted orthography (*Oluluyia*). In her own words, her magnificent missionary service constituted 'forty very wonderful years of watching God at work in the African Church, and being privileged to share in the work'.

In the early missionary churches in Butere, therefore, a strict separation between what was considered Christian practice and the so-called heathen traditional beliefs and practices was desired and indeed actively pursued. This resonates with an earlier conclusion reached at the World Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh. In this conference a declaration was reached that African traditional religions were bankrupt of any preparation for the reception of Christianity by the African peoples (contra Sundkler & Steed 2000:557 – 558). Mwaura (2000:81) observes that, generally speaking, missionaries preached a spiritual salvation based on their own experience and for many Africans, Christianity was only adopted outwardly but it did not inspire their spirituality. This is witnessed in the fact that many Christians, while holding their piety as bequeathed to them in the missionary enterprise, still maintain their traditional beliefs and practices during important or critical stages of life such as birth, initiation, marriage, death, suffering and other anxieties of daily living. Entries in the St. Luke's Parish Council Minutes (1932 – 1945) provide a window into the modern missionary praxis and the attempted cultural separation.

3.2.1.2 Inferences from St. Luke's Parish Council Minute Book

The minute book is an archival source which proved essential in deducing the missionaries' attitudes, challenges and responses to cultural bereavement coping models. In particular, the entries throw much light on the moral stand propounded by CMS missionaries against traditional cultural beliefs and practices related to death and bereavement. Communicant Christians who participated in traditional ways in their bereavement underwent church discipline which often

involved excommunication for a stipulated period. It is clear from the cases discussed that the mission church neither sought for the meaning and value of the cultural beliefs and practices nor how best they could be employed for the good of the bereaved and the ministry of pastoral care.

Most of the parish meetings recorded were chaired by either Rev. Zakayo Makonjio or Rev. A. J. Leech. The minutes were taken in vernacular (*Oluluyia*). The researcher's own translations are used. For purposes of this research, only entries touching on death and bereavement practices are analysed.

In a meeting held on 30th October 1933 and chaired by Rev. A. J. Leech, it was reported that Zakayo Murono from Masaba wished to marry his late cousin Ezekiel Mukoya's wife Meza Amakobe. Zakayo's first marriage had earlier ended prematurely when his wife deserted him for another man. The council rejected his bid to marry in the church and advised him to go for a civil marriage.

Rev. Zakayo Makonjio chaired a meeting held on 4th December 1933. In this meeting, a request was made by Namasoli Christians on behalf of their catechist Paulo Omulubi who had lost his wife. The council was requested to allow the catechist to marry his late wife's sister. Those making the plea said that the marriage was highly desirable as the woman was considered best suited to care for her late sister's children. The council members explained that this was a difficult request. After deliberations, they ruled that the catechist could not remarry in the church. They asked him to seek a civil marriage if he still felt the need to marry his late wife's sister.

Among other items, the council meeting held on 5th February 1934 and chaired by Rev. Zakayo Makonjio discussed the plight of Sara Nyarotso. Sara sought for permission to separate from Yakobo Wanguba. She reported that after the death of her husband, Matsaba, she was 'inherited' or remarried by Yakobo, her late husband's brother. Yakobo informed the council that he did not pay dowry for Sara except a goat and a hoe. Sara sought to end this second marriage arguing that she was old and that all the nine children she bore to Yakobo had died. She had only one surviving child from her first marriage. Yakobo was encouraged to find another wife.

On 2nd July 1934, in a council meeting chaired by A. J. Leech it was reported that when Samuel Onyango of Butere lost his wife, he allowed people to stage dances within his homestead for two days. Samuel was found guilty of consenting to behaviour unbecoming of a Christian believer. He was excommunicated from the church fellowship for six months. During the period of excommunication, he was refused admission to the Holy Communion and strongly advised

not to recite the Apostles Creed.

In a meeting held on 9th October 1944 and chaired by Rev. Zakayo Makonjio, a Christian widow, Ludiya Omukuyia from Manyala, informed the parish council that her house was speedily going to wrack and ruin. It was leaking profusely during rains for lack of repair. She complained that no one within her community showed love and care for her. According to the Abaluyia, it was taboo for a man to renovate Ludiya's house because she had not been 'inherited' after the death of her husband, Gidioni Meso. Traditionally, it is required of the man, often a brother of the deceased or some other close relative, who inherit his brother's wife to care and provide for her. The person who inherits the widow is the one expected to repair the thatch on the roof of the hut (*okhutsomoshela*). In response to Ludiya's plight, the Parish Council asked Christians of Manyala to assist her to repair the house. The council members also encouraged her to stay in her marital home and gave her permission to decide whether to remarry or not.

It is important to note that in another council meeting held on 6th November 1944 and chaired by Rev. Zakayo Makonjio, Ludiya's plight came up again. The meeting was informed that Christian women of Butere had collected fifteen shillings designated for the repair of Ludiya's house. The council was dismayed to learn that nothing had been done by the Christians in Manyala in spite of the last council's directive. However, the need to help this Christian widow was again reiterated.

On 4th June 1945, in a council meeting chaired by Rev. Zakayo Makonjio, Sara Imbanda a Christian of Musanda was found guilty for agreeing to be 'inherited' after the death of her husband. She was excommunicated and asked not to partake in the Holy Communion for one year.

3.2.1.3 Critique of the missionary approach to bereavement healing

As already noted, many early missionaries and mission churches adopted a negative attitude towards African cultural beliefs and practices. Sundkler and Steed (2000:557-558) observe that burial rites were often a source of conflict between the 'new' teachings and cultural beliefs. As a result, missionaries and later mission churches sought to rid African converts of all cultural beliefs and practices which they often dismissed as barbaric superstition.

Positive inferences

As already indicated, there are some retrogressive cultural beliefs and practices related to death and bereavement. These beliefs and practices, it was assumed, formed a basis for resistance to the gospel message. In other words, they were thought to be either overtly contradictory to the gospel or unduly burdensome to the bereaved. Consequently, some respondents, especially the

Revival Brethren, were of the view that early missionaries were largely justified in their intolerance of cultural beliefs and practices. They argued that it could have been more difficult for the Abaluyia to turn away from the retrogressive cultural beliefs and practices and to trust a different set of beliefs and practices introduced by Christianity. Anderson (1977:115) concurs by saying that 'without a measure of separation, it would have been difficult for Christian communities to emerge'.

Negative inferences

However, the missionary and mission church approaches led to a situation whereby cultural approaches to bereavement healing were continually held in suspicion. Sitshebo (1998:26-27) attributes this suspicion to the absence of mutual dialogue between missionaries and African converts. The clash was made worse by the intolerance and a blanket condemnation of the cultural approaches by the missionaries largely due to ignorance and underestimation of the value of the traditional approaches. The cultural beliefs and practices were simply dismissed as being 'harmful to health and morals' (FAM s.a.:6). This contemptuous dismissal of cultural beliefs and practices often leads to pluralism whereby the African convert holds at once to traditional beliefs and practices which are entrenched into the African child's psyche from birth and to Christianity. This pluralism comes to the fore during bereavement where the traditional beliefs and practices reign supreme backed up, as it were, with Christian prayers and ceremonies.

In the inferences from St. Luke's Parish Council Minute Book, it is glaring that reflective listening to the needs of the Abaluyia Christians faced with death and bereavement was lacking in the mission church. For instance, it is clear from the case where no male member of the church was willing to repair the house of a Christian widow who had not been inherited that the men's fears had not been dealt with in spite of their conversion to Christianity (cf. Anderson 1977:96). As already pointed out, among the Abaluyia, the traditional way to protect and provide for widows was through 'widow inheritance'. This is a practice where the deceased's brother, cousin or even a son from another woman, but never an uncle or any other maternal relation however distant, marry the widow and take responsibility for her and her children. In some cases a dying man would identify the person he preferred as the inheritor and carer of his wife or wives and children (Malusu 1978:7, 12, cf. Wako 1954:36; Wagner 1954:37; Mbiti 1969:144; Reggy-Mamo 1999:8; Halperin 2005:106). The Christian men's reluctance to overlook cultural beliefs and practices related to widow inheritance is evident as they defied several resolutions by the Parish Council requiring them to help the uninherited Christian widow.

The entries also clearly show how the converts were expected to make difficult cultural and social concessions demanded by the mission church leadership. In the case of the catechist,

Paulo, the Parish Council refused him permission to marry his late wife's sister (*eshibeyo*) in church. According to the Abaluyia, it is acceptable and even encouraged for a man to marry his late wife's sister (Wako 1954:31). In the case of Sara, a remarried woman, seeking separation, it is unclear on which grounds permission was granted by the Parish Council. In her second marriage, Sara reported that she had given birth to nine children in her second marriage but unfortunately all the children had died in infancy. According to the Abaluyia, the death of the children would be interpreted to mean that the deceased husband was unhappy with the remarriage. In fact, it is commonly held that the remarriage holds only when the first child born to the inherited widow is a girl.

In the mission church, therefore, excommunication was often used to underscore the missionaries' desire to rid the African convert of the cultural approaches to bereavement healing. The missionaries' emphasis on reasonableness meant that they encouraged medical means at the expense of both biblical as well as cultural approaches. However, the rarity of medical means meant that bereaved Christians resorted to the readily available cultural approaches and endured excommunication or quit mission churches to form independent churches which condone cultural beliefs and practices. In addition, the mission church was critiqued for being rigid and 'unspiritual'. As a result, many African Christians left the mission church to join or establish independent churches which largely accommodate traditional beliefs and practices. The independent churches are said to better address spiritual matters related to death and bereavement than the mission churches.

Names and naming are important among the Abaluyia. Names are often used to remember the dead as well as to disguise a child whose siblings die in infancy. Consistent with the missionaries, the mission church resisted the use of traditional names in baptism and instead insisted on the so-called 'Christian names' for use in baptism.

The local church community often has no capacity to assist the bereaved economically. In financial paucity, the church membership reflects the community at large. During the course of this research, the church was cited as contributing to the economic burden of the bereaved. The church routinely gives the bereaved family a list of foodstuff to entertain the pastor and his team (*Abasomi* lit., 'readers') during the funeral and especially after the burial service. Such a list from the church was sent to a jobless Christian family, who had lost their only son, on 18 October 2003 and it is now kept at the Chadwick Library in Butere. The following items were required for the *Abasomi*'s tea and lunch: 10 loaves of bread, 4 live chickens, 5 kilograms of beef (*eshiamberi*), 20 kilograms of maize flour, 4 kilograms of millet flour, 4 kilograms of rice, 6 kilograms (3 packets) of wheat flour, 500 grams of margarine, 1 litre of cooking oil, 1 kilogram of cooking fat, 5 kilograms of sugar, 4 kilograms of rice, 1 piece of bar soap, three heads

(*olukhanya*) of firewood, 250 grams of loose tea leaves, 250 grams of cocoa, 7 litres (10 bottles) of milk, 4 kilograms of dry maize, 6 kilograms of beans, 250 grams of salt and 250 grams of washing soap. A similar list is also sent to the bereaved for the post-burial prayer service held after three days at the home of the bereaved. These foodstuffs for the church group (*abasomi*) are in addition to what is needed to feed relatives and friends and other mandatory funeral costs. All the respondents mentioned such lists given to them in their mourning as a source of anxiety and a feeling of impotency when they are unable to provide the stipulated items. The first bishop of the diocese of Butere consistently decried this uncaring practice arguing that it was neither biblical nor cultural. However, the practice still persists long after his tenure. In the course of this research, the need for the church to change her practice in this area was advised. It was pointed out that due to the high poverty rate; there is need for the church to help the bereaved instead of making demands. It was suggested that each church ought to strive to set up a bereavement fund to help lighten the burden of bereavement on her members.

Many respondents observed that their parishes are greatly lacking in alternative ritual practices. They argued that the missionaries and later, the mission church rejected cultural rituals without providing alternative ones. It was suggested that there is need for churches to form pastoral committees to engage these issues and provide alternatives. In addition, it was proposed that each parish should have a welfare committee to care for the bereaved (cf. Shisanya 1996:193). The committee should comprise those who have been bereaved as they would better understand and articulate the issues and challenges of bereavement among the Abaluyia from their experiences. One of the major objectives of such committees should be to restore the indigenous Abaluyia attitude of caring for the bereaved and the vulnerable. Such committees may also interact with and exegetically appropriate and accommodate biblical injunctions in pastoral ministry to the bereaved among the Abaluyia.

Wild-Wood (2008:42) aptly observes in her study of CMS missionaries in Congo that the missionaries' moral code was an ideal for the most committed rather than being a necessity for all Christians. However, those considered not to be 'most committed' comprise a majority of Christians and accommodate various cultural beliefs and practices. There is need, therefore, to avoid the early missionaries' wholesome condemnation of cultural systems and procedures without setting in place biblical alternatives. For instance, inferences from Butere mission church minutes indicate that those who participated in traditional bereavement practices were simply excommunicated. However, the largely negative attitude towards African cultural beliefs and practices by the early missionaries informs the pietistic Revival Brethren's response to death and bereavement healing.

3.2.2 Revival Brethren's approach

Western Kenya has experienced various periods of Christian revival. The most notable Christian revival can be associated to the activities of the East African Revival Movement (EARM) which started in Rwanda in 1927. It spread throughout Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and the southern Sudan in the 1930s. In 1937 the first group or 'team', as they came to be known, of the Revival Fellowship held evangelistic meetings in various towns in central and western Kenya. These initial meetings were followed by another team visiting Nairobi in 1938 and the hosting of the Kenya African Keswick Convention held in the same year at Kikuyu (Mambo 1973:110). The Revival Fellowship is still strong in western Kenya despite the dwindling numbers.

3.2.2.1 East African Revival Movement ethos

According to Kalu and Duncan (2005:290), the Revival Fellowship grew out of a desire for holiness. Its members felt that the church was suffering from stagnation arising out of arid mission church tradition, the patronage of traditional African values by some believers and the infiltration modernist liberal views. The brethren also contested the clerical office and the lukewarm faith of the church members (Kalu & Duncan 2005:291). The *Balokole* (Luganda for 'saved ones', 'spirit filled') as they are commonly called, are therefore, not very popular both with some leaders within the mission churches as well as those believers and nationalists who promoted African values. In Kenya, the initial years of the Revival Fellowship were riddled with misunderstandings and persecution often from mission church leaders. However, the brethren persisted through prayer, Bible reading, fellowship often meeting under trees, testimony and mutual encouragement and repeated singing of their anthem, *Tukutendereza Yesu*, in praise of Jesus.

The Revival Fellowship is an informal non-denominational group. As Mambo (1973:110, 112 cf. Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001:357) records, the Revival Fellowship draws its members mainly from the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, where in fact they remain and continue as a movement of renewal. The brethren are characterised by public declaration of Jesus Christ as one's personal saviour, public confession of sin and restitution, public witnessing, emphasis on the efficacy of the blood of Jesus which was shed on the cross as a sacrifice which takes away sin and brings the individual into a new fellowship with God and with other brothers and sisters (brethren) in the Lord and an evangelistic and missionary concern (Their evangelistic zeal is often expressed through regional and national conventions which attract many people. Theologically, the Fellowship holds similar views as those held by the historical Protestant mission churches (cf. Mambo 1973:116). However, the cross and the resurrection form the core of their theological constructs. The blood (*amabanga*) of Jesus is the central symbol of the redemptive sacrifice. The brethren put emphasis on daily Christian living in the light of these twin themes. This lifestyle is spoken of variously as walking in the light

(*Abachendi*), standing firm on Jesus the foundation of the church (*Abasinjira*) and dying in and resurrecting with Christ (*Abakulukha*).

3.2.2.2 Revival Brethren's approach to bereavement healing

The Revival Brethren teach a strict separation between the gospel and traditional beliefs and practices. One area where such separation is clearly demanded relate to death and mourning rituals. Their strict piety and refusal to compromise has often put its members on a collision course not only with the custodians of traditional cultural practices but also with other Christians who seek to take the best that culture can offer while rejecting what is contradictory to the gospel. This conflict is often seen in cases where some members of the bereaved family belong or subscribe to the Revival Brethren's ethos while others do not.

The Revival Brethren reject all traditional rituals as well as any pseudo-magical beliefs and practices that often accompany death and bereavement. They do not light the ritual fire (*omuliro kwamachenga*) when their loved ones die. Wako (1985:31) observes that this is because of the association of the fire with the appeasement of departed spirits. In addition, Revival Brethren do not give a goat or cow traditionally given to the uncles (*imbusi/ing'ombe yeshikalo*) or participate in any other post-burial cultural practices like the shaving ritual (*olubeko*), the ritual of bringing home the 'shadow' or spirit of the deceased (*eshinini*), the ceremony to allow for the cleaning of the house and closing of the door which is left ajar after the occurrence of death, the return of the deceased's married daughters (*obukoko*), memorial services (*emiyimo*) or the cultural bequeathing of the deceased man's wife to his brother or other relative commonly called wife or widow inheritance (*okhukalusia*).

Furthermore, among the Abaluyia, deaths are announced by loud outbursts of wailing. This loud and often dramatised wailing (*okhwikhuula*) and singing dirges (*okhutserera*) following the death of a loved one is unacceptable for Revival Brethrens. In support of this position, most respondents quoted 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 'we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men'. Any member who wails after the death of a loved one is called to repent publicly and is rebuked (*okhupwa setani*) for accepting to be carried away by negative emotions.

3.2.2.3 Critique of the Revival Brethren's response to death and bereavement

Positive inferences

It was observed that most members of the Revival Fellowship exhibited a sense of peace in their bereavement. Respondents from the Fellowship stated that they are able to cope in their grief through bearing in mind the gospel promises, the ultimate promise being the resurrection

and eternity with the Lord. The efficacy of the hope of resurrection is particularly evident especially when the deceased was a believer. This is informed by their high view of the Bible as the word of God.

The Revival Brethren's regard for the Bible inclines them to desire to live lives that bear testimony to the free gift of salvation they have received in spite of their circumstances. In addition to private and public reading and listening to the gospel, the Revival Brethren observed that they are consoled in their grief through prayer, singing gospel inspired songs which are often unaccompanied by musical instruments, the assurance of forgiveness for believers, the hope of resurrection and an eternity beyond this life, a great sense of love and fellowship from other members and the encouraging of a spiritual perspective on the life experiences especially during the weekly fellowship (*obusanjirani*).

They helpfully cited some cultural practices related to the system of inheritance as being unbefitting for Christians. The practices include the life-threatening ritual cleansing, demeaning widow-inheritance and patrilineal systems which often disinherit widows and the girl-child. They argued that practices of ritual cleansing and wife-inheritance not only pose a health problem but they largely contradict biblical teaching on sexual morality and marriage. They further argued that the ritual of distributing the deceased person's properties among relatives as a way of keeping his spirit among them for protection and extension of favours contravenes the biblical teaching on state of the dead.

In times of bereavement, the Revival Brethren form a closely knit circle given to sacrificial mutual assistance. They model after the church in the New Testament with emphasis on love and fellowship as key features. This has meant that the members are empowered through the experience of genuine love and fellowship which some of them had not experienced before conversion. In addition, as a result of the strong bond among members of the Revival Fellowship, barriers of denominationalism, ethnicity and socio-economic status, which are often rife in Christian congregations, are demolished as all see each other as brothers or sisters in the Lord. They view the gospel as primarily a message of reconciliation to God and to one another (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:19; John 17:21). Their closeness and support for one another comes to the fore in a special way during bereavement. By holding together, the Revival Brethren are able to support one another at their most vulnerable point so that they are not swayed from the Christian faith or made to bow to pressure to compromise. Soon after the occurrence of death, the members gather at the home of the deceased in order to comfort the bereaved. Each of them makes a contribution towards the funeral expenses and they bring their own food which is usually prepared at another member's home nearby. They argue that in this way, they are not a burden but rather an encouragement to the bereaved. The members further argue that their

model is not just a Christian gesture, but it is similar to the traditional Abaluyia cultural practice of 'bring and share' (*okhutura*).

Negative inferences

However, the Revival Brethren's approach to bereavement was criticised by some respondents on various fronts. First, they were criticised for their stoic endurance of pain and suffering. The example often given for their stoic view was their refusal to weep or to express emotions of grief. It was argued that by holding this view they deny their members the benefit of the release of numbness and pain through shedding tears. This line of argument is similar to the conclusion reached by Ndeti, cited by Mbogori (2002:114), that there is a strong religious belief among Kenyans that death is an event sanctioned 'from above' by God and has a divine purpose for the good of the dead and those left behind and that all are obliged to accept his will. Faith is clearly not evidenced by this stoic attitude towards death. The brethren are also criticised for condemning those who weep which clearly should not be a basis for moral condemnation (cf. Spiegel 1977:158; Richardson 1982:48).

Second, the Revival Brethren were criticised for leaving the bereaved prematurely. Unlike other church members, the Revival Brethren were reported to leave the homestead of the bereaved immediately after burial. They do not return to the homestead to comfort the bereaved for a few days after burial as other church and community members do. In addition, it was argued that they do not allow the bereaved time to heal. Instead, they expect the bereaved to return to normal life immediately and expect them to attend the weekly fellowship (*obusanjirani*) shortly after burial. Talitwala (2002:61) points out that staying on for some days after the funeral is good if the purpose of staying is to comfort the bereaved. As Spiegel (1977:165) correctly observes, it is after the mourners have left that the bereaved is bound to experience great loneliness. As such, the ministry of the church family cannot end with the burial.

Third, some of the respondents observed that some Revival Brethren are hypocritical in their condemnation of cultural practices. They pointed out that whereas the condemnation is done in the open, some of the Revival Brethren engage in the same cultural practices secretly. For instance, a leading Revival Fellowship team leader known to openly condemn all cultural beliefs and practices especially those related to death and mourning was reported to have given the ritual gift, often goat or cow, to the uncles (*eshikalo*) following the death of his wife. Traditionally, this ritual gift was a gesture of honour to the maternal roots and it was believed to avert or stop (*okhwikala*) further misfortune arising from the maternal roots of the deceased.

Fourth, it was suggested that the Revival Brethren do not appreciate that other Christians who do not belong to the Revival Fellowship are saved. It was reported that they often point to lack

of public confession of sin and expressive daily Christian living which they consider important for Christians as lack of faith in Christ. For instance, the brethren perceive laxity in following Christ if a Christian engages in or allows the performance of any cultural practice following the death of their loved ones even if the cultural practice is thought not to be contrary to biblical teachings. They are not prepared to leave room just in case the other Christians may be right. This attitude is interpreted by some as being unnecessarily overbearing and judgmental. Furthermore, some respondents argued that in their readiness to find spiritual solutions to the pain of grief, the brethren often forget that sometimes there are bodily needs which require attention (cf. Carson 1978:97).

Fifth, as already pointed out, Revival Brethren discourage any wailing during bereavement citing Paul's injunction in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. They argue that because of the distinctive hope of resurrection, the Christian ought not to grieve and accuse those who wail of not exercising faith. Suffice to point out that this popular citation of single verses common among the Revival Brethren is thought to be suspect as it often does not lend itself to critical biblical exegesis.

Sixth, the Revival Brethren are criticised for their seclusion. The brethren's close, intimate fellowship is cited as a source of friction within families especially with relatives and friends who do not belong to the Revival Fellowship. The seclusion is reinforced by traditionalists who argue that there is a rift between Christianity and traditional culture. McCall (2004:17) points out that from the traditionalists' point of view, Christianity is seen as alien and 'other worldly' or whimsy while traditional culture is considered real and thus it must be taken seriously as consequences of cultural neglect are dire.

Contrary to the Revival Brethren's response to bereavement, the Mothers' Union's rather inadvertent attempt at inculturation of the gospel is widely embraced within the diocese of Butere and other neighbouring dioceses. The Mothers' Union displays a desire to maintain continuity with some dominant cultural practices especially those considered therapeutic while rejecting those which are contrary to the Bible. Many members of the local churches turn to the Mothers' Union for support and encouragement in times of need.

3.2.3 Mothers' Union's approach

The Mothers' Union (MU) is a worldwide organisation of the Anglican Communion. The MU was founded in England in 1876 by Mary Sumner as a society for the support of women in their role as mothers. The Mothers' Union was introduced in Kenya by CMS missionaries in 1918. According to the society's official website, its stated purpose for existence is to promote Christian marriage and family life through prayer. As such, the Mothers' Union takes interest in

the integrity of marriage, instruction of children and promotion of better understanding between the sexes in accordance with biblical teaching within the various specific local contexts. Like the individual dioceses within the Anglican Communion, each diocesan MU body is organised and run with a degree of autonomy.

3.2.3.1 Priority of the family

As an organisation interested in the wellbeing of the family, the Mothers' Union is directly affected by the adversity of death and bereavement which attack the family fabric. In fact, one of the MU's objectives is 'to help those whose life has met with adversity' (Mombo 2007:33). In the diocese of Butere, the Mothers' Union officials and members consistently visit the bereaved shortly after an occurrence of death to sympathise, console, listen to the bereaved person's story, express their love and support and to give practical help.

The MU has adopted the cultural family based welfare model. Unlike the Revival Brethren who strictly draw their cue of welfare from the Bible and tend to be exclusive in their welfare programmes, the Mothers' Union, seeks to integrate the traditional family based welfare system and a Christo-centric biblical model of care.

One respondent, a young widow and member of the Mothers' Union, observed that she was greatly encouraged by the help she received from other MU members. She pointed out that in her bereavement an older MU member was identified and assigned the role of a 'personal attendant' to her throughout the funeral and several months afterwards. This is similar to the cultural practice of *okhukura* (protect or shield from harm). During the funeral the older lady, who had been a widow for five years, ensured that she had some food and rest. She also allowed her to weep, guided her on the practical and cultural issues, prayed with her, allowed her time to be on her own and encouraged her not only to trust the word of God but also to express her feelings about God openly. She says that the attendant's presence, encouragement and willingness to listen to her without being judgmental gave her confidence to face her loss and the future without her loved one. She added that her experience exposed her to new possibilities for service in church and community.

3.2.3.2 Integration

As noted in relation to the family welfare system, the Mothers' Union has integrated several cultural and social practices. During funerals, the MU has adopted several cultural practices including burial procession (*okhuchesia*) and post-burial visits within their otherwise Christian approach. As a result, the MU model evinces an accommodative and less condemnatory attitude to cultural beliefs and practices.

In addition, most MU members join in the initial wailing which announce the occurrence of death. After this initial weeping has subsided, they meet on their own to identify areas where they may be of help to the bereaved. They often identify one among them to act as a 'personal attendant' to the bereaved member during the entire period of mourning. They consult with the bereaved family and the pastor on issues such as the date of burial, the immediate needs of the family and those of the church for the night vigils and burial service. They also organise themselves in such a way that there is always a group of helpers at the home of the bereaved following the occurrence of death and for a few day after the funeral. The helpers are assigned chores such as fetching water, cooking, cleaning and arranging flowers.

During the funeral, MU members actively participate in the procession, give eulogy, serve the bereaved, church leaders and other mourners and lead songs. Immediately after committal and the blessing, the MU members rotate the grave before planting flowers on the freshly filled grave. After some time the flowers take root beautifying the grave. The grave, which is often dug next to the deceased's house, becomes an attractive place rather than the usual creepy dull red earth or gray cemented stone in the homestead. After burial, MU members return to the deceased's homestead for a post-burial service. This service is important as it marks the end of the official funeral period. Traditionally, this period was marked by the shaving (*olubeko*) and bathing or washing ceremonies. These ceremonies marked the end of ritual uncleanness culturally associated with death and burial. In this way the MU provides an alternative Christian ritual cleansing ceremony.

3.2.3.3 Support teams

Perhaps the most attractive practice of the Mothers' Union is the formation of support teams and the establishment of support programmes. The teams and programmes are formed for the bereaved especially widows and orphans to provide spiritual and emotional support. Prayer and Bible reading are central activities to the support although in some instances counselling is provided. On the other hand, support programmes often aim at providing not only spiritual and emotional support but also seek to address basic physical needs such as food, clothing and shelter. In some incidences, MU members make contributions towards urgent needs like repairing dilapidated houses and providing food and clothing. In this regard, the MU often holds workshops especially for widows and orphans to teach basic skills in order to empower them socially and to promote economic self reliance through income-generating projects.

3.2.3.4 Mothers' Union parenting programme

In 2005, the Mothers' Union Provincial office in Kenya launched a parenting programme. This programme is not only concerned with parenting but also with the plight of the socially vulnerable and disadvantaged. In their workshops issues such as family communication and

prayer are addressed. They mostly work with single parents, orphans and the elderly. They often visit the dying for prayer and encouragement. Talitwala (2002:61-62) suggests that the church ought to be involved in the preparation for death and bereavement among its members. This can be done through anticipatory grief counselling, teaching and preaching on the subject of death and related subjects from the Bible, and teaching on healthy Christian family relationships that strengthen family communication and encourage honest expression of feelings.

3.2.3.5 Awareness campaigns

In addition, the Mothers' Union members lobby and campaign for the change or removal of oppressive cultural practices such as the life-threatening ritual cleansing, widow inheritance and patrilineal systems of inheritance which often disinherit widows and the girl-child (cf. Shisanya 1996:192; ACK 1993b). They have also worked hard at raising awareness about emerging challenges to the family such as HIV/AIDS, high poverty levels and food insecurity, violence against women, child labour, the plight of the elderly and the dying, education for girls and parenting. Wild-Wood (2008:42) correctly observes that through advocacy and policy work in the community, the MU acts as a conduit through which social order is maintained and socio-religious ideas about the role of Christian women expressed. Through these various means, the MU seeks to bring back a sense of belonging and wellbeing for the bereaved among them and largely contribute to the caring ministry of the church.

3.2.3.6 Critique of the Mothers' Union approach

Positive inferences

The Mothers' Union approach to bereavement healing was hailed by many respondents as a model Christian approach that makes attempts to integrate cultural beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the MU support teams for parenting, visitation, counselling and entrepreneurial training and social awareness greatly assist in easing the pain of bereavement, funeral costs and the care of the bereaved.

Negative inferences

Some respondents argued that the approach emphasises social issues at the expense of spiritual wellness. It was also suggested that the approach favours MU members leaving out a large section of the local congregation members. In addition, it was suggested that the MU approach can easily slip into syncretism. As a result of the latter critique, leaders of the Revival Fellowship discourage members from joining the Mothers' Union and especially from participating in the MU burial processions and singing.

3.2.4 Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) institutional approach

Institutional approach to bereavement healing is used restrictively to refer to responses to death and bereavement by the Anglican Church of Kenya that may not strictly be classified as being pastoral or liturgical. In this respect, the Provincial Synod's guidelines on funerals, medical means and social concern are discussed.

3.2.4.1 Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) guidelines on funerals

The Anglican Church of Kenya has an institutional policy on funerals (ACK 1993a). This was prompted largely by current practices at funerals seen to either contradict the teaching of the Bible (cf. Mathew 15:6) or to disadvantage the bereaved. The guidelines were also motivated by a conviction that the funeral service provides opportunities for extending pastoral care to the bereaved as well as proclamation of the gospel.

The guidelines were prepared by a committee appointed by the Provincial Synod. The committee noted that because Kenya is a multi-cultural society, with many different cultural beliefs and practices concerning burial and mourning, the guidelines were to be discussed further and appropriated at the diocesan level. This realisation underscores the fact that each culture has its own unique beliefs and practices that aid its members to heal in their bereavement. The committee also noted that as Christian believers, there is need to reject all aspects of traditional culture that are contrary to the biblical teaching and to common sense. It further highlighted the need to uphold those aspects of culture which are not contrary to the Bible while leaving to the discretion of particular local decisions those issues that are not contradictory to the Bible but cannot be biblically supported.

The guidelines, though well meaning, have largely been disregarded. There are different reasons for their disregard. One common reason is the regard for and assumed efficacy of the traditional beliefs and practices in bereavement healing and the irrelevance of the guidelines to local situations. For instance, bodies of the dead among the Abaluyia are generally kept for three days, with burial on the third day. The actual time of the day for interment is culturally predetermined and it is dictated by factors such as the age, gender, status and the manner of death of the deceased. A respectable elder, is buried at dusk, a child is buried in the early morning and a person who commits suicide is buried at night. It has not been possible, therefore, to adhere to a two hour service guideline especially because most burial services of the church are set in the early morning.

Furthermore, the Abaluyia hold that it is therapeutic to talk about one's experiences with the deceased (*obuloli*). As a result, the guideline which limited the number of speakers in burial services to only one has been overlooked. In all the funerals attended during the research, there

were not less than ten speakers. Even in cases where the service has been held in church, people still gather for many hours listening to eulogies by the grave site before burial.

Contrary to the recommendation that the viewing of the body be limited to identification purposes by those who go to collect the body at the mortuary, the Abaluyia traditionally view their dead without restriction. In fact, it is by viewing the body that people register their presence to condole with the bereaved. The necessity to view the body explains the importance of informing relatives and friends (*okhuhala*) of the occurrence of death before burial.

The guidelines 'condemn' the traditional practice where the property of the deceased reverts to the in-laws and not to the wife and her children unless the will states that the property be given to members of the extended family. Among the Abaluyia, this is carried out in accordance with the ritual of property distribution. For the Abaluyia, unlike among the Jews where if a man has no son the inheritance goes to his daughter(cf. Numbers 27:8-11), the wife does not inherit from her husband or a daughter from her father. In cases where the man has no male heir, the property reverts to a male next of kin, say a brother or a nephew. This, at least in part, explains why respect for a wife increase within the family on the birth of a boy among the Abaluyia. In addition, as Shisanya (1996:192) points out, the Abaluyia observe the ritual of distributing the deceased's property among relatives in order to keep the deceased's spirit among them. The spirit is believed to protect the relatives from malevolence and to ensure them favours. Furthermore, the legal written will is yet to take root among the Abaluyia where cultural procedures still hold sway. The cultural way is also held in aspects such as direction of burying the body, the desire to bury the body in their ancestral land, conduct and care of the widows, widowers and orphans among other burial and mourning rituals.

The committee acknowledged the negative impact in cases where the church leadership refuse to conduct Christian burial services to members who are thought to have backslidden. It encouraged the presence of church leaders in all cases in order to minister to the living. The different treatment of different church members casts doubt on the commitment of the church leadership to bring about healing in bereavement. For instance, the refusal to use the burial liturgy of the church or the practice of wearing only the black cassock due to the leaders' doubt about the faith of the dead only adds to the pain of the bereaved. The black cassock is associated with sin and is understood to imply that the deceased is a condemned sinner. As Perham (1984:136) points out, white is considered the most suitable liturgical colour for a funeral as it signifies the imputed justification by the grace of God and the hope of resurrection. Normally the presiding Anglican pastor wears a white surplice over the black cassock as a symbol of imputed righteousness. The church leaders often refuse to use the burial liturgy in what is culturally considered taboo deaths such as suicide. By such action, the church

inadvertently reinforces the cultural understanding of such deaths. In addition, the church's ministry to the bereaved that may have been aided by the potential power of the funeral liturgy to reinforce the message of hope for the living is forfeited (cf. Perham 1984:134).

The recommendation of the committee aimed at reducing the cost of funerals is welcome but largely untenable. For instance, it is suggested that to reduce funeral expenses, there should be no 'feasting' before, during or after the funeral. In group discussions during this research, it emerged that for the Abaluyia, taking a meal or drinking water at the homestead of the bereaved is culturally necessary as it is considered an honour to the deceased and his family to do so. It is, therefore, strictly speaking not 'feasting'. It is communion. Culturally, most of the food was brought in by relatives and neighbours.

The guidelines also urge the bereaved not to transport the body of the deceased to the ancestral home. For the Abaluyia, there is no burial if it is not done in the ancestral home. As such, and in spite of the costs involved, families struggle to transport the body of their dead kin back to their ancestral home. Other measures proposed in order for the bereaved to reduce costs include not buying an expensive coffin or new clothes for the deceased and the bereaved family and not cementing the grave. These practices do not seem to bother the Abaluyia much because they are alien to them and have no much cultural implication. Agreeing with the need to cut down the costs, Talitwala (2002:63) adds the following to the list of 'irrelevant costs': black or white dress for mourners, wreaths, taking the body to the church and keeping the body for long.

The guidelines encourage remembrance of the dead. Wright (2007:184) observes that for a departed Christians, the body is dead, but the 'real person' continues. The Christians in their death are held firmly within the conscious love of God and the conscious presence of Jesus Christ as they await their bodily resurrection. He further argues that since both the departed Christians and those still in the body are in Christ, they share in the communion of saints especially in the celebration of the Holy Communion along with angels and archangels. For this reason, Christians ought to pray for and with the departed. The love that existed between them thus passes into prayer. The church remembers the dead by mentioning their names in prayer during worship, annual commemorations called 'the year's mind' and by a service during the All Saints – All Souls tide. Wright (2007:186) rightly rejects the All Souls commemorations on the ground that it teaches an erroneous Roman Catholic theology about the dead. He argues that the appropriate times for the commemoration of the dead among Christians in ways that express genuine Christian hope are Easter and All Saints day. This explanation is helpful for the Abaluyia Christians who may be tempted to lurch back to the unbiblical cultural veneration of the dead.

The practice of commemoration in the Anglican Diocese of Butere is common. Following a funeral of a member of the local congregation, the deceased's immediate family often attend a special service for prayer and thanksgiving. They give thanks for the life of the deceased and during the service the immediate family members usually express their gratitude for the help received from other church members or organisations. The church also joins the family in the memorial services (*lisabo*) which is usually held after one year. Prayers during the memorial services often include intercessions for the deceased's immediate and church families. Perham (1984:145) observes that remembrance is not only important as a spiritual part of the church's ministry of prayer but it can also be its pastoral opportunity and outreach.

3.2.4.2 Diocese of Butere (DOB) institutional approaches

The Anglican diocese of Butere came into existence in 1993 following the sub-division of the former diocese of Maseno North. According to the 1999 national census in Kenya, Butere has a population of 109,782 of which 33,000 are members of the Anglican Church of Kenya. In addition to pastoral care, the church is also involved in healing through medical means. This involvement follows in the solid legacy of medical missionaries to Butere such as Maud Pethybridge (1892 – 1986) locally known as *Bakhoya* ('one who brings joy'). As Storr (1998:271) observes, the purpose of the Anglican Church's ministry of healing is 'to bring to people in need all that can be done to relieve suffering, to heal and prevent disease in an atmosphere of Christian love and compassion'.

In earlier days, the missionaries in Butere provided the only medical services that existed apart from the cultural traditional means. The church in Butere views the continuation of the missionary medical services as a high priority. More recently, the involvement of the church has been witnessed through establishment and renovation of health facilities, provision of medical education and training, advocacy, care and counselling. The medical means are therefore achieved through medical facilities and trained individuals. Wilkinson (1980:175) rightly points out that although the church is mainly involved in non-medical healing through the congregational practice of healing in which the church acts corporately it is also involved through the individual practice of Christians trained in the art and science of various healing professions.

The church's involvement is necessitated by the poor public medical facilities and the desperately low doctor-patient ratio which puts access to medical services out of reach for a great majority of the Kenyan population. The diocese runs several health centres and clinics not only for her members but for all community members. An example of these church facilities is Namasoli Hospital which is entirely under the aegis of the Anglican diocese of Butere. In order

to provide the necessary qualified medical personnel for the health centres, the diocese is consciously involved in their training at various local and international medical schools in spite of the high costs involved. The trained medical personnel have been instrumental in providing medical expertise, health care and counselling in areas where national health services are minimal.

In addition, the church has also spoken boldly against retrogressive cultural practices such as wife or widow inheritance, widow ritual cleansing, social indifference, stigmatisation and superstition which impede bereavement healing (ACK 1993b).

It emerged from some respondents that the circumstances of the death impacts bereavement healing. As Mbogori (2002:82) observes, the complexity of the demands of mourning often causes the healing process to regress and compounds the difficulty of finding a new meaning, which is dependent on the individual's evaluation of their worth towards his person. Furthermore, the response or lack of response from caregivers in view of the circumstances of death can be a source of either comfort or pain. One respondent, for instance, was bitter at her late husband who died of AIDS related complications. She blamed him of infidelity and for infecting her with the disease. The respondent, expecting the pastor to take the initiative, complained that her pastor had not visited or talked with her several months after he buried her husband. She pointed out that she felt wrongly judged and isolated due to the HIV status. Mwaura (2000:96) observes that the pastor as a caregiver has a duty to be well informed about HIV/AIDS because his irrational fear can be a source of further pain for the infected as well as other caregivers. She further points out that in the light of the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, the church has a duty to teach and exemplify biblical principles such as compassion, concern and care for one's neighbour without prejudice or being judgmental. Thus, the message of compassionate love dominates pastoral teaching against the stigma towards the infected and the affected.

The existence of the so-called 'faith healing' churches was pointed out by some respondents as a hindrance not only to the efforts to combat the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS but also as a source of early deaths for the infected and more suffering for the bereaved. In the course of this research, some mourners were heard lamenting at a funeral of a young woman. In their laments, they observed that the deceased would not have died at the time she died if she had not joined a certain 'faith healing' church. After her husband died of AIDS related complications, she was diagnosed with the HI-Virus. She was put on anti-retroviral drugs and helped to accept the fact that her infection was not a death sentence. For five years she lived with the virus with a positive attitude, right behaviour and treatment without any life threatening complications. However, after joining the faith-healing church and being prayed for, it was claimed that she had

been completely healed. She stopped taking her drugs and going for routine medical checkups. Unfortunately, her health deteriorated rapidly and she died living behind several children with their elderly grandmother. With such happenings, the church is often held with contempt and her genuine healing ministry spurned.

The disputed General Elections held in December 2007 in Kenya led to rampant killings and near-death heart-rending ordeals. The citizens, Christian and non-Christian alike, were divided into two main blocs of those supporting the incumbent president and those in support of the opposition. The main opposition presidential candidate was deemed to have won the election. Following the alleged blatant vote rigging and botched electoral process, the longstanding divisive and alienating historical and social injustices resurfaced through fighting, looting and killing. The ensuing mayhem took ethnic lines even within the churches. The church in Kenya, recognising her failure, has humbly embarked on redeeming her pastoral ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation especially for those who lost their loved ones during the senseless mayhem. This effort was carried out both at local and national levels by congregation pastors as well as chaplains to institutions such as schools, hospitals and the armed forces.

The church's institutional means to bereavement healing are not carried out in isolation. The medical personnel, for instance, work together with other church members. Wilkinson (1980:175) correctly observes that as members of the church, the medical practitioners 'are upheld and supported in other practical ways by the church gathered as a community in worship and in witness'. The individuals are in turn encouraged to use their gift and skills for the common good of the community (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:7, 28). Lewis (1999:42) observes that painful experiences ought to move the observer to compassion and acts of mercy. At the forefront of this 'corporate concern' is the pastor.

3.2.4.3 Critique of the institutional approaches

Unfortunately, the cited church policy paper on funerals makes no reference to the Bible. It emerged from the focus group discussion during the research that such an omission is greatly misleading. It also emerged that without proper biblical teaching some church doctrines like the doctrine of the communion of saints held by the church will continue to be viewed by some locals as double standards on the part of the church. It is clear, therefore, that there is need for the church leadership to rethink the guidelines related to death and bereavement.

Although the medical means of the church cannot be denied, yet they are almost insignificant due to the large numbers that need help and the high poverty levels which put them beyond the reach of many people. As noted, none of the respondents reported to have sought medical help or professional counselling for their bereavement healing.

3.2.5 Liturgical approach

Willimon (1979:100 cf. Griffin 1978:117) observes that liturgy functions as a means of helping us cope with life's most difficult circumstances. It helps us get by. Liturgy gives us a way through crises that might otherwise overwhelm us by providing a patterned, purposeful, predictable way of behaving in the midst of the crisis and by symbolically focusing our attention upon norms, beliefs, and sentiments regarding our ultimate concerns. In addition, the funeral liturgy proclaims the hope of resurrection and this is an appropriate part of the Christian structure of support and consolation.

3.2.5.1 Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) burial liturgy

The liturgy and how it is used has an impact on bereavement healing. Most pastors interviewed during this research pointed to the help realised with the launch of the new ACK liturgical book, *Our modern services*. The funerary texts were founded in 2002 based on Kanamai Statement of 1993. The Kanamai Statement was drafted after deliberations of representatives to the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) meeting at Kanamai near the coastal town of Mombasa in Kenya. The theme of the consultations was 'African culture and Anglican Liturgy'. The representatives sought to delineate principles for the African inculturation of Anglican liturgy.

The Kanamai Statement was informed by a respectful desire by people of diverse cultures to express their unique identity in their forms of worship. It suggests that for inculturation to be achieved there is need for the liturgists to listen to the needs of the whole body of worshipers, exercise caution in view of cultural diversity, seek insight from attempts that have been made by others, understand the principles of worship in Christianity as well as in traditional forms of worship and to recognise and study liturgical inculturation which has already taken place both formally and informally. It is also noted that once a liturgy has been created there is need for teaching and training so that every Christian may fully understand the words and symbols used and for the worship leaders to be sensitive in their use of the liturgy.

The Kanamai Statement was divided into five sections the last of which dealt with death and burial liturgy. It acknowledges that the African Christians' attitude to death and bereavement is inevitably shaped by African tradition and Christian belief. It recognises that whereas some traditional beliefs can be and have been incorporated into Christian use, others must be subjected to criticism based on the gospel and the tradition of the church (Sheppy 2004:96). For the burial liturgy, several cultural issues were identified for consideration including the marital status of the deceased, distinctions between men, women and children, attitudes to suicide and

criminals, rites relating to burial, mourning and remembrance, systems of property distribution and naming of children after the deceased.

In the creation of the burial liturgies, traditional African understanding about the causes of death was contrasted with the Christian understanding that, irrespective of how death occurs, it is God who holds and withholds life. It was affirmed that it is God who raised Christ from the dead and in that resurrection the ministry of comfort is grounded. In the liturgy for those who commit suicide, it is ascertained that judgment belongs to God alone and therefore it is not part of the church's task to refuse its prayers even to those who have taken their own lives. They are commended to the mercy of God with the prayer that 'they may be granted the forgiveness which Jesus came to bring' (ACK 2002:178-180 cf. Sheppy 2004:96).

The items of the burial service provided for in the liturgy include reading Bible sentences and passages, sermon, prayers of intercession, songs of praise, procession to the grave, consecration of the grave, committal and blessing and dismissal. The burial service begins with a statement of purpose which is the burial of the body and the affirmation and remembrance of the hope of the resurrection for those who have died in Christ (ACK 2002:165 cf. Sheppy 2004:98). This hope is also expressed in the prayers of intercession which remind the mourners that 'life is fleetingly short' and the need to live each day 'as though it were our last'. The prayers also focus on the reality of grief and the need for divine compassion in time of sorrow, that is for grace to cope, for the ministry of the Holy Spirit the comforter, for peace that passes all understanding and a resolve to live in the light of the cross and the resurrection of Christ (ACK 2002:169-170; Sheppy 2004:99).

Sheppy (2004:102) aptly observes that the ACK burial liturgy 'display an overwhelming pastoral care for those who mourn, a clear body-soul anthropology and a strong evangelical proclamation of the cross and resurrection of Christ'. Notably, the burial liturgy is pastorally sympathetic to those who commit suicide and those who survive them. Two forms of burial liturgy are developed. One form is general while the other is specific to those who commit suicide. In Spite of the strong evangelical tone of the main burial service, the service for those who commit suicide adopts a less condemnatory attitude (ACK 2002:178-180). In particular, the intercessory prayers for those bereaved through suicide emphasise love, care, understanding and acceptance so that this life's 'burdens might be lighter and hopes brighter' (ACK 2002:179). This attitude is starkly different from the Abaluyia's view of suicide where it is considered a taboo death not deserving decent burial (Wabukala & LeMarquand 2001:355). Yet the Abaluyia's view is accommodated by the fact that a different order of burial service was written for those who commit suicide. The rite suggests a clear understanding that God does not abandon those who take their own lives. Like the main burial service, this service also maintains a clear distinction

between those who profess Christian faith and those who do not. This liturgy provides an example of how the gospel may be inculturated without being compromised (Sheppy 2004:101-102).

In the ACK burial liturgy, Christian evangelical theology has accommodated itself to meet African attitudes related to death and bereavement. Pastors who use this new liturgy observed that they no longer feel as though they were representatives of an alien culture during burial services but as freely expressing the gospel truths in their own culture. They argued that the new liturgy captures the important areas of the Abaluyia culture which missionary teaching had ignored.

3.2.5.2 Pastoral and liturgical guidance

In the new burial liturgy, the church has made efforts to understand cultural beliefs and practices in order to engender pastoral care and Christian living. The liturgy has been hailed as being sensitive to the diverse cultures of Kenya. In particular, it provides pastoral and liturgical notes sensitive to the various cultural settings (ACK 2002:164 cf. Sheppy 2004:96). This cultural sensitivity informs its popularity among its users.

Various pastoral and liturgical guidelines are given to cover local circumstances. First, there is a distinction between the baptised and those who have not received baptism. It is thus clearly a Christian liturgy. The main burial liturgy is designed for the baptised that are not excommunicated and have not died by suicide. The family of the deceased are provided with various possibilities from which they may choose what is most appropriate for them. Second, emphasis is placed on pastoral care before, during and after the burial service. Before the burial, the funeral liturgy ought to be explained and options given to the bereaved. After burial, the pastor or any other authorised Christian is required to escort the bereaved back to their home if possible. Follow up visitations are encouraged for pastoral support and fellowship. Third, any traditional custom which is not repugnant to Christian faith, such as placing the body with the head towards the east among the Abaluyia, may appropriately be done for Christians. It is noted that feeding at the funeral should be very minimal, if any. In addition, burial expenses should not exceed the resources of the bereaved. Fourth, funerals may be celebrated at any lawful time. On Sundays, however, priority is given to the worship of the church. Lastly, the funeral rite need not take place within a church building, but may be conducted wherever is convenient, whether indoors or outdoors. However, the service must not be interrupted once it has begun and eulogies must be controlled in order that the service may take a maximum of two hours. These are given as guidelines only and bear resemblance to those given by the committee of the Synod on funerals.

3.2.5.3 Critique of the liturgical approach

Many respondents observed that they felt comforted largely when the church burial rites were explained prior to their use and carried out diligently (cf. Hendriks 2004:137). Some respondents, however, pointed out that the liturgy is sometimes read out unclearly or rushed through with little meaning.

The researcher observed that the ACK burial liturgy is adapted and used by pastors of various independent churches and Christian ministries. This indicates a positive liturgical contribution made by the Anglican Church to the body of Christ. In some cases, however, it was observed that the liturgy was mutilated by rampant quotations during the funeral without due consideration being made, for instance, to liturgical and pastoral guidance.

3.2.6 Clerical approach

The church is both the locus of salvation as well as healing. As Louw (1998:17) observes, the congregation (*koinonia*) remains the theological basis of all pastoral ministry. All the respondents in this study encountered the church in their bereavement. The church as an institution is a meeting place for Christians from all walks of life and inquirers of various spiritual persuasions. Among the Abaluyia, the church has to a great extent succeeded, by divine grace, in being present with the people in their various critical situations in life especially during bereavement. This presence is felt through its teaching, rituals and mutual care. The clerical approach thus refers to the observed response to bereavement healing whereby the bereaved turn to individual lay church leaders or the ordained pastor for help. Among the Abaluyia Christians, the pastor is perhaps the single most important human face of the church and agent in the process of bereavement healing.

3.2.6.1 Pastors as carers

Most respondents, including those critical of the institutional church, alluded to the fact that the pastor as the worship and prayer leader, master of ceremony during burial services and lead carer was important in their coping with bereavement. It is helpful to note that none of the respondents in this research reported to have consulted a professional psychotherapist or counsellor for help in their bereavement healing process. This is not only due to the rarity of these professionals and the unaffordable costs where they exist but most importantly it points to trust in spiritual efficacy, pastor's accessibility, familiarity with the bereaved and prior knowledge of their circumstances and availability. As a result, the pastors are generally held in high esteem as carers. Clinebell (1984:218) observes that pastors are the only persons with an automatic entrée to the world of most sorrowing people. This entrée is both an opportunity as well as a responsibility to be effective guides and companions of the bereaved. Mwaura (2000:72)

acknowledges that pastors have a duty to heal, that is, to restore humankind to a state of wholeness.

Several issues emerged in the course of this research which impacts the role of the pastor as an agent of bereavement healing. They included the pastor's identity, example, availability, training, use of the Bible and prayer, ability to teach, handling of burial liturgy, use of sacraments, pastoral presence, pastoral visits, exposure and leadership.

3.2.6.2 Identity

The pastor's identity here refers to how he is viewed both by the local congregation and the community at large. It is apparent from the responses given that many people view the pastor as not only a representative of the church but more importantly as a representative of God. The respondents referred to the pastors as 'the man of God'. It was reported that during funerals, the bereaved felt a sense of relieve when they recounted their story in the presence of the pastor as they believe that because God's representative has heard their story, by extension, God has heard. The sense of relieve was particularly enhanced where these listening-sessions were followed by the pastor committing the issues raised to God in prayer.

The identity involves not only the pastor's teaching but also his example in godly living. Since there is no legal obligation on the bereaved, or other parishioners for that matter, to seek and accept pastoral care, the pastors can accomplish their purpose only by holding the confidence of the members of the congregation. Pastors who are thought to teach one thing and practice another or the opposite of what they teach do not inspire confidence and trust and are thus thought to be an impediment in the process of healing. The pastors are to lead by example. Mbogori (2002:177) observes that the bereaved people value a helping person with strong religious beliefs. A low view of the pastor impedes the effectiveness of his role as a caregiver. In addition the pastor's self-image is important. As Cobb (1977:3) correctly points out, pastoral care is often affected by the pastors' understanding of their role as ministers. When the Christian faith gives pastors an assurance of God's grace and of the meaningfulness of life, this assurance is subtly communicated to their counselees. When their Christian experience has made them deeply loving persons, their love is in itself therapeutic.

Among the Abaluyia, age confers seniority. Traditionally, therefore, guiding and counselling was largely a preserve of the elders. The elders deal with broken relationships (cf. WCC 1990:7). However, during group discussions it emerged that several other legitimate factors would confer seniority and thus place the recipient on a par with the elders in their caring role. For instance, before the dawn of colonial era the Abawanga clan of the Abaluyia had an elaborate system of ruling monarchs. Among the Abawanga, therefore, status was accorded by virtue of one's birth. The age of the king (*Nabongo*) was thus not a primary consideration in this hereditary system.

This social heritage is important as it draws attention to the Abaluyia's respect for conferred status in spite of age. A pastor, for instance, by virtue of being set apart for the ministry is highly regarded among the Abaluyia. The pastor acquires the status of an elder (*omukhulundu*) even though he may not be advanced in age. Evidently, therefore, most respondents acknowledged the role of pastors as elders. As an elder, the pastor is looked up to by the bereaved for guidance and care. In line with the traditional model of eldership, the pastor is informed of and expected to attend to all matters that affect the individual and the community. They are thus invited when there is a party to celebrate personal or communal achievements as well as when death strikes. Traditionally, the elders' role was broad based embracing the entire range of life experiences. They acted as leaders, carers, healers, counsellors, educators, judges, mediators and reconcilers among other important roles. Their basic drive is the desire for the promotion of life and the welfare in the community.

3.2.6.3 Training

Training and experience were pointed out as important ingredients for a pastor as a carer. A respondent, who is a pastor, observed that he was not adequately prepared at the seminary for the practical difficult realities he encountered in his first posting. He said that the greatest test to his training was the handling of the dying and the bereaved. His inadequate training, however, has been compensated for by his experience over the years. He pointed out that poor training or lack of training often led to the misuse of the otherwise healing approaches such as prayer, Bible reading and exposition, ability to teach important doctrinal issues and proper handling of liturgy and sacraments. However, he warned that, training achieves little where there is no genuine desire to love as Christ has loved us (John 13:34, 35) and to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24, 25 cf. Isaiah 61:1-3). McCall (2004:15) adds that those who are trained in spiritual care and pastoral therapy need to learn the languages that apply to other care disciplines in order to foster communication and collaboration as well as promote strategies that provide better outcomes gained from spirituality in general and the use of spiritual practices in particular.

3.2.6.4 Sacraments and absolution

It was observed that pastors are often asked by the sick or by their family members for Holy Communion. In such cases where the elements of the Holy Communion are requested, the pastor's visit to the sick is often highly desired. The pastor's response to this desire at their time of life's most shattering crisis is important for encouraging the dying as well as for the survivors' healing in case of eventual death. Mwaura (2000:89) acknowledges that 'in Christian teaching and practice, sacraments have always been associated with pastoral care and healing'. However, during this research, some pastors reported that the taking of the Holy Communion is viewed by some Christians as the last rite and those who accept it really recover from their

sickness. This view, though rampant, is erroneous.

It was reported that some of the dying people call for the pastors so that they may confess known sins committed against God or their neighbour and to seek for forgiveness and reconciliation before they die. Such sessions are often followed by the pastor's explanation or declaration of God's forgiveness and prayer. Oates (1982:61) observes that the need for confessional ministry remains an abiding reality in the spiritual hunger of the dying. Several respondents alluded to the fact that they were less anxious about their loved ones who had the opportunity to confess before they died.

3.2.6.5 Pastoral presence

The presence of the pastor or a pastoral team during the funeral was cited by most respondents as pivotal in their bereavement healing process. One respondent observed that her ability to cope was boosted by her pastor's presence at her husband's death bed as it assured both the dying husband and her that she was not alone (cf. Oates 1982:60).

The pastoral presence is reinforced after the funeral through pastoral visits. It was observed that during these pastoral visits the bereaved are encouraged by the reading of the Bible as both they and the pastoral team seek answers to their questions, prayer, songs, testimonies and fellowship. Group discussions with pastors revealed that due to the high poverty levels, the pastoral team often take gifts (love-gifts) while visiting the bereaved.

It was observed that it is important for the pastor to point the bereaved to God as their ultimate source of help. The bereaved must not be overly dependent on the carer in their healing process. The carer instead ought to act only as a catalyst to their healing process. He is an enabler. The early missionary model of using church discipline such as excommunicating those who lapsed into cultural practices was found wanting. It was pointed out that the pastor should rather be present with those who mourn for guidance and care in their hour of need and not to stay away at a time when the bereaved are most vulnerable and only turn up later to condemn their actions.

3.2.6.6 Reconciliation

Many respondents pointed out the need for pastors to encourage repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation for healing before death and during bereavement. Most respondents observed that they were greatly helped by the feeling that they were at peace with themselves, the deceased as well as other surviving family members and friends. In their stories, reconciliation emerged as a fruit of repentance and forgiveness. Admittedly, several respondents observed that it had not been easy for them to repent or forgive. One respondent succinctly captured this

struggle as well as the healing that issue from repentance and forgiveness. She greatly appreciated the help achieved through her pastor's teaching after the funeral of her husband which emphasised that justice and righteousness were coterminous in the gospel. The pastor pointed out that the loving God is also a judge of all human beings.

The respondent reported that her husband had been physically, emotionally and verbally abusive to her, especially when drunk, during most of their fifteen years of marriage. He had also neglected her and their children and wasted most of the family inheritance and income not only on alcohol but also on extra-marital affairs. She was forced out of her career employment when he insisted that she was just competing with him and that she was not being a good mother. On his death, he left her and the children in debt and with no savings. She said that his family openly supported her late husband against her and even blamed his infidelity on her. All these happenings and accusations made her bitter with her deceased husband as well as his family.

The respondent told the researcher that she was greatly helped to know that God is just and does not ignore injustice. She reported that during the funeral some family members asked for her forgiveness openly as they gave their eulogy (*obuloli*) while others did so privately after the funeral. They confessed that they had not treated her well and that they had not cared enough to listen to her side of the story. She further observed that having been helped to understand that vengeance belongs to God, her forgiving of those who had asked for her forgiveness and her own repentance and assurance of God's forgiveness through the symbolic declaration of absolution by the pastor, the process of healing in her bereavement begun.

On the contrary, a widow confided to the researcher that she was indifferent following the death of her violent and adulterous husband. With tears, she said that she found it very difficult to forgive her unrepentant husband who variously abused her and infected her with the HI Virus. She reported that her consolation was in the fact that she won't have to see him ever again. She was glad that in at the resurrection there is no marriage (cf. Matthew 22:30). She added that if by any chance she saw him, even only in her dreams, her impulsive response would be to run away from him. This deeply hurt lady has since died leaving behind several children in the care of their elderly grandmother. In view of this case, the process of coping depends to some extent on the relationship of the deceased and the survivors prior to the occurrence of death. Violent and unloving relationships may be cause for pathological grieving and obviously make reconciliation more difficult.

3.2.6.7 Leadership in a secularised society

The bereaved appreciate decisive servant leadership from their pastor. This need is made more

urgent not only by the ease with which most Christians lapse into cultural practices but with the slow but sure infiltration of western sceptical attitude towards biblical injunctions and the spirit world. As Mbogori (2002:126) observes, from the western sceptical viewpoint, the claim that faith gives succour is contested and thus it is disregarded as capable of restoring to health. On the contrary, among the Abaluyia and indeed in the Bible, sickness, death and healing always have more than a physical dimension (cf. Wilkinson 1980:115). As Mwaura (2000:82) comments, sickness and death point to alienating forces and powers and thus the attainment of healing implies a conquest of these alienating forces and powers.

In the contemporary world, the western scepticism is often presented as ideal and desirable. This viewpoint is largely informed by the Hollywood glorification of beauty and youthfulness expressed in plastic surgery and beauty products including anti-aging creams. The Hollywood context makes aging more scaring than death. This understanding which follows from the collapse of the unquestioned loyalty to the teaching of the Bible has created an environment where people would rather die than age or suffer. 'Happiness now' reigns supreme. In addition, the secularism of this age has not only obscured the sense of divinity but also led to the change of the meaning attributed to death and dying and the increase of the human role in determining the end of life through acts such as euthanasia and suicide or its illusory elongation through theories and practices such as post-selves, ego-transcendence and cryogenics (cf. Mbogori 2002:59, 123-139, Cobb 1977:43).

It emerged from a pastors' discussion that the disingenuous Hollywood views urgently needs to be countered by teaching the Christian view of death and the afterlife and adopting a sympathetic view of therapeutic cultural beliefs and practices in bereavement. Mbogori (2002:131) suggests that the role of pastors in bereavement needs to be addressed from the wider perspective of these changing attitudes towards faith. Faith has lost influence in the west such that even the most traditional roles of the church such as that of rallying people in times of crisis has been taken over by the other helping professions. Africa is not insulated from the rest of the world in this matter. As Mwaura (2000:76) observes, Africa 'has passed rapidly from a traditionally closed and rural community to a global community. This situation places the average African between two worlds that sometimes create severe social and psychological tensions'. However, among the Abaluyia, the pastors reported that only a few members of their congregations have had this exposure and been influenced by the modern and post-modern views and only to a small degree. On the contrary, traditional beliefs and practices still influence even the highly western educated individuals.

3.2.6.8 Pastoral teams

As a leader, the pastor also needs to be aware of burnout especially when dealing with

bereavement. Burnout was pointed out during a clergy focus group discussion as a reason for less effectiveness in the pastors' ministry to the bereaved. Several reasons were advanced for the burnout including poor planning, lack of delegation, lack of or dysfunctional pastoral teams and the sheer large number of cases that need attention. A stable pastor is more likely to positively impact the bereaved and encourage the healing process. To this end, some pastors emphasised the need to form pastoral teams consisting of pastors within the same deanery as well as lay leaders and other church members. The pastors encouraged one another to delegate some of the responsibilities without of course abdicating their responsibilities in order to avoid burnout. Mwaura (2000:74) correctly points out that pastoral concerns are not the responsibility of bishops, clergy or a few gifted members alone but of the whole body of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 4:10). Griffin (1978:109) helpfully adds that 'most of the needs of the dying and the bereaved can be met by sensitive lay people who are secure enough in their own faith to be able to offer strength and comfort by their presence, and comfortable enough with their own emotions to be able to tolerate emotional expression in others'.

In summary, the discussions with pastors revealed that the process of healing in bereavement is not easy. The pastors acknowledged the need to rely on the enabling of the Holy Spirit in the endeavour to bring about healing for the bereaved. They also pointed out that there are no quick fixes for the bereaved. Bereavement healing takes time and for some individuals it takes a lifetime. Consequently, pastoral care must not be confined only to the period after the actual occurrence of death or the funeral instead mechanisms ought to be put in place for anticipatory care and long time post-burial care for the bereaved through identified bereavement healing programmes within the community of believers.

3.3 Common ecclesiastical bereavement healing beliefs and practices

In spite of the specific emphasis by the various groups investigated, respondents repeatedly mentioned the following elements as being essential for bereavement healing: belief in God's love and care for the bereaved, edification from reading the Bible, personal and corporate prayers, the grace of the sacraments, communal fellowship and mutual help through acts of compassion and the hope of resurrection.

3.3.1 Presence of God

Many emotional reactions cause the bereaved not to draw healing from the presence of God. A time of bereavement can be, and often is, a time of incomparable feeling of loneliness. Many bereaved people often feel numb and have no desire for company. This feeling may cause them to withdraw from other people. They may also feel guilty or blame themselves for the intended good they never did or the bad they did in their relationship with the deceased. Some may even blame themselves for the death or feel that their bereavement is a punishment for their sin or

the sin of their beloved ones. They may also blame others for their perceived unkindness or even for the death of their beloved one. In some cases, they blame God for their predicament. If the deceased was a believer, the bereaved may question whether everything they believed was mere pious nonsense. Most importantly, and this may happen even to those Christians who are considered 'strong' or mature, the bereaved often doubt the presence of God and his goodness. They feel that even God has deserted them at their hour of need. These emotional reactions are a common and natural occurrence. Marshall (1957:21) observes that if these questions are not faced and answered, there can be no healing of the bruised heart. The questions reveal that the greatest healing need for the bereaved is to be oriented to God, centred in him so that the bereaved person's life can have an anchor.

The term 'bereavement' befittingly derives from an Old English word '*bereafian*' meaning 'to plunder'. It is often an unwelcome deprivation or isolation of valued relations as it separates the living from the deceased. The feeling of isolation is thus at the centre of bereavement. In some cases, the pain of isolation is made worse by actual isolation by the community of believers, family members or friends. The isolation may be overt or concealed, real or imagined but it still impacts their healing. Isolation may be as a result of one's mistakes or those of some other person for which the bereaved feels responsible. Among the Abaluyia, for instance, it is not uncommon for a widow to feel isolated by her in-laws. This is often because she is regarded as an outsider due to the patrilocal marriage arrangement. Writing on a Christian response to domestic violence, the researcher observes that largely severed from her biological parents and siblings, a woman's life is often made difficult because she is always perceived as a newcomer or an outsider (Keya 2003:10). Unfortunately, grief often blinds the bereaved to the comforting and assured presence of God with his people at all times.

Faith acknowledges God's presence. According to Mbogori (2002:128) faith is an assurance or awareness of divine reality, the fact that God cares, and the confidence in the life to come. The Christian faith teaches about God who is actively concerned with the plight of his people. He is *Immanuel*, God with us, both in good times and in not so good times (Matthew 1:23). It is comforting to know that God is omnipresent and is especially present with those who trust in him. Mbogori (2002:249) further points out that the uniqueness of the church lies not in its being composed of multitudes of numbers, but in its being a channel and symbol of God's presence. He adds that the uniqueness of the church as a therapeutic community not only lies in its symbolic presence, but especially by being the channel of God's presence in the community (Mbogori 2002:257). Ultimately, it is the testimony of the loving presence of God in the midst of suffering that makes hope and mutual encouragement possible. Webster (2005:195) argues that Christian hope has to do with the object of Christian hoping, namely Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:1) before it is a set of attitudes on the part of those who hope in him. Entertaining

these truths during bereavement brings about not just momentary relief, as opium or another tranquiliser would, but a lasting wellness. As Carson (1978:71-72) points out, for a person with the restricted frontiers of a world without God there is nothing but despair, or the alleviation of the various escape mechanisms which help to dull the pain for a time. But for the Christian there is an answer; to know the Father's care, to feel the sympathy of Christ, to see a purpose in one's sorrow – all these are a solace in the grief. Knox (2003:29 cf. Autton 1967:20) concurs arguing that in the tender, understanding presence of God, grief and disappointment are soothed by a deep sense of his constant love and wisdom in everything that he allows. The knowledge of the presence of God releases the bereaved from the bondage of fear. It also reminds them that they do not face their sorrow in their own strength, for God himself is with them.

The knowledge of God's presence can, however, be overwhelming for the bereaved. This may occur in cases where there is sin or other forms of wrongdoing that has not been dealt with either on the part of the bereaved or the deceased. In such cases God's presence seems threatening. This feeling is real and although it must not be ignored, it ought not to lead to despair. The knowledge of God's presence should, therefore, spur the believer to repent and to realise that God is near and willing to forgive his trespasses. The believer can find forgiveness and healing in him. As far as the deceased are concerned, God is the ultimate judge, and it is healing to leave their destiny to him. However, while times of bereavement may lead some people to rely on God more than times of happiness, yet for others bereavement brings doubt and even withdrawal from faith. Knox (2003:257-258) points out that it is helpful for the bereaved to remember that God has not lost his love for them. Ultimately, Christianity does not depend on our ability, but on God's dependability. The certainty of the tender, illimitable loving presence of God brings immeasurable healing to the bereaved.

3.3.2 Reading the Scriptures

There are several benefits of reading the Bible by bereaved Christians everywhere but especially among the Abaluyia. Firstly, the Bible is the word of God and as such, it is the basis of the Christian belief. The Christian ought to seek to listen to what God has made known by his word in all circumstances but it is especially comforting to do so in bereavement. In times of grief, people are prone to follow instructions from other people and often lurch back to their traditional beliefs and practices. It has been noted, for instance, that among the Abaluyia the voice of the community is particularly strong during bereavement. Therefore, it is necessary that bereaved Christians desire to listen and trust God's word for encouragement and direction.

Secondly, although there is a proliferation of writings on the subject of bereavement from the

western world, and although literary levels among the Abaluyia have increased considerably over the last century, yet many people in rural Kenya have very limited access to such literature. In addition, reading culture is yet to take root in the otherwise largely oral culture of the Abaluyia. Furthermore, western literature is often set in and addressed to a completely different environment often at odds with the Abaluyia's cultural understanding. The languages and examples used by western authors are alien to most people and therefore the effectiveness of western literature is greatly limited.

Thirdly, the Bible is available not only in the various English translations but also in the local dialects. The *Ibibulia*, a central *Oluluyia* translation is readily available and widely used by the Abaluyia. Furthermore, translation work to make the Bible available in more local dialects is ongoing. The other popular translation of the Bible is in Kiswahili. The availability and accessibility of the Bible makes it the most widely read book among the Abaluyia.

Fourthly and perhaps most importantly, respondents reported that reading the Bible or hearing the word of God explained faithfully helped to strengthen faith and trust in God and prompted them to pureness of heart and godly living (cf. CE 1859:10). As Louw (1998:384) observes, reflecting on Scripture promotes the focus of thoughts on positive content. In bereavement, the Bible is a reminder to the believer, not only that God is present with them but also that he certainly shares their pain. This is why the church belief holds that for a Christian there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable than the knowledge of the Bible which is God's true word. There can, therefore, be no true healing apart from what is or can be drawn from it. It is comforting to know what God's will is and what the believer's response ought to be in specific situations of life.

Bible reading can be done personally and privately or with other believers in a group. One can also draw the benefits of the Bible through hearing the Bible explained by reliable preachers, searching the truth by inquiring from mature believers and studying it through Bible study or listening to talks. The Bible is the food that nourishes believers in their spiritual quest and it is especially necessary when death occurs. In the homily on a fruitful exhortation to the reading of the Bible, believers are encouraged thus: 'Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by man's imagination.... He that is oppressed with misery in this world shall find relief in the promises of everlasting life, to his great consolation and comfort; he that is wounded the medicine whereby he may be restored again to health' (CE 1859:7-8). Reading the Bible illuminates the understanding of those that faithfully and diligently read it, comforts their hearts and encourages them to perform that which is pleasing to God. In addition, reading of the Bible teaches patience, gives counsel in doubtful matters and ultimately shows to whom the believer

ought to look for aid and help in our grief (1 Samuel 14:6-23; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4). Louw (1998:369) aptly observes that it is edifying and empowering to know what the Bible says.

The word of God helps the believer to avoid error (Matthew 22:29). The bereaved Christian is thus able to maintain godliness if her reading of the Bible is done with an attitude of humility and a desire to follow God's will. This desire is expressed and achieved through prayer with the help of the Holy Spirit. Griffin (1978:113) explains that the Bible texts are used appropriately when they reinforce or illuminate faith without denying whatever other elements there may be in the total situation. Choice of a passage should reflect the particular needs and circumstances of the particular situation. In addition, Bible verses or principles must not be turned into checklists or formulas.

The study of the Bible helps the believer to have the correct perspective on suffering and death. Growth in the understanding of the word of God brings healing as one discovers the will of God, the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the extent of the love of Jesus. As Carson (1978:108 cf. Psalm 119:11) points out, a mind well stored with the truths of God's word will be well furnished to resist the attacks of the evil one, and also to rouse the afflicted from his depression to renewed hope.

There is great need in pastoral care among the Abaluyia to rid the church of any use of the Bible which presents it as though it was a charm. In some instances, the Bible has been used by the bereaved and the general body of Christians among the Abaluyia as a talisman against suffering and evil dreams. In such cases the Bible is put under the pillow sometimes open at a Psalm or some other passage that is assumed to assure the dreamer of his security. Mombo (2007:32) points out that in popular Christianity in Africa the Bible is sometimes used as a charm to keep away evil spirits. It may be placed in the foundation of a building or in the grave of a loved one. Whereas it is important to hold the Bible with respect, yet it is pursuit in futility to assume that it is some form of charm. This misuse of the Bible is sometimes associated with a misunderstanding of the concept of the sufficiency of Scripture. The sufficiency of the Bible means that it is the final authority of matters of salvation and Christian living.

3.3.3 Prayer

During the empirical research, prayer was the most frequently mentioned essential source of consolation in bereavement. Prayer is motivated by the trust that God is at work and in full control of the universe. It is recognition that God is near and listening (Psalm 145:18). According to Augustine (CE 1859:322), prayer is 'the key of heaven'. Christians can freely approach God

through prayer. Christ has made this access possible and now humankind has no need for any other intermediary to God. From God's perspective, troubles are meant to make us mature and more dependent on him (James 1:4). Trials take us to a point where we know that it's only God we ultimately have need of. Prayer is thus an act of acknowledging our reliance on God and the insufficiency of our own understanding (James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5). Prayer is an acknowledgement that nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even death (Romans 8:38f.). Carson (1978:129) observes that prayer is one of the instruments God gives us to help us to be patient in tribulation.

Prayer is also asking (Luke 11:9). In Augustine's words, it is 'a lifting up of the mind to God, that is to say, a humble and lowly pouring out of the heart to God'(CE 1859:328). The content of our prayer is dictated by two main factors; firstly, our necessity and secondly, the glory of God. In bereavement, our necessity is to ultimately find healing and mature in our relationship with God. Carson (1978:133) helpfully points out that in our prayer we must never infringe God's sovereign discretion whether to grant healing or the grace to endure. It is the will of God that we ought to seek at all times.

True prayer consists, not so much in the outward sound and voice of words, as in the inward groaning and crying of the heart to God. As Isidorus succinctly put it, prayer is 'an affection of the heart, and not a labour of the lips' (CE 1859:325-6). According to Louw (1998:429) prayer involves a reaction through faith in the context of communion with God. Carson (1978:128) adds that true prayer is the attitude and the resultant expression of one who has come to know God as Father. This is the gracious work of adoption by which God adopts us into his family. Accompanying this is the gift of the Holy Spirit who assures us of our adoption, and gives us the confidence to pray, 'Our Father'.

Prayer is necessity in the life of all Christians (James 1:17; Romans 10:12). This is not because God will not give without our asking, but because he has appointed prayer as an ordinary means between him and the believer (CE 1859:320f.). There is no doubt that God knows what we need (Matthew 6:8), and that he is always most ready to listen. Yet, he has ordained that in time of necessity we should ask for help from him (Jeffery 1993:22-25 cf. Psalm 50:15; Mathew 7:7, 8; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 1: 5, 6). God expects us to be willing to ask him as he is willing to give. Prayer is necessary for all people at all times but it is especially necessary in time of need (Psalm 7:9; Matthew 6:8, 9; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Luke 11:2; 21:36; 22:41-44; Acts 1:13, 14; Romans 8:27; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Through prayer, Christians also find an opportunity to give thanks and praise God for all his goodness.

Prayer has strength and power and as such it changes things (Exodus 17:10-13; 2 Chronicles 20:5-12; Esther 4:16; James 5:17, 18 cf. 1 Kings 17:1; 18:42-45; Luke 4:25). Chrysostom asserts that there is nothing in the entire world stronger than a man that gives himself to fervent prayer (CE 1859:320, 322). The bereaved can be assured that whatever they ask God the Father in the name of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ and according to his will, he will undoubtedly grant it (John 16:23-27; 1 John 5:14, 15). Because God is omnipotent, he can easily perform and bring to pass the thing that we request (CE 1859:331). God is faithful and able to do that which he has promised. He encourages believers not to be anxious but to pray instead (Philippians 4:6-7). As Dicks (1963:102) observes, through prayer, the person in need experiences an awareness of a relationship toward God. The pastor or carer, therefore, becomes a medium for the grace of God. However, the pastor is not responsible for the fact of God and the healing redemptive power of God as it enfolds the suffering person.

In the Bible we encounter three general modes of prayer. Two of the modes are private, and the third is common or public (CE 1859:353-4). All the three modes of prayer are relevant and useful in bereavement. Firstly, the believer is taught to lift his mind to God without vocal utterances of the heart's grief or desire (1 Timothy 2:8 cf. 1 Samuel 1:13). It is from this point of view that Christians are encouraged to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:16). One can also utter his grief and desires of the heart with words but in a solitary place (Matthew 6:6). Lastly, one may participate in public or common prayer in an assembly of believers (Matthew 18:20 cf. Jonah 3:4-10; Joel 2:15-17; Esther 4:16; Acts 12:5). The Lord's Prayer implies corporate use. Any of these modes of prayer may be used as the bereaved Christian seeks to honour God by his praying (Isaiah 29:13 cf. Matthew 15:8).

The Bible instructs believers to pray solely to God. They are to desire help from him alone and no other. Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray send them to the Father in his name (John 16:23 cf. Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2; Psalm 1:15; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21). It is clear that we must first believe in him before we can make our prayers to him (Romans 10:14) (CE 1859:324-5). Christ is our only mediator and intercessor with God, and thus we must seek and run to no other – for his mediation is sufficient (1 Timothy 2:5 cf. 1 John 2:1-2; John 14:6; 10:9; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25) (CE 1859:327). As Wright (2007:185) points out, the Christian has immediacy of access to God through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the believer can approach God at all times and have no need for other intermediaries.

There is no teaching or example in the Bible to pray for or to the departed. The Bible acknowledges only two places after this life, one for salvation and the other for damnation. Our prayers do not help or profit the dead (CE 1859:336). On the other hand, there is also no

suggestion in the Bible that those who have died are actively engaged in praying for those of us in the present life (Wright 2007:184). Knox (2003:262) helpfully points out that the bereaved Christian must face the truth that the person who has died has gone and is not hovering around us as disembodied spirit close at hand. Believers must never yield to the temptation of attempting to contact the dead. God specifically forbids this in Deuteronomy 18:11. People who have died do not come back to this world in other forms.

However, those who are bereaved often find it difficult to pray. As Dicks (1963:103 cf. Williams 1977:28) observes, the crisis of death and grief intrude to the degree where one's God consciousness becomes remote. Several reasons may account for the difficulty. Firstly, the bereaved may feel that it is pointless to pray especially if they had prayed and desired for the healing of the deceased. The need for prayer may escape them or they may find themselves lacking words to express what they feel. Some often feel numb or bitter following their loss and may blame God, the deceased, the pastor, other believers or themselves for their bereavement (cf. Marshall 1957:25). As Carson (1978:129) observes, a serious side-effect of our pains is that we easily become inward looking. We are taken up with our own crushing problems and, unless we are careful, self-pity will begin to dominate us. But to adore God is to be lifted outside ourselves. Dicks (1963:103) observes that in such cases, the pastor's or other believers' prayers reduce the tensions of the moment and restores perspective. Secondly, some of the bereaved feel they have sinned and thus unable to pray. Sin ought not to withhold anyone from praying to the Lord God (Matthew 6:12; Psalm 103:8; Ephesians 2:4; Romans 10:12; Isaiah 54:7, 8) (CE 1859:328). James encouraged believers to confess their sins to one another, and pray for one another, and then there will be healing (James 5:16 cf. 5:19-20). Lambourne (1963:146-7) explains that a small group is here envisaged in which Christian men and women will feel able to speak to their fellows of their sins in the confident expectation of understanding and a positive concern to help as exemplified by prayer. According to Bridger & Atkinson (1994:223 cf. Louw 1998:437) there is a depression which is directly due to unconfessed sin (Psalm 32 cf. Psalm 139). In bereavement, sometimes what is needed is a prayer of confession and absolution in order for the bereaved to experience healing. If there are matters that remain unresolved between the bereaved and the deceased, prayer often play an important role in bringing about healing for the bereaved. The bereaved are encouraged to tell it as it is to the Lord Jesus, confess and ask for his forgiveness. Knox (2003:262-3) points out that when guilt is confessed to God through prayer, it is transformed by God's grace into forgiveness and liberation. The bereaved must learn to embrace the Lord's forgiveness and to forgive others. It might be helpful to pray the Lord's Prayer emphasising on forgiveness. It is only in forgiving that we ourselves find forgiveness and peace of mind. Forgiveness may also demand that one needs to turn deliberately from a perceived wrong to God. Wright (2007:259) observes that sin is the root cause of death; if death has been defeated, it must mean that sin has been dealt

with. As Dicks (1963:105) points out, prayer has the effect of absolution when it embodies the elements of God's understanding and forgiveness.

Bridger and Atkinson (1994:222 cf. Griffin (1978:114)) point out the need for sensitivity in the use of prayer especially by carers. They argue that appropriate prayers follow the model in James 5 where prayer is requested by those in need, not for the carers to impose it. They warn that prayer, misused, can become unhelpfully manipulative. They observe that believers and especially carers need very great care not to place directive burdens on one another through prayer. Refusing to cover all prayers with 'nevertheless not my will but your will be done' both misuses this means of grace, and can also raise unrealistic expectations in those the carers seek to help. Similarly, adds that the prayer of faith is always open-ended. We share with God our desires in all their strength and in all their distortions, but if it is truly a prayer of faith we also seek his strength to see more clearly and to trust more deeply. There is no prayer we cannot pray if we are genuinely open to the 'nevertheless, not my will but yours be done'. According to Griffin (1978:113) it is always appropriate to pray for the bereaved but it is not always and necessarily appropriate to pray directly with them. Here, as in other matters, we take our cue directly from the other person. While there are some bereaved people who feel that our praying with them is an imposition and an invasion of their belief and value system, there are indeed many who would feel cheated if they did not receive it from a Christian pastor. He further points out that prayer is used appropriately when the pastor has first spent time in sensitive listening and sharing with the bereaved and when the prayer is shaped so that the genuine hopes and concerns of the bereaved are offered to God. When we pray before we have taken time to listen we are in grave danger of using prayer as a means of reinforcing our hopes and fears and denials or of subtly instructing the bereaved and God as to how we believe the particular death should be mourned.

Some respondents helpfully observed that prayers are not gimmicks or quick fixes and ought not to be used as though they were. The bereaved needs to be aware and strive to accept as normal the emotions of guilt, anger, tears and even depression that often result from bereavement. These emotions persist for longer periods for some people than for others. For a Christian, prayer is a fruit of his trust in the Triune God. It is an acknowledgement of God's enduring love and care. It is a realisation that those in need can cry to and with Jesus, discover his comfort and be confident to say 'I know my Redeemer lives' (Job 19:25).

3.3.4 Sacraments

Sacraments occupy an important part in the life of faith of the members of the Anglican Church of Kenya. Within the Anglican Church of Kenya only two sacraments are observed – baptism

and the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion as instituted by Christ in accordance with Article 25 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of religion (CESA 1992:152). These sacraments form an important basis for healing in bereavement. A sacrament (from Latin *sacramentum* for 'sacred pledge') is a visible sign of an invisible grace, that is to say, that the inward working of God's free mercy is seen by eyes and acknowledged by other outward senses, and as such, the promises of God are sealed in our hearts (CE 1859:353). Sacraments are 'effectual signs of grace' (Bicknell 1955: 13, 352-367). They are effectual only 'on account of Christ's institution and promise' (CESA 1992:153; Article 26 of the Thirty-Nine Articles). Mwaura (2000:89) observes that as symbols of Christ's real presence in the church, sacraments express various aspects of Christ's care and compassion in tangible form. The healing sacraments symbolise Christ as healer *per excellence*.

The experiences within the Anglican Diocese of Butere reinforce sacraments as means of healing grace. Firstly, the church recognises the membership which baptism affords. Family members of those who die before baptism may not benefit from the full involvement of the church community for burial and pastoral care. On the contrary, the church community feels obligated to get involved if one among their number dies. In baptism, one is acknowledged as a member of the body of Christ. As Mwaura (2000:89) notes, baptism symbolises the removal of sin and grants healing grace that destroys sin and wounds of human beings through the mystery of suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-11). The healing wrought by baptism is based on forgiveness and reconciliation between God and humankind.

Secondly, the sacrament of the Holy Communion has particularly been used by the church as a conduit for healing. Willimon (1979:59) records that the early fathers spoke of the Communion as 'medicine for the soul', claiming that special healing and nourishment came through its consumption. Mwaura (2000:90 cf. Williams 1977:17) suggests that the sacrament of the Holy Communion heals through strengthening and nourishing the wounded soul of the repentant. It is a sign of the presence of Christ in the community and it is the centre of the community. Griffin (1978:112-113 cf. Simcox 1960:33) helpfully adds that if the Holy Communion is used sensitively and sensibly, it can speak at a depth that our words rarely reach. In the symbolic act of the Holy Communion, the bereaved are put in touch at one and the same time with God's power and trustworthiness, with their own ambivalence and incompleteness, with the presence of the whole church with them in their loneliness, with mystery made concrete and with eternity expressed in the structures of history. And in all this, they are caught up in the most expressive way in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who empowers them for life and death and new life. In this respect, the Holy Communion is not just a ritual commemoration, but an experience of communion with the living Christ which is the life and power of the church. Bridger and Atkinson (1994:225) acknowledge that there is a link between ritual mourning and

emotional health. Through the use of the Holy Communion as special means of grace through which Christ wished us to remember him, people's anxieties are relieved, and health enhanced.

It is a pastoral practice within the Anglican diocese of Butere to provide sacrament for the sick. Those who are not baptised are baptised if they so desire and more commonly the Holy Communion is conferred on the seriously sick as well as the dying. The Holy Communion is given and received to indicate that physical as well as spiritual healing is desired in this sacrament. It further provides opportunity for prayer, affirmation, conversion and community involvement. Mwaura (2000:89) observes that a communal celebration of the Holy Communion is seen as a way of making Christ's healing ministry real for people today. Through the sacrament the sick person experiences that in all his pain and suffering he is not left alone, but feels comforted and cared for by the community to which he belongs. According to Bridger and Atkinson (1994:226) the Holy Communion is an appropriate context for prayer for healing. This is the service by which, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). There is reference to the past, in commemoration and remembrance, there is a reference anticipating God's future 'until he comes'. There is a shared action in the present, participating together in the tokens of Christ's promised grace.

The sacraments avail healing when used sensitively. As Griffin (1978:113) points out neither sacrament nor prayer nor Scripture is a magic token which automatically produces or ensures a helpful result. Each can be used insensitively as an alternative to genuine sharing with the person and as a device behind which the pastor can hide from the bereaved person and from death itself. The sacrament as a means of healing grace is used appropriately where there is some common awareness of its point and value and this will often mean only after genuine sharing between the pastor and the bereaved. This is made possible if the pastor has from time to time taught and explained the meaning of these means of grace to the parishioners rather than only when they find themselves confronted by bereavement. In other words, teaching should be faithful and ongoing not just limited to catechism classes for confirmation. Louw (1998:383) points out that development of a new perspective and the communication of correct information play an important role in changing a person's view of a matter.

3.3.5 Christian fellowship and mutual help

It is Christ who has called the church into being. The church is therefore a community of faith which is gathered and guided by the Holy Spirit (George 1988:81). Magezi (2006:506) observes that the role of the gathered community of believers in the process of healing is a distinctive character of pastoral care. *Koinonia*, the acts of believers' fellowship – the character of a faith community, implies a healing community. According to Mbogori (2002:246), Christ's 'model' is

the basis of the therapeutic community of faith. Christ is the embodiment of both the symbol and the power which is the enduring presence of God's being in the individual and community. Christ is the key to understanding life, and at the same time, he actualises the eternal destiny of man through his resurrection which is the exemplar to the community. Citing Rumbold in part, Mbogori (2002:255) asserts that the church, as a therapeutic community, is the microcosm of hope in the midst of hopelessness caused by death. In other words, the believers' story with God is the story of their participation in God's community, and their experience in community is the basis of their hope. Clinebell (1984:223) observes that the Christian community provides mutual support for the bereaved as well as an affirmation that helps the bereaved put the loss in the larger context of a life-affirming faith.

The church provides the context and reinforces the vocabulary of healing in bereavement. As Switzer (1970:213-214) observes, the type of context usually provided by the community of believers reinforces the meaning of life in terms which include death. Death is part and parcel of the language of the community of believers. The Christian fellowship supplies the interpersonal reinforcements which contribute to the emotional acceptance of this reality, the opportunity for meaningful areas of commitment, and a person-to-person caring for the dying person and the grief-stricken. The community of believers provides the rituals which gather up and express in verbal form these life commitments, the faith, the hope and the love of those who share a common life style. In the funeral, these verbal expressions aid in the acceptance of the reality of the physical death and expedite the process of mourning through the stimulation of memories of the deceased. The funeral is both the symbol and the reality of the mobilization of the community to sustain those persons in distress as it pushes them along in their grief work.

The principle of *koinonia* took root in the early church. Lambourne (1963:146) notes that the general principle of *koinonia* was visibly demonstrated after Pentecost (Acts 2:41-45). Williams (1977:89) adds that the church as a community of believers has been at the work of bereavement, binding the broken-hearted, for a long time. Through the centuries, the church has gathered to share confession, absolution, song, prayer, word and sacrament and the hope of the risen Christ. As they gather to worship God, believers come with their grief to have it understood by a Lord who triumphed over death. In the fellowship, believers experience the One who suffered for them and is able to rekindle their faith and help them to come through their darkest hours. Carson (1978:102-103) reminds believers that as members of the body of Christ; it is not only their responsibility to give from their strength, but also their privilege to receive in their weakness. In their bereavement, believers need to see their membership within the *koinonia* as a source of help in trouble, rather than merely an occasion for self-reproach.

To be a member of the community of believers is to be responsible for the well being of other

members of the community. As members of a caring community, believers model after God. Pauls writes, 'Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God' (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). The bereaved believers do not pretend about their pain. Instead they weep and have to work through their bereavement, but they get through well because other believers, as they typify the compassionate character of God, care for them. The funeral is an important ritual that enables the community of believers to provide comfort to the bereaved. The believers' compassion typifies Christ's empathy for the distress of others with a desire to eradicate it (Matthew 9:36). Mbogori (2002:177 cf. Oates 1982:59) observes that the support by the community of believers for the bereaved during the funeral is an important therapeutic act. He further argues that there is an affinity in attitudes in regard to the value of a funeral service and the crucial help it brings in focusing on the reality of death. In addition, Wright (2007:219) observes that the funeral service brings about the realisation that there is no reprieve from the cruel fact of death. With this realisation, the long pull of the healing of a desolate heart begins.

The bereaved within this active community of believers often find that they not only share their grief with others, but also help others. This mutual help contributes positively to healing and maturing. In the *koinonia*, those who feel far from God and especially those who may feel that they have lost their faith are held through prayer and encouragement by other believers. It is encouraging for the bereaved to be assured of the prayers by the community of believers; that they are entrusted to God's loving care and healing (Matthew 5:44; 6:9-13; James 5:16; Colossians 3:3; 1 Timothy 2:1-2) (CE 1859:328). Mwaura (2000:91) observes that the church as the body of Christ heals through its charisma such as prayers, liturgy, hymns, affirmation, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. All these essentials for healing are possible due to the example of Jesus in serving and loving. Williams (1977:89) argues that the New Testament defines love in terms of life. To love is to engender life – 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love.... Anyone who does not love remains in death' (1 John 3:14 cf. Galatians 6:2; 1 Peter 4:8). Therefore, the community of faith stands to touch continually our innermost bereaved self with collective support and the offer of renewed life through the goodness in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:9-10). As Griffin (1978:120) points out, within the Christian fellowship, death and its accompanying sadness and loss become not only facts of life, but also occasions for growth.

The importance of Christian fellowship in bereavement healing was emphasised by most of the respondents interviewed. The respondents expressed great appreciation to the visits of and encouragement from Christian brothers and sisters during their bereavement. Members of the Revival Fellowship and the Mothers' Union were especially uplifted by the fellowship accorded

to them by their respective groups.

3.3.6 Hope of resurrection

During this research, it was noted that the most abundant consolation in bereavement found in the Bible is the hope that those who die in Christ will be raised to eternal life with him. This hope is a shared hope among the community of believers. As Louw (2008:561 cf. Mbogori 2002:29) points out, hope in the resurrection determines the quality of growth of faith during mourning grief. The Christian is isolated from all other believers in other creeds on the basis of the belief that Jesus Christ died, as all human beings must, and was bodily raised from the dead. This is the basis of the Christian hope for their resurrection and hope for a post-mortem destiny. The hope of resurrection shapes the attitudes towards death and bereavement in the light of what happened on the cross and the vindication of the raised Christ.

It was noted that the use of resurrection hope ought to be applied sensitively. As Griffin (1978:117) observes, some real sensitivity is needed to know when to reinforce the Christian hope and when to accept that it may need to lie quietly in the background until other elements in the process bereavement have run their course. The Christian hope does not negate the emotions that the bereaved may go through. As Knox (2003:35) affirms, the Christian will shed tears in her bereavement but the tears are never tears of hopelessness, for God's love, care and understanding are not just things preachers talk about; they are realities God gives.

3.4 Critique of the persistence of cultural bereavement healing approaches

Generally, the Abaluyia Christians participate either openly or secretly but consciously or inadvertently and therefore unconsciously in cultural beliefs and practices associated with death and bereavement. Faced with bereavement, therefore, the Abaluyia Christians often lurch back for their traditional beliefs and practices which impact on their healing.

3.4.1 Positive inferences

As Mwaura (2000:73) points out, the continued return to traditional beliefs and practices can only mean that healing as offered in these approaches is relevant and valuable. Many respondents argued that the church ought to reconsider its pastoral role of healing in the light of the African worldview which determines the African's holistic understanding of health. They further observed that there are many positive cultural beliefs and practices which aid healing in bereavement. As such, they decried unsympathetic and careless dismissal of cultural beliefs and practices.

3.4.2 Negative inferences

Among the Abaluyia, some negative beliefs and practices such as *okhwichera* (literally, 'to fit oneself in'), *okhukhalaka amakhoola*, (literally, 'to cut banana fibres'), widow inheritance or remarriage by her husband's brother or other relative and the ritual of property distribution continue albeit sparsely. Many respondents decried the persistence of the retrogressive cultural beliefs and practices which are contrary to biblical teachings or burdensome to the bereaved. They cited greed, lack of proper biblical understanding, fear, pressure from unbelieving family members, pride, unbiblical example, poverty and failure of the church as an alternative healing community for the persistence of cultural beliefs and practices.

3.4.2.1 Greed

Many respondents, especially members of the Revival Fellowship, observed that most of the present day activities at funerals are not only unchristian but they are largely motivated by greed and robbery in the pretext of observing culture. They argued that matters have been made worse by the economic hardships affecting many community members. They cited cases where brothers-in-law rush to remarry a relatively wealthy widow whereas they show no interest where there are no economic gains. They also decried the habit where some people go to funerals to eat and share the deceased's property among themselves instead of helping (*okhutura*) the bereaved as culture stipulates.

3.4.2.2 Ignorance

Perham (1984:134) observes that good teaching about church doctrines strengthen and sustain the mourners long after the funeral. During this research, however, many respondents acknowledged their lack of organised biblical teaching on death, the afterlife and bereavement from the church. They observed that apart from a few sermons, especially at funerals, there was no effort on the part of their pastors to explain the biblical teaching on questions raised by the dying and the bereaved. This deficiency often shows in the misuse of biblical injunctions. For instance, many respondents in favour of cultural practices quoted the Bible out of context in their effort to explain away their practices. They erroneously made reference to Jesus' declaration that he had not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil them as though he was talking about their traditional culture (cf. Matthew 5:17-19). It is argued that these Christians pick and choose Bible verses that are thought not to speak against traditional practices. As a result, they twist, misinterpret and misuse the Bible for their selfish unbiblical practices. One of the respondents argued that the pastors have been compromised because some of these Christians are relatively well off and if the pastors condemn their ways, they will starve for lack of a stipend.

3.4.2.3 Fear

Fear expresses itself in various forms during bereavement among the Abaluyia. Firstly, there is fear linked to the cultural beliefs and practices. The Abaluyia believe that the dead live amongst them and although they are not commonly seen, they are involved in the daily happenings in their family and community. This involvement can be benevolent or malevolent depending on the deceased's relationship with the living. It is believed that if the deceased are not honoured and rituals are neglected, the resultant effect is misfortune, suffering and even death. These dreaded repercussions feed the people's fears and anxieties and informs the persistence of cultural beliefs and practices associated with death and bereavement. It is also believed that the dead listen to the testimonies given about them especially during burial and may punish those who tell lies. As a result of this belief, many people shy from mentioning the deceased person's ills and illness. In addition, the deceased are believed to be able to see acts of kindness or hostility towards or by their surviving loved ones and to respond accordingly either with favour or harm. Secondly, there is the fear of suffering rejection from other family members. Some family members, not necessarily only the non-Christians, are in favour of cultural beliefs and practices related to death and mourning. They, therefore, exert pressure on those who would rather not participate in the cultural practices. Those who do not favour cultural practices are often accused of a holier-than-thou attitude. In addition, as it is often the case, the pressure is backed with financial power. Those without the economic power are often forced to compromise in order to receive the desired financial assistance. The result is often concession in favour of traditional culture. As Magezi (2006:26) observes, 'the pressure to conform to community advice and practices that may be against pastoral or Christian practices is very high. Refusal to conform may cause expulsion from the circle of relationships, which aggravates pain and suffering'. Thirdly, the Christian message as presented by some preachers seems to increase fear of death and judgment among Christians (cf. Gehman 1999: xi). Some of these preachers even pray a miracle of resurrection during funerals. Owuor (2006:2) rightly notes that as a result of the fear of death the Christian faith is compromised through unbiblical practices and erroneous biblical interpretation. Lastly, there is the fear of the unknown. Some Christians participate in cultural practices they do not understand and cannot explain the purpose of the rites. It is clear that they do it just-in-case there is some truth in the cultural beliefs and practices. As one respondent succinctly expressed, it is better to be safe than sorry.

3.4.2.4 Pride

Pride was also cited as a reason for participating in cultural practices. Among the Abaluyia, wealth is seen as a sign that one is in good standing with the ancestors and, to a certain extent, with their neighbours. Wealth, as opposed to poverty, is a source of high ritual and social status, respect and authority. It is important to note that the high ritual status is not a preserve of only a few in the society as those who are wealthy today could be the poor ones tomorrow. In this sense, the Abaluyia have no hard social strata (cf. Wagner 1954:37, 42). From the high status

point of view, funerals are often indicators of the economic standing of the affected family. The mourners are often heard commenting about funerals in economic terms. If all cultural practices are observed and the mourners are well looked after, the family is praised for according the dead 'a warm' send-off. On the other hand, a display of need is seen as disfavour from the ancestors and thus 'a cold' send-off for the deceased. The bereaved, therefore make every effort which include incurring huge debts to put on a display of the so-called 'warm' funeral. Alembi (2002:111) observes that some of the practices displayed are largely hypocritical. For instance, people known to neglect their parents and relatives often turn up with new clothes, bed, mattress and linen for the dead when the deceased never had such comfort in life. They are motivated to engage in this futile hypocritical show-off because it earns them respect and honour in the community.

3.4.2.5 Poor example

Compromise to societal pressure was also blamed on unbiblical example from some Christian leaders especially pastors. It is clear that some Christians participate in cultural practices related to death and bereavement purely because of the example of their Christian leaders. The syllogism is simple: so-and-so is a leading Christian and since he has carried out a certain cultural practice, therefore the cultural practice is acceptable or at least tolerable for other Christians. Many respondents observed that pastors have arguably the highest bearing for such influence. It was noticed to be the case that if a pastor is known to participate in certain cultural practices then his moral authority to teach against the practice is compromised. There is no advice without example.

3.4.2.6 Lack of alternatives biblical rituals

It emerged that persistence in cultural beliefs and practices in mourning also reflects lack of an alternative option. People do not know anything better to replace the suspect cultural practices. Therefore, the church has a duty not only to offer pastoral care for the bereaved and to teach believers why certain cultural beliefs and practices are forbidden but also to provide alternative biblical rituals (cf. Anderson 1977:102). The alternative rituals will help to avoid a feeling of guilt by the bereaved for not performing the traditional rituals (cf. Mwaura 2000:96).

3.4.2.7 Contradictory teachings

The lack of care and teaching has been made worse by contradictory teachings from different denominations or Christian groups which exist within the community. It was observed that many African Instituted Churches and a section of Christians within the mission churches indiscriminately condone cultural beliefs and practices in spite the fact that some that are clearly contrary to biblical teaching. They pointed out the memorial service (*lisabo*) which is condoned by many Abaluyia Christians despite the traditional ritual sacrifices associated with it. The memorial service (*lisabo*) is the single most important remembrance ceremony for deceased

family members among the Abaluyia.

Commemoration gestures are common in churches within the diocese of Butere. These include holding memorial services by the graveside often three days after burial and about one year, or whenever the family of the bereaved desire it. Some families use the opportunity for a memorial service to cement, put fresh paint or a cross on the grave. Before burial, vigils are held by the church to support the bereaved. During vigils held following a death in the community as well as during the funeral service, relatives and friends remember the deceased in their eulogies. They talk about the good and not so good moments they had with the deceased. Most importantly, they often conclude their eulogies by repenting of any thought or practice especially harbouring bitterness towards the deceased or any other person. Although it was reported that giving eulogy was found helpful in coping with bereavement, yet addresses to the dead are suspect.

During the main memorial service (*lisabo*), the church holds a service and engages in prayer to give thanks for the life of the deceased and to remind those present of their own transience and the need to live accordingly, singing, proclamation of the gospel and feasting. Apart from the Christianisation of the memorial service, many see a continuity of the all-important cultural remembrance ceremonies (*emiyimo*). For the feast, many respondents reported to have killed a bull or cow in the traditional way insisting that this killing was void of the traditional connotations of it being a sacrifice to appease the dead. It is, however, for this ritual connotation that some respondents, especially Revival Brethren, shy away from all memorial services. The church also remembers her dead members by mentioning the name of the deceased in the Christian community during corporate prayers where the deceased is seen and placed within the context of the hope of resurrection.

3.4.2.8 Poor prioritisation

It also emerged that the church needs to re-examine her priorities and revitalise her pastoral care ministry if she is to be an alternative community of carers. Some respondents argued that most of the church leaders are concerned more with money matters at the expense of genuine pastoral care and faithful biblical exposition. Pastoral visits are widely seen as diocesan quota collection patrols rather than pastoral ministry for the care of those who grieve.

3.4.2.9 Stigmatisation

Other respondents argued that the church greatly sidelines the surviving spouses especially the widows. Their gifting and desire to use these gifts in church is often spitefully ignored. For instance, a young widow at a local church was refused a chance as a children and women worker. The reason given for the refusal was not her incompetence but her widowhood. It was argued that as a young widow she could be easily tempted and thus bring the church ministry into disrepute. This reason was found wanting by many church members who said that the

young woman had kept her integrity and purity for over seven years since she lost her husband. They felt that the church leadership should have allowed her to serve and guided her accordingly. The said widow felt dejected and humiliated following this incident. Some widows also mentioned similar suspicion from some Mothers' Union workers. In one case, it took the intervention of the local pastor for a widow to be enrolled as an MU member. The Mothers' Union worker in refusing her admission had argued that she was using widowhood as a shortcut to becoming a member of the organisation where ordinarily only women who have been married in church are admitted (cf. Wild-Wood 2008:42). The MU worker's statement was interpreted by the respondent as being hurtful and unhelpful to the healing of the bereaved.

3.5 Meta-theoretical findings on current ecclesiastical bereavement healing approaches

This chapter highlights the existing praxis. Its focus is on how the Abaluyia Christians within the Anglican Diocese of Butere currently seek or are helped to cope in their bereavement by death. It was noted that none of the respondents reported to have accessed a professional counsellor. In the absence of professional counselling and reliable government sponsored medical services, the Abaluyia Christian rely almost entirely on cultural practices and pastoral care when faced with bereavement through death. It emerged that various approaches are employed by different Christian groups in their endeavour to come to terms with the occurrence of death and bereavement. The following meta-theoretical elements can be distinguishable:

3.5.1 God as personal and immanent

3.5.2 Encouragement from the Bible

3.5.3 Efficacy of prayer

3.5.4 Grace of the sacraments

3.5.5 Fellowship and mutual help of believers

3.5.6 The hope of resurrection

3.5.7 Medical means

3.5.8 Cultural sensitivity (liturgical inculturation)

3.5.9 Social concern

3.5.9 Pastor as lead carer

In spite of the reported efficacy afforded by the aforementioned, the empirical findings also brought to the fore the challenges that constrain the effectiveness of these means. It emerged, for instance, that the early missionaries' largely negative attitude towards cultural beliefs and practices often led to a dialectic approach in biblical interpretation which does not lend itself to a sympathetic view of the cultural beliefs and practices. The dialectic approach presumes an

insurmountable gap between biblical normative truths and cultural beliefs and practices. This view largely informs the Revival Brethren's approach to death and bereavement. From this viewpoint, the persistence of cultural beliefs and practices related to death are explained away as emanating from greed, fear, ignorance, pride, compromise and syncretism, poor example from Christian leaders especially pastors and failure on the part of the local congregations to provide acceptable alternative rituals. Furthermore, it emerged that there are certain practices that hinder healing in bereavement and thus inhibit Christian maturity. In particular, there is rampant lack of organised biblical instruction on death, afterlife and bereavement. In reference to the Abaluyia culture, it is imperative that those beliefs and practices that are contrary to the Bible or hinder healing in bereavement ought to be transformed or replaced. In the following two chapters, focus is put on the analysis of biblical understanding of death, afterlife and bereavement as normative to Christian pastoral care.

Chapter 4: The concept of death, afterlife and bereavement within a biblical framework

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, basis-theoretical principles are formulated from the Bible. In this endeavour, the concept of death and afterlife in the Bible are explored and pertinent biblical passages on bereavement analysed with a view to draw biblical paradigms for bereavement healing. The analysis is done according to the systematic and historical-grammatical methods of exegesis. Because the Bible does not present a step-by-step procedure for bereavement healing, Janzen (1994:1) suggests the use of paradigmatic approach whereby a study of pertinent biblical passages is used to draw paradigms and conclusions. He argues that this approach helps the researcher to avoid a reductionist use of biblical texts. In addition, Hays (1996:209, 300) explains that because the biblical text is inextricably bound to its context, the hermeneutic employed must value rather than denigrate the particularity of the biblical texts.

Biblical principles form an important basis for the formulation of an integrated pastoral model for bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. In addressing bereavement among Abaluyia Christians, some of whom may not know what the Bible teaches, certain issues ought to be clarified. The clarification is necessitated by the fact that their cultural worldview may be at variance with biblical teaching. The issues include the biblical understanding of the concept of death, the state and residence of the dead (afterlife), the relationship between the living and the dead, that is, whether or not the dead have power over the living. In addition, who avenges for offended deceased persons or their victims? In the light of biblical teachings on death and afterlife, what biblical principles could be embraced in order to engender bereavement healing? Magezi (2006:517) points to the necessity of this inquiry arguing that for pastoral healing to be effective, a biblical worldview or understanding should be in place.

In this section a thematic approach to biblical analysis is adopted. This is largely because the Bible itself does not sequentially deal with the concepts of death, afterlife and bereavement. Instead, these concepts are woven throughout the entire Bible, being clearer in some passages than in others. The motivating theoretical assumption in this section is that an individual's faith and certainty in the biblical teaching on the concepts of death and afterlife helps immensely in the process of healing during bereavement. As Knox (2003:55) points out, a right attitude towards death and afterlife is crucial in one's handling of bereavement. Mbogori (2002:173) concurs arguing that the churches' teaching on death and the hereafter is helpful in preparing the bereaved to face the death of the deceased. The element of bereavement healing is addressed in the following chapter where further basis theoretical principles are analysed.

The biblical analysis here not only takes cognoscente of the contextual pre-Christian concepts in the ancient Near East cultures which inform the particular biblical texts, but also the contemporary reading by the Abaluyia. This is deemed necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the Christian belief and practice did not grow in a void but rather developed within the first-century Near East cultures. Consequently, Christianity was markedly influenced primarily by the Jewish culture but also by the neighbouring cultures. Writing on the supremacy of Mesopotamia as the cradle of civilization, for instance, Kramer (1969:160) observes that Mesopotamia's rich complex of ritual and myth, evolved three thousand years before the birth of Christ, profoundly affected Judaism and Christianity. Albright (1957:23) argues that the Bible is deeply indebted to the world in which it arose. The Old Testament arose in a world of Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures, and streams of influence from the entire civilised world of that day were to pour into it and to be transformed by the faith of Moses and the prophets. The New Testament, on the other hand, arose in a Jewish environment which had been enriched by Hellenistic and Iranian elements. The non-Jewish streams which flowed through Judaism into nascent Christianity were transfigured by the cross and given a spiritual depth which was to transform the world. Similarly, Mbogori (2002:3) points out that our mourning patterns are borne from generations past which influence contemporary social habits and attitudes. However, a study of the ancient cultures reveals the novelty of the Christian belief and practice in spite of the supposed influences. As Mbogori (2002:61) observes, each generation rediscovers the meaning of death and dying anew. The psyche is under threat of disintegration when this exercise is not achieved to the fullest. It is evident, therefore, that the Israelites stand apart from their neighbours. Secondly, it is important to note that a peoples' reading of Scripture is often informed by their worldview. This in turn impacts what they take from their reading and therefore what may be adequately used to aid in their bereavement. As far as possible, the exegesis points out any particular reading of the biblical text by the Abaluyia.

In the Protestant tradition, the Bible (Gk *biblos* for 'books') is a library of 66 canonical books. For the Christian, the entire Bible, which is the word of God written, is definitive. However, the ultimate basis of the Christian approach to death, bereavement and the afterlife has to be found in the life and teachings of the Jesus Christ who is 'at once the centre and the Lord of the Bible' (George 1988:83).

4.2 Old Testament view of death and afterlife

The Old Testament presents various views and attitudes about death and afterlife. It is important to note from the onset that the views and attitudes developed gradually over many years and in a variety of socio-economic contexts of the Jews. In the Old Testament various expressions are

used for the concept of death and dying. Dying is 'like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered' (2 Samuel 14:14). Other expressions death including being 'no more', taken by God (Genesis 5:24), wiped 'from the face of the earth', (Genesis 6:7), breathing his or her last, being gathered to one's people (Genesis 35:29), going to the pit, descending to *Sheol* or going to 'the place of no return' (Job 10:21).

4.2.1 Death in the context of life

In spite of the various periods and contexts of the Old Testament, death is appropriately understood in the context of life (Anderson 1986:38). For the Jews, human existence is understood entirely within the realm of Yahweh who is the creator and the source of life. Johnston (2002:39) observes that name 'Yahweh' comes from the verb *h-y-h* 'to be' which is understood in Hebrew text as related to 'being', notably in the account of its revelation to Moses: 'I am who I am' (Exodus 3:14). Essentially, Yahweh is life and gives life. Life and death ultimately lie within the dominion of God. Therefore, death, like life, is an act of God (Genesis 2:7; 6:7; Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20; 32:39; Job 12:10; 14:5; 16:7; Psalms 36:9; 68:20; 139:16). It is this radically different relationship between Yahweh and his people that made Israel's understanding of life and death unique among her neighbours. Pickle (1988:7 cf. Mbogori 2002:10-12; Anderson 1986:38) points out that in the abundant presence of death, the Jews affirmed the goodness of life which was understood as a gift of God. Life is thus affirmed in terms of the living God who is its fountain.

4.2.2 Death as whole

In the Old Testament, death is not demarcated as either physical or spiritual. As Morris (1996:265 cf. De Vaux 1961:56; Mbogori 2002:12) observes, the Old Testament does not put a sharp demarcation between physical and spiritual conception of death. Death involves the whole person in the totality of his or her being. The human being is approached wholesomely and as such allowance ought to be made for metaphorical use of language in relation to the concept of death. In the Jewish thought a person was understood as a whole rather than as a composite of body and soul.

4.2.3 Death as a natural limitation of life

The dominant view in the Old Testament is that death is the natural end of human life, a part of the human normal order. From this viewpoint, human life, like that of other earthly creatures, ultimately ends in death; 'the way of all the earth' (Genesis 15:15; 35:29; Joshua 23:14; Judges 8:32; 1 Kings 2:2; 1 Chronicles 23:1; 29:28; 2 Chronicles 24:15; Job 5:26; 7:21; 14:1-2; 30:23; 42:17). All human beings come from dust, and to dust they all return (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Psalm

90:3; 103:14b; Ecclesiastes 3:20). They are like grass which dry and wither (Psalm 90:5; Isaiah 40:6-8). Death is thus the complete end of existence without much contemplation about what follows after it. For 'Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die' (2 Samuel 14:14 cf. Job 7:21; Psalm 39:13; Ecclesiastes 9:10). Death was perceived as the eternal end of all existence – they will 'sleep for ever and not wake up' (Jeremiah 51:39, 57) (Jacob 1962:803). Johnston (2002:41) observes that God's announcement in Genesis 2:7 implies that human beings are naturally mortal. Pickle (1988:9) argues that the limitation of life by death has been given by God. The nature of the material human body means that mortality is a condition of life. Physical death is thus a given experience, a reality of human nature.

The view of death as a natural limitation of life has been a subject of protracted debates among Christian theologians for a long time. Traditional Christian thought holds that Adam was created with an immortal nature prior to sin. This view was popularised by theologians such as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas and Calvin (Pickle 1988:9-10). From this point of view, death cannot be limited to the physical realm. According to Morris (1996:265), the fact that Adam and Eve did not die physically on the day they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil indicates that the death that is the result of their disobedience is more than bodily death. He therefore argues that perhaps mortality was the result of Adam's sin, and that the penalty of death includes both physical and spiritual aspects. But we do not know enough about Adam's pre-fallen condition to be dogmatic. If his body was like ours, then it was mortal. If it was not, we have no means of knowing whether it was mortal or not. Johnston (2002: 41, 43) argues that the account of God's response to humans' disobedience recorded in Genesis 3:22 portrays human immortality as a potential rather than actual and ends with human death as certain due to human sin. He further points out a link between sin and death in Psalm 90. Jacob (1962:802-803) adds that Genesis 2-3 attempts to resolve the problem of the relationship of sin and death: since human beings are created of perishable matter, their natural condition is mortality – 'By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return' (Genesis 3:19). Sin irremediably destroyed the possibility of immortality, and thenceforth death, which until sin was committed had been virtual, became an actuality for human beings. Sin, however, is not viewed as a fatality hanging over human beings who remain free and capable of choice. If one chooses disobedience, he takes the way leading to death (Deuteronomy 30:19). On the other hand, the mortal nature of human beings creates in them a propensity for evil (Psalms 78:39; 103:10; 143:2; Isaiah 57:16), so that death may be called at once a consequence and a source of sin. Tillich (1957:67) sought to correct the traditional view arguing that 'Sin does not produce death but gives to death the power which is conquered only in participation with the eternal'. Rahner (1961:15 cf. Pickle 1988:10, 12), a Roman Catholic theologian, also offers a modification of the traditional view. He suggests that the universality of death in divine revelation is not ultimately

based on a biological necessity. Because all people are sinners, all people will die. From the traditional viewpoint, the kind of death which was experienced in the disobedient act was spiritual death.

4.2.4 Death as divine punishment

Death is a consequence of divine judgment. The biblical concept of death is introduced by God the Creator when he declares that if Adam ate from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' he would 'surely die' (Genesis 2:17). Consequently, Adam disobeyed and had to die. God sent them out of the Garden of Eden saying 'dust you are, and to dust you shall return' (Genesis 3:19). Death is thus an act of punishment from God in response to the sin of Adam and Eve. The consequences play out in reality shortly in the death of Abel by the hand of his brother Cain (Genesis 4:8). Jacob (1962:803) suggests that the link between sin and death has sometimes been unduly rigid. God controls and employs the forces of death to punish those who voluntarily turn from him and thus Yahweh dispenses the opposing powers of life and death – dualist monism (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Isaiah 45:7). He uses the forces of death to serve his holy will (Hosea 13:14). Mbogori (2002:12) observes that God permits and uses the power of death because sin renders such use inevitable. In the Old Testament death was often thought to be a punishment for something done or left undone. More particularly, a death in the early years, in the prime of life, or under exceptionally distressing circumstances was often regarded as a judgment upon sin (Job 16:7).

It is not, however, unknown to the Old Testament writers that humans are not just a body. From this understanding, Jacob (1962:802) argues, the Old Testament presents death as lifelessness. In other words, death occurs when *nephesh* (the breath of life) stops or is taken away by God, its giver (Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Jeremiah 15:9; Jonah 4:3). The 'departure' of life (*nephesh*) does not imply that *nephesh* continue to exist independently of the body, but dies with it (Judges 16:30; Ezekiel 13:19). Death is thus the opposite of life. The *ruakh* 'spirit', which makes humans living beings (Genesis 2:7), is not an anthropological reality, but a gift of God which returns to him at the time of death – 'the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it' (Ecclesiastes 12:7). This departs from the traditional Catholic description of death as a separation of body and soul which is not explicitly contained in the Old Testament (cf. Rahner 1961:16).

However, the Old Testament eschatology has no concept of judgment or punishment after death (Johnston 2002:73). Johnston (2002:237) further argues that, it is disputable to see post-mortem judgment in Job 31:6 (cf. Tromp 1969:22) as the context implies present punishment (cf. Proverb 16:2; 21:2; 24:12). Additionally, the text does not comment on the punishment or

destruction of the wicked. These issues may be the logical consequence of the differentiated fates noted obliquely in Isaiah 26 and directly in Daniel 12, but they were not developed in the canonical texts. The 'shame and everlasting contempt' of Daniel 12:2 remains unexplained and undeveloped.

4.2.5 Death as undesirable

The Old Testament often presents death as 'bad' and undesirable. Certain circumstances rendered a death 'bad' and thus more difficult to bear. First, death was considered bad when premature (Ecclesiastes 7:17; Job 1:19-20; Isaiah 38:10). Normal life span is given as 120 years (Genesis 6:3) and 70 years or 80 'if we have the strength' (Psalm 90:10). Wolff cited by Jacob (1962:802 cf. Pickle 1988:13; Johnston 2002:27, 41; Mbogori 2002:10), observes that the Chronicle of the king of Judah provides 44 years as an average life span). Second, if the deceased has no surviving heirs to carry on the memory of his name (2 Samuel 18:18). Third, death that involved a violent experience such as shedding of innocent blood. Life is said to be in the blood – 'But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat' (Deuteronomy 12:23). Lastly, the dead had to be buried properly in a sepulchre in order to avoid any possibility of the deceased taking revenge and upsetting the equilibrium between the world of the living and that of the dead.

Death is more commonly presented as an enemy (Psalm 18:4-5; 49:14; 55:4; Ecclesiastes 7:26; Proverbs 30:15-16; Hosea 13:4; Habakkuk 2:5). In Job 18:14, death is personified as 'the king of terror' (cf. Job 5:7). This reference may be related to a mythological understanding of death among Israel's neighbours. Johnston (2002:29, 30-31) notes that in Mesopotamia, Namtar, the god of plague and vizier of the underworld, was perhaps the firstborn son of its queen, Ereshkigal. As an enemy, death is a source of hopelessness (Job 17:13-16). It was also evoked as an irresistible intruder who captures even the children and the young adults (Jeremiah 9:21 cf. 2 Samuel 12:23; 14:14; Job 10:21; 14:11-12; Ecclesiastes 7:2f.). Isaiah disparaged Israelites attempts to allay death's attack (Isaiah 28:15, 18) possible by including *m-w-t* for 'death' in names as a homage to death (1 Chronicles 6:25; 8:36; 9:42; 2 Samuel 12:3; 23:31; 27:25).

4.2.6 Death as rest

Contrary to the view of death as an undesirable enemy, the Old Testament also presents death as a welcome rest (cf. Johnston 2002:33). This is especially the case when the deceased dies at 'a good old age' having enjoyed a long, happy and fulfilled life (Genesis 15:15; 25:8; Numbers 23:10; Judges 8:32; 1 Chronicles 29:28; Job 5:26; 14:12; Ecclesiastes 3:2). Death provides rest from the harshness of this life (Job 3:13, 17-22; Psalm 13:3) and is provides good riddance of the wicked (Psalm 49:14, 19; Ezekiel 32:22-30). In addition, death makes reunion possible. The

deceased, especially patriarchs, are described as being gathered to others who died before them (Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Numbers 20:24; 27:13; 31:2; Deuteronomy 32:50) or they, mostly kings, are said to have 'slept with his fathers'. However, there is no sense of meaningful interaction or happy reunion among the dead in the Old Testament.

4.2.7 Death as a cause of ritual impurity

Death is viewed as a cause of impurity. Following one's death and thus separation from the living, any contact with the dead body, human bone, grave or other things related to the dead, or occupying a tent where there is a dead body causes impurity and must be strictly avoided. Any inevitable contact must be followed with purification (Numbers 9:6; 19:11, 16, 18; 31:19). According to Martin-Archard cited in Mbogori (2002:13), a strict code of taboos regulated the funerary ceremonies, 'in order to prevent the power of the dead, his "*mana*", from spreading and contaminating the clan or the whole people; thus whatever has been in contact with the dead must be put away or destroyed'. No reason is, however, given for the uncleanness of death. Johnston (2002:44f.) plausibly suggests that it may be linked to the understanding of Yahweh as the God of life. Jacob (1962:802) observes that this mystery surrounding death was a source of certain popular beliefs attributing superior power and knowledge to the dead.

4.2.8 Death as separation

Death brings about separation of individuals but most importantly, it cuts off one from Yahweh. In the ancient world, which Israel was a part of, the cosmos was understood as being three-tiered with the heaven (above) for the gods, the earth (in the middle) for humans and the underworld (below) for the dead and fertility deities or demons (Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 11:8; 17:16; Psalm 139:8; Isaiah 7:11; 14:11; Ezekiel 32:18-32; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:5). The underworld, *Sheol*, was of no particular importance. It was associated with worms and maggots (Isaiah 14:11), darkness and inactivity (Job 3:13-19; 10:21; Psalms 88:6, 12; 94:17; 115:17; 143:3). Jacob (1962:802) points out that existence in *Sheol*, the place of the dead, was presented as being non-dynamic and destined to end in a relatively brief period. It is the region where praise of God is impossible (Isaiah 38:18), the recollection of God has been annihilated (Psalms 6:5-6; 10, 11, 12; 28:1; 30:9, 10; 88:5, 12; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18), a place of no return (Job 16:22 cf. Isaiah 38:10; Jonah 2:6; Psalms 18:5; 116:3) fitting for those who forget God (Psalm 9:17; 31:17; 55:15), dreaded by the righteous (Psalm 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13) and a place where one falls into the hands of other powers other than Yahweh. Hezekiah, King of Judah, staring death in the face, laments to God 'the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise, those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living – they praise you (Isaiah 38:18-19). 'The living' here refers to those who have not yet died; they who have died miserably exist in *Sheol*, beyond the reach of God's goodness (Simcox

1960:11). As Jacob (1962:803 cf. Johnston 2002:69-75) explains, the concept of separation from Yahweh by death is best understood in the light of dualist monism whereby the power of Yahweh extends to *Sheol* – ‘Though they dig down to the depths of the grave, from there my hand will take them’ (Amos 9:2 cf. Job 11:8; 26:5; Psalm 139:7-8; Proverbs 15:11; Isaiah 7:11). Because death is God’s enemy, it separates us from God who is Life and the Creator of all life (Cullmann 1958:24). This view of death permeates almost all of the Old Testament.

4.2.9 Death as caused by hostile powers

Death is thought of as being meted out by a destructive and hostile power. This power was not initially considered to be the power of Yahweh, since he is at various times asked to snatch his followers from the hand, the prison or the net of death. As the Psalmist laments, ‘The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: “O Lord, save me!”’ (Psalm 116:3-4; cf. Psalm 18:6) Jacob (1962:802) suggests that this view may be reminiscent of a period when belief in a kingdom of the dead ruled perhaps by the divinities of *Sheol* or *Mot* was rife. These divinities are later understood as mere images (Jeremiah 9:21) or inferior powers, angels of death or demons (Exodus 12:23; 2 Samuel 24:16; Job 33:22; Psalm 91:5ff).

4.2.10 Death as taboo

Johnston (2002:35-37 cf. Mbogori 2002:12-13) observes that death by human sacrifice, common among Israel’s neighbours especially the Canaanites, was abhorred and fiercely condemned in Israel (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:9-14; 32:17; 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Psalm 106:34-40; Jeremiah 32:35). The incident in Genesis 22 where Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son Isaac was a unique test of faith which does not undermine Israel’s abhorrence of the practice. Israelites undoubtedly grappled with the prevailing multifarious attitudes towards death (cf. Leviticus 27:29). Ultimately, however, all the heathen practices were declared incompatible with the worship of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 14:1; Jeremiah 16:6; Ezekiel 24:17; Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:14).

Death by committing suicide was also abhorred in Israel. Although there are people who wish to die, yet it is not reported that they contemplated suicide (1 Kings 19:4; Job 7:15; Jonah 4:3; Ecclesiastes 9:4). The Old Testament records a few cases of death by suicide. However, the small number of suicide cases – Saul, Ahithophel and Zimri, occurs only in contexts of military disaster (Judges 9:53; 16:29-30; 1 Samuel 31:3-4; 2 Samuel 17:23; 1 Kings 16:18). For the Israelites, life, which found its source in Yahweh, was of supreme importance and was to be honoured rather than scorned (Johnston 2002:38; Morris 1996:265).

4.2.11 Death as capital punishment

Death penalty is upheld in the Old Testament (Johnston 2002:42-43). In Israel, the death penalty was particularly required for deliberate murder as such an act was in direct contravention of the Lord's command, 'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13). 'Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death...if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death' (Exodus 21:12, 14). God had made a similar covenant with Noah stipulating that "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 9:6). Human life is uniquely important because it bears the image of God. The deliberate killing of another human being was deemed to be an attempted, though futile, affront against God himself in whose image human beings are made.

Those who killed unintentionally were to flee to 'the city of refuge' and thus escape the wrath of the 'avenger of blood' (Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:8-34). According to the system of blood vengeance, the avenger of blood was a relative who would kill a person who killed his kin in spite of whether the first killing was intentional or accidental. However, this law forbidding the killing of those who fled and remained in the city of refuge protected those who caused accidental deaths. However, those who killed deliberately and then escaped to a city of refuge would be brought back to the city in which murder had been committed and put to death (Deuteronomy 19:11-13 cf. 13:9).

Furthermore, death penalty was prescribed for offenses that do not involve homicide. These offenses include not only false witness in capital cases (Deuteronomy 19:16-21 cf. Numbers 35:30), but also blasphemy (Leviticus 24:14-23), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), and even insubordination to parents and to God's Law (Exodus 21:15, 17; 30:1-31:18). Stuart (2006:485) observes that in Israel, intentional homicide was punished by the juridical death of the murderer without exemption by reason of class or status or gender or age. This represents a quantum leap in fairness over the prevailing attitudes in all societies outside of Israel. These laws protected the sanctity of human life.

4.2.12 Necromancy in Israel

Necromancy, the practice of consulting the dead, was prohibited in Israel (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 1 Samuel 28:9; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3; 29:4). However, the practice of necromancy is noted among Israelites. The incidence at Endor, Saul, through a medium, successfully consulted with Samuel who was then deceased and buried in Ramah. Samuel is recorded to have indeed appeared from the dead and proclaimed judgment against Saul. This judgment is fulfilled as pronounced the next day (1 Samuel 28; 31:4).

Johnston (2002:166, 168) argues that this account confirms that necromancy was not only highly illegal but also highly effective. This case is unique because the necromancy was undertaken to gain knowledge rather than to secure favours from the dead as would otherwise be the case. In spite of the ban, Isaiah points out necromancy as one of Israel's sin (Isaiah 8:19).

According to Brueggemann (1990:196 cf. Johnston 2002:170, 194f.; Evans 2004:152), the narrative about the appearance of Samuel is thoroughly Yahwistic with no real interest in the summoning of the spirit or in the role and capacity of the medium but invites reflection on the vocation of royal power in a context where God's singular power will not be mocked. God exceptionally allowed it in order to reiterate the message of final judgment to the disobedient king. Honouring the dead or any other communion with them was incompatible to the worship of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 26:14; Jeremiah 16:5-9; 27:9; Ezekiel 8:7-12; Psalms 23:5; 133). Yahweh alone gives and sustains life and while practices such as grave offerings may have occurred, they were of marginal importance and not inimical to Yahwism. For the Israelites, therefore, life occurrences were to be interpreted in light of their covenantal relationship with Yahweh.

Israelites were concerned more with the living than the dead. Jacob (1962:803) makes reference to two passages in the Old Testament where the designation '*elohim*' is given to the dead (1 Samuel 28:3; Isaiah 8:19). He observes that these passages do not express an authentically Yahwist belief. Similarly, attributing to the dead superior knowledge of the power to cure illness (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:11; 1 Samuel 28:3, 9) is not in line with true Israelitic doctrine, even if this idea was much in favour at certain periods. General opinion held that 'a living dog is better than a dead lion' (Ecclesiastes 9:4), and the hope of resurrection had as a corollary the horror inspired by death. Burns cited by Johnston (2002:166), observes that it is not suggested anywhere in the Old Testament that the dead have power to harm the living. On the contrary, the Old Testament displays little interest in the fate of the dead and certainly no fear of them.

4.2.13 Rays of eschatological hope

In the dominant shadow of death presented in the Old Testament, there are rays of eschatological hope. As Johnston (2002:238) points out, Yahweh's proclaimed power to renew life, occasional experience of the renewal in life and vision (Ezekiel 37:9f. cf. Genesis 2:7), his authority over the underworld (Psalm 139:8; Amos 9:2; Job 26:6) and the desire for unending communion with him (Psalms 16; 49; 73) all contributed to the development of Israelite belief in resurrection. The view of death was continuously modified such that in post-exilic period

references are no longer made to the wretchedness of the inhabitants of realm of the dead, doomed to nourish themselves on dust. Instead, texts refer to death as sleep (Job 14:10-12; Psalms 3:5; 90:5; Isaiah 26:19; Jeremiah 51:39, 57), to a lessening of the power of death and even of its ultimate disappearance (Isaiah 25:6-10). This discordant line of thought contributed to a later development of the belief in resurrection of the dead 'at the time of the end' (Daniel 12:2). The imagery presupposes a concept of individual resurrection (Isaiah 26:19) (Jacob 1962:803; Johnston 2002:47). It is also resurrection of both righteous and wicked, to eternal life and eternal contempt respectively (Johnston 2002:224f.). Wright (2007:7) points out that the Orthodox Jew believes that all the righteous will be raised to new individual bodily life in the resurrection. This belief on death and the hereafter was informed by their relationship with Yahweh. It was, however, variously modified as through their contacts with their neighbouring peoples. As Johnston (2002:227, 238) observes, the concept of individual resurrection remained marginal to Old Testament belief. In addition, the resurrection envisaged is not a general one of all humans, but focuses on the Jewish people, and probably one generation among them. The belief of individual resurrection emerged as distinctly Israelite. Johnston (2002:239) helpfully concludes that in this strain of hope of resurrection lay the basis for the resolution of the dilemma of *Sheol*, a response to the yearning for some form of continued communion with God and a breakthrough to maintain faith in traumatic times.

4.2.14 Mourning practices in Israel

The Old Testament gives only sparse information on funeral customs (Johnston 2002:50-54). However, it is clear that normally, the disposal of the body was by burial shortly after death and nearly always in the family land (Genesis 23; Deuteronomy 21:23; Joshua 24:30, 33; Judges 8:32; 10:1-2; 12:7-15; 16:31; 2 Samuel 2:32; 17:23; 19:37; 1 Kings 13:22; Ecclesiastes 6:3). Exposure or non-burial and exhumation were abhorred as was cremation – death by burning was reserved for the worst crimes (Deuteronomy 21:22-23; 28:25-26; Joshua 8:1, 29; 10:26-27; 2 Samuel 4:12; 1 Kings 14:10-11; 16:4; 2 Kings 9:37; Jeremiah 7:33; 22:19; Ezekiel 29:6; 39:4). There is no evidence of petitioning at the grave. Johnston (2002:51) notes that whatever the Israelites' customs at death, religious rites either did not occur or were of such minimal importance that they have left no trace in the Old Testament.

In spite of the Old Testament dominant concept of death as an act of God and thus the natural end of life, death elicited a profound response of deep anguish for the bereaved. Job's lamentation following the deaths of his children aptly capture the anguish of bereavement in the Old Testament, 'My eyes have grown dim with grief; my whole frame is but a shadow' (Job 17:7 cf. Genesis 23:2; 24:67; 37:35; 50:10; Lamentations 3:20; Psalm 6:6; Ruth 5:1-5; 1 Samuel 15:35 and 2 Kings 20:5).

In common with other people groups in the Near East, the Israelites mourn their dead (Mbogori 2002:12; Johnston 2002:47-50; Rooker 2000:159; Hartley 1988:77). In fact, they had elaborate ceremonial mourning for the dead (Genesis 30:3-10; 2 Samuel 1:17-27). Informed by their belief system, the customary mourning for the dead was often accompanied with weeping, wailing, beating the breast and tearing the clothes (2 Samuel 3:31; Isaiah 22:12; Ezekiel 27:29-32; Joel 1:13; 2:12-13). Other gestures of mourning and grief included wearing sackcloth or other distinctive clothes, shaving their head or the edges of their beard, covering themselves with dust, uncovering or disheveling their hair, walking barefoot, fasting or taking a funeral meal (Genesis 37:34-35; 38:11, 14; 1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:11-12; 3:35-37; 12:20-21; 13:31; 14:2, 6-7; Jeremiah 4:8; 7:29; Ezekiel 7:18; 24:17, 22; 27:30-32; Micah 1:16).

Some mourning practices, common in the Near East, were forbidden in Israel. For instance, the Israelites were forbidden from cutting a bald spot on the head by plucking or tearing out of hair, that is, lacerating the skull or mutilating themselves by making cuts on their bodies as a sign of mourning (Leviticus 19:27-28; 21:5; Deuteronomy 14:1). However, some of these forbidden practices are noted in Israel (Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 16:6; 41:5 cf. Isaiah 15:2-3; Jeremiah 47:5; 48:37; Ezekiel 27:30-32).

In Jeremiah's prophecy, a day of mourning is used to describe the looming judgment that would certainly befall the unrepentant Israel (Jeremiah 16:3-7). In the prophecy various practices associated with mourning can be deduced. Death was followed by a funerary gathering, mourning and burial (16:4). Community members visited the bereaved in order to show their sympathy and to condole with them (16:5). Weeping was often accompanied by lacerating oneself for the dead and shaving the head (16:6). A funeral meal and drink were offered to comfort and console the mourners (16:5, 7). There is also evidence of professional mourners for hire (Jeremiah 9:17-18; Amos 5:16; 2 Chronicles 35:25; Ecclesiastes 12:5) and poetic laments written after notable death (2 Samuel 1; 2 Chronicles 35:25).

4.2.15 Summary

In the Old Testament the concepts of death and the afterlife are understood in the context of life. Yahweh is the source of all life and human beings live and die because the Lord in his sovereignty allows. More importantly, however, the Israelites were concerned more with the living. From this viewpoint, death is the opposite of life. Whereas life is being, death is not being. It is the natural limitation to life. In the Old Testament dominant understanding, there is no hard demarcation between physical and spiritual death. Death is simultaneously physical and spiritual. As such, death is more than bodily death. Death is a punishment for sin against God's

command (Genesis 2:17). However, although the Old Testament presents death as the deserved divine punishment for sin, it does not develop the concept of post-mortem judgment.

As the natural end of life, death is an enemy as it threatens life which is desirable. Death is undesirable not simply because it is often accompanied by pain and suffering, but because it interrupts fellowship and communion by imposing separation. It separates human beings from family and friends but most importantly, it interrupts people's meaningful activity in the land of the living and ushers them into the inactivity of the dreary, miserable, shadowy and unexplored *Sheol*. One such important activity of the living is the worship of Yahweh. With this understanding, David entreats God saying, 'What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?' (Psalm 30:9 cf. Isaiah 38:18-19).

On the contrary, however, the Old Testament also presents death as rest. Death is welcome, although not desirable, not only for those at 'a good old age', but also as it ends suffering brought about by the harshness of life. Job laments his suffering arguing that in death 'the weary are at rest. Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver's shout' (Job 3:17). This is reinforced by the fact that in the Old Testament it is this life that matters most. *Sheol* is clearly not a place to look forward to for it is a 'land of gloom and deep shadow' (Job 10:21).

Because life issues from God, it is unacceptable for an individual to take his own life or that of his neighbour. Life is to be honoured and not scorned. In Israel, however, death is not overwhelming to the individual as such. Life and death are understood in relation to the loving omnipotent Yahweh and in the context of a people gathered and called into a lasting living relationship with him. In view of this relationship, the death of the individual, though clearly destructive and hostile, yet it is not overwhelming as the corporate continue. Furthermore, practices such as necromancy are forbidden for the people of God as they are clearly incompatible with the worship of Yahweh, the one true God. Consultation and veneration of the dead is incompatible with trusting Yahweh, the creator and sustainer of life. For the Israelites, therefore, neither hostile powers and principalities nor the dead have power over the living. Death penalty was prescribed for murder, blasphemy and other forms of disregard to the Law of God.

Yahweh is not limited by death. He brings about his will even in one's death for he has authority over all things. With confidence and trust in this authority, Old Testament individuals can hope for life after death with Yahweh. Job can thus declare, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I

will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another” (Job 19:25-27). And David can confidently say, “And I – in righteousness I shall see your face; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with seeing your likeness” (Psalm 17:15 cf. Psalm 16:8-11; Proverbs 14:32; 24:20; Isaiah 25:8; Daniel 12:2). Therefore, amidst the speculations surrounding *Sheol* in the Old Testament, yet the confidence of resurrection cannot be totally denied. Individuals can claim what the corporate has always been, a people called to live eternally before their Eternal King. The Old Testament also develops the theme of a Messiah who will finally redeem human beings and by this redemption conquer death.

In spite of the seeming ambiguity in the understanding of death and afterlife in the Old Testament, it is clear that its occurrence occasioned deep anguish and mourning and necessitated various coping rites. The rites were, of necessity, designed in order to restore a sense of normalcy after the disruption by death. Burial came shortly after the occurrence of death in line with the Mediterranean climatic conditions. In addition, there were ritual cleansing practices especially because contact with a dead body causes ritual impurity. However, it is important to underscore that even though the Israelites engaged in mourning with deep weeping, fasting, sitting in dust, disheveling their hair among other practices common among their neighbours, yet they were called to be distinct from these neighbours. Their mourning was to be consistent with their worship of and trust in Yahweh. Therefore, practices such as human sacrifices and lacerating of their bodies were abhorrent to Yahweh and unacceptable for his people.

4.3 New Testament view of death and afterlife

We now turn to issues of death and afterlife in Jesus’ own world, the world of the first-century Judaism, with its Old Testament roots and the surrounding context of the Greco-Roman world. It is important to note that many first-century Christians were Jews and would have known and held most of the popular beliefs and practices on death and bereavement discussed in the Old Testament. In this respect, there is continuity rather than discontinuity between the Old and the New Testaments. As Wright (2007:47) correctly remarks, it is important to locate the early Christian beliefs and practices on the map of ancient views, both pagan and Jewish.

4.3.1 Death as inescapable

As already alluded to while discussing the concept of death in the Old Testament, the road to the underworld ran only one way. Death was neither escapable nor could one break its power once it had come. In the Greco-Roman first-century world, as Wright (2007:47) points out, the road to the underworld was divided broadly into those who, like Homer’s shades, might have wanted a new body but knew they couldn’t have one, and those, like Plato’s philosophers, who

did not want a body because being a disembodied soul was far better. Johnston (2002:217) notes that although the Jews were essentially different, they were also divided into those whose hope remained firmly anchored in the present life with no alternative to *Sheol*, no other destiny or fate in the afterlife and those who entertained hope for individual resurrection. It is in this mixed culture, amidst this uncertainty, that Jesus Christ breaks into with authority.

4.3.2 Death as capital punishment

As pointed out already, the Old Testament contains several references to capital offenses including blasphemy and attack on parents. Underlying the capital punishment among the Israel's was the requirement to honour God and obey his commandments. This understanding is still central to the New Testament thought. Jesus and Stephen were regarded as blasphemers by the Jewish authorities who condemned both to death on this ground (Mathew 26:65-66; Acts 6:11).

4.3.3 Death as spiritual

The dominant view in the Old Testament times which limited death to the physical realm persisted in the New Testament times. However, it is presentation of death as a consequence of sin that was to dominate the teaching of the New Testament on death and afterlife. This emphasis appears in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Paul points out that sin entered the world through one human being and death through sin (Romans 5:12). Morris (1996:265 cf. Jacob 1962:802) observes that although both views of death as physical and spiritual persist in the New Testament, the more serious death is divine penalty which is a due reward for sin – 'For the wages of sin is death...' (Romans 6:23). This concept of death enables us to see the full horror of death. In other words, sin not only renders death inevitable, but also gives it its 'sting' (1 Corinthians 15:56).

4.3.4 Death as a spiritual state

In the New Testament, death is described both as a state as well as an event (Morris 1996:266). Life lived apart from God is considered death. Luke records Zechariah's prophecy which points to Jesus the Saviour who, because of the tender mercy of God, comes from heaven 'to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death' (Luke 1:79). In Romans 8:6, Paul says that 'The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace' while the first letter of John express a similar thought differently, "Anyone who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14).

4.3.5 Judgment after death

The theme of judgment after death is undeveloped in the Old Testament. However, this is an important theme in New Testament teaching. The understanding of this theme impacts on the process of coping in bereavement. Wright (2007:191) observes that judgment is necessary as the only alternative to chaos. He defines the final judgment as ‘the sovereign declaration that *this* is good and to be upheld and vindicated, and *that* is evil and to be condemned’. Christ, who is the resurrection (John 11:25), will be the judge of all nations (Matthew 16:27; 25:32; Acts 17:31; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 20:10; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Simcox (1960:53) observes that Christ is perfectly fitted to this office by being both God and human (John 5:27). His deity assures us that he knows all things and is perfectly just, so that he cannot judge us ignorantly or unjustly. His being human assures us that he knows from his human experience all our mortal weaknesses and limitations. The one and only principle of judgment will be that of acceptability to Christ. Those who have put their trust in Christ have been judged already. They are forgiven and accepted because of Christ’s death. They have passed from death into life eternal (John 5:24).

4.3.6 The ‘second death’

The New Testament emphasises the serious consequences of sin by referring to ‘the second death’ (Jude 12; Revelation 2:11). The unrepentant have the spiritual, also called the second death, which follows the bodily death. Traditionally, the mainline churches have taught that this second death is a condemnation of one, without appeal or hope for redemption, to everlasting intolerable pains in hell (Revelation 21:8 cf. CE 1859:92). Morris (1996:266) observes that the concept of ‘the second death’ is a rabbinic (Deuteronomy 33:6; Jeremiah 51:39) expression for eternal perdition or blessedness. It is to be understood along with passages in which Jesus spoke of eternal life in contrast to eternal punishment – “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:41, 46). As such, the second death comes at the last judgment and will be experienced by those going to eternal punishment. Bowman (1962:804) argues that the expression ‘second death’ is limited to Revelation where it is defined in symbolic terms as the ‘fiery lake of burning sulphur’ (Revelation 21:8; cf. 20:14). But its clearer definition in John’s usage appears from its being set over against the ‘crown of life’ promised to those who suffer the physical death of martyrdom (Revelation 2:10-11), and further from the suggestion that he who is ‘holy’ or truly sanctified, having shared in the ‘first resurrection’ to newness of life, will not experience it (Revelation 20:6). The ‘second death’ is, therefore, the opposite of that life lived in the presence of God which is promised to believers (Revelation 21:3-4; 22:3-5). ‘Death and Hades’ experience this second death (Revelation 20:4), along with those whose names are not

‘found written in the book of life’ (Revelation 20:15).

However, various views abound among commentators on the fate of the impenitent following the final judgment. The traditional view is that the impenitent will be held for ever in conscious torment in hell ‘where the fire never goes out’ (Mark 9:43 cf. Matthew 13:42; 18:8; Luke 16:19-31). In other words, the condemned will continue to be, in some sense, human beings, and they will be punished forever (cf. France 2002:383). This traditional view is opposed by the ‘universalists’ who suggest that God will be merciful even to the utterly abhorrent or that he will continue, after death, to offer all people the chance of repentance, until they finally give in to the offer of his love (Wright 2007:195). ‘Universalists’ argue that as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. Penelhum (1997:39) observes that this has never been more than a minority view, since it seems inconsistent with the fundamental thrust of Christian theology that each person is presented with a choice to accept or reject salvation. It is all who are in Christ that will be made alive. A middle way is offered by the so-called ‘conditionalists’. They propose ‘conditional immortality’ arguing that immortality is not an innate human characteristic but something only God possesses as of right, and hence it is a gift which God can choose to bestow or withhold (1 Timothy 6:16). In the case of the impenitent, God will simply not confer immortality. This view is sometimes known as ‘annihilationism’ whereby those who persistently refuse God’s love and his way of life in the present world will simply cease to exist, their fate is simple extinction (Wright 2007:193-194). Others maintain the view that the unrepentant will be raised to be condemned. After judgment, the condemned will experience total destruction in hell and not suffer forever. They argue that this squares with both the goodness of God and the power of God to accomplish his own loving purposes (Simcox 1960:63, 64). Arguing against the notion of annihilation, Simcox (1960:17, 21) observes that Jesus assumes the everlastingness of human life and thus admits no possibility that a person can escape from life by dying. One can die to God, but one cannot die to life; and life, here or hereafter, is either in the kingdom of God or out of it. Combining the traditional and ‘conditionalists’ views, Wright (2007:195) suggests that it is possible for human beings to continue in rebellion against God, that after death they become at last, by their own effective choice, *beings that once were human but now are not*, creatures that have ceased to bear the divine image at all. After death, the impenitent thus pass simultaneously not only beyond hope but also beyond pity. For the bereaved, it is important to remember that these are only theories (cf. Simcox 1960:64). What is fact is that our Lord Jesus warns us to fear not those who have power to kill the body only, but rather to fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Furthermore, there is no consensus about heaven and hell. The now redundant traditional depictions of a last judgment painted a picture in which the saved and the damned are separated and sent to opposite destinations, heaven (above) and hell (below). These depictions

greatly relied on the cosmology of the ancient worlds which assumed a three-tiered universe with heaven above, the earth in the middle and hell underneath. Modern understandings of the nature of the universe close us off completely from such erroneous cosmological understandings (Penelhum 1997:39). Heaven was a place where the saved go to. Simcox (1960:66) suggests that heaven is best thought of as the state of being perfectly and completely at home with God, 'hid with God in Christ'. According to Wright (2007:34), the point of the final new creation, and the resurrection itself, is that this is the moment when, fully and finally, the heavenly kingdom *arrives on earth*. As Simcox (1960:74) observes, for the believer, and especially the bereaved, consolation is in sharing the Lord's promise 'that where I am you may be also'. The heavenly life is centred in God himself – 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent' (John 17:3).

4.3.7 The afterlife

Three main views dominate the New Testament teaching about the afterlife (Wright 2007:48-49; Penelhum 1997:37). First, the view held by the Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected all forms of future life, especially a re-embodied one. They denied that there is any resurrection. The second view was held by the Hellenistic Jews, like Philo, who were influenced by Platonic philosophy. The Hellenistic Jews thought in terms of a glorious though disembodied future for the soul. In other words, they affirmed the immortality of the soul. Finally, a majority of the Jews believed in an eventual resurrection. On this matter Jesus clearly took the side of the Pharisees, who accepted the belief in bodily resurrection, and refuted the position taken by the Sadducees (Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; 13:43; Luke 20:27-40; John 11:24). Simcox (1960:25) observes that in refuting the position taken by the Sadducees (Mark 12:18-27), Jesus suggests that in the life after resurrection our present earthly relationships are transmuted, and in a sense transcended, into a new and higher life of love which is beyond our present understanding. The Christian church has traditionally shared and taught the resurrection belief.

4.3.8 Jesus' death and resurrection

The overarching event governing discussions concerning death, afterlife and bereavement in the New Testament is the death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cullmann (1958:27) observes that in resurrection, the whole human, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God. Cullmann (1962:807) further comments that only the experience of the resurrected one, the Lord whom God has exalted above all powers and authorities (Philippians 2:9 ff.), opened the eyes of the profoundly disillusioned disciples. Without the resurrection, Jesus' death would be no more than one among many deaths, and would soon have ceased to be discussed. It was the resurrection which was the point of departure for real reflection on the meaning of Jesus' death. Therefore, Jesus' death and resurrection belong closely together, and

we do well not to lose sight of this connection as the presupposition of Christian thought.

In the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the most arresting feature of the New Testament view of death is its emphasis on life. Although death is approached realistically, yet the ultimate interest is in life (Morris 1996:266). Jesus Christ conquered death. Hebrews 2:14-15 – ‘Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death’. Jesus Christ died to put an end to death (cf. Luke 12:5; Romans 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; John 8:51). Therefore, the extent of Christ’s victory over death is indicated by his resurrection.

With this resurrection death has already been overcome and the resurrection age is already inaugurated (Cullmann 1958:41). ‘For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God’ (Romans 6:9f.). The victory of Christ over death is made available to the believers and as such the second death has no authority over them (1 Corinthians 15:26, 54ff; Revelation 2:11; 20:6; 21:4). In keeping with the resurrection of Christ, the New Testament understands eternal life not as the immortality of the soul, but as the resurrection of the body. As Morris (1996:266) observes, nothing could more graphically illustrate the finality and the completeness of death’s defeat. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, believers have passed altogether out of the state which is death into a new state which is life (John 5:24; 8:51; 1 John 3:14; Romans 8:2, 38f). Jacob (1962:803 cf. Wright 2007:29) succinctly adds that the entry of God into the domain of death not only allowed him to dispose of the power of death, but ultimately led to conflict between him and death. Death could not exist as a destructive force beside the living God without raising the question of his omnipotence. Life had to absorb death (2 Corinthians 5:4). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the definitive manifestation of the power of the living God (Mark 12:24ff). Therefore, death in the New Testament is an enemy, conquered by Jesus but still awaiting its final defeat.

The belief in the resurrection presupposes the Jewish connection between death and sin (Romans 6:23). Cullmann (1958:28) notes that from this point of view, death is not natural but rather unnatural and opposed to God. As such, death can be conquered only to the extent that sin is removed.

Like in the Old Testament, there are two broad views on the concept of resurrection in the New Testament (Wright 2007:58 cf. Penelhum 1997:37, 38; Cullmann 1958:17)). First, there are occurrences of the Old Testament metaphorical (non-physical meaning) use of the term resurrection referring to the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6; Romans 11:15 cf. Ezekiel 37).

Second and most importantly, resurrection in the New Testament has to do with individual bodily resurrection. The primary source of teaching on bodily resurrection is Paul's letters. The longest and most important text is 1 Corinthians 15. In this letter Paul seems to be responding to some Christians in Corinth who had come to doubt whether there was to be a resurrection. Paul insists that the resurrection is the core of the gospel proclamation: the salvation Christians inherit is a consequence of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, and this entails that they, too, will be raised. The resurrection body will be an incorruptible body, that is, the body of a person who has been redeemed from corruption. It will have glory and power, and be clothed with immortality. But this does not entail that it is not spatial, three dimensional, or material. As Wright (2007:180) points out, the New Testament teaches that the resurrection is still in the future and the believers ultimate destination is not 'going to heaven', but being bodily raised into the transformed, glorious likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:1, 38f.). Cullmann (1958:37, 38) adds that the resurrection of the body, whose substance will no longer be that of the flesh, but that of the Holy Spirit, is only a part of the whole creation (2 Peter 3:13; Romans 8:19ff.). Because resurrection of the body is a new act of creation which embraces everything, it is not an event which begins with each individual death, but will happen only at the *End*. It is not a transition from this world to another world; but rather from the present age to the future.

4.3.9 The state of the dead before the *Parousia*

The question concerning where the dead are now, has been variously answered by theological commentators. An inquiry of this question has particular importance for Christians and non-Christians alike. This is so because the bereaved often find consolation in the belief that their loved ones are well and safe or at rest at last. Unfortunately, commentators are divided not only on their interpretation of the biblical claims about death and the afterlife but also on the state of the dead in the interim period before the *Parousia*. Penelhum (1997:37, 40, 43 cf. Carson 1978:74; Barth 1960: 698ff.) claims that Jesus taught about the reality of an afterlife immediately following death, one in which the dead are divided by judgment and destined either to heaven or to hell with no intermediate state, and presumably no body. The transition to blessedness or perdition is immediate (cf. Luke 16:19-31; 23:39-43). However, Cullmann (1958:49f.) argues that this view is wrong as it erroneously assumes that the dead are no longer in time. He concludes that the dead, like the living, are still waiting (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13; John 6:11). According to Wright (2007:48-49, 160 cf. Cullmann 1958:49), the afterlife is certainly not immediate as claimed by Barth, Penelhum and others, but rather that God looks after the soul after death until, at the last day, he will give his people new bodies at the time when he will judge and remake the whole world. Wright therefore describes resurrection as life *after* "life after death" (see John 11:24 cf. Mark 13:43; Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40).

The Roman Catholics, after Aquinas and Dante (13th and 14th centuries), have continued to teach that most Christians remain sinful in some measure right up to death. Purgatory was, mooted as a place where such Christians would be purged and made viable for life with a sin-free God. Penelhum (1997:40-41) observes that this teaching represents a modification of the claim that each person's fate is decided by the time of death. According to the doctrine of purgatory, those in the interim state who have not, prior to death, committed sins for which there is no redemption, but who are guilty of offenses for which they have not done adequate penance before death, suffer a period of purgation or redemptive suffering. Purgatory, presupposes a double judgment, in that the sufferings of purgatory are intended only for those whose sins are deemed to be forgivable and destined to be forgiven. Therefore, the doctrine does not fundamentally modify the belief that redemption or condemnation is determined by the time of death. Simcox (1960:26, 61) argues for the possibility of what he calls a 'second chance' in eternity for people who have failed to accept Christ in time. He states that even the highest Christian saint on earth realises with sorrow that much still needs to be done with him before he can be ready for the full joy and the beatific vision of God in heaven. He further comments, that there is every right to believe that God will give humans opportunity to finish becoming in eternity what they have chosen to become on earth. The Christian belief in an intermediate state, or Paradise, or purgatory (the vestibule of heaven), is not a doctrine of a second chance but rather of a further chance to become what we have chosen to become as aspiring children of God (cf. Luke 23:39-43). Wright (2007:180, 183-184 cf. Cullman 1958:17, 26) points out that this trend of thought provides the rationale behind the Anglican All Souls' Day, a 10th century Benedictine innovation which assumes a sharp distinction between 'saints', who are already in heaven, and 'souls' who need our help to 'move on'. He observes that all Christians who have died are in substantially the same state, that of restful happiness which is sometimes described as 'sleep', not a state of unconsciousness. The body is dead, but the 'real person' continues. It is a state in which the dead are held firmly within the conscious love of God and the conscious presence of Jesus Christ, while they await the day of their bodily resurrection. However, the doctrine of purgatory is categorically rejected as 'a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God' (Article 22 of the Thirty-Nine Articles see Bicknell 1955:276-298). For purposes of this research (cf. Penelhum 1997:40), the fundamental feature of all the expectations for resurrection and judgment is that whether the dead are to go to their final destinations at once or only after an interim time, what determines their final destination is whether they have availed themselves to the sacrifice of Christ during this life. For there seem to be no place in Christian expectations for the notion of a decisive spiritual reorientation *after* death.

4.3.10 Communication with the dead

In addressing the issues of death among the Abaluyia, a biblical understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead is necessary. This is because according to the Abaluyia, the spirits' world is real and alive with activities that are believed to impact on the welfare of the living. Often, both fortuity and misfortune are attributed to the activities of deceased relatives who are deemed to be able to bring about prosperity as well as calamity. As such, the spiritual world cannot and must not be ignored.

Christian commentators hold different views concerning whether or not the dead can communicate with the living. The popular view in modern time has been that the dead are unable to communicate, impact or make contact with the living and any appearances of the dead in any form are a manifestation of demons masquerading as the deceased relatives. However, even the reality of demons has been debated with various theories being advanced to explain biblical passages where there is mention of demons (cf. Khathide 2007:58-60). Khathide (2007:60) argues that the theories which include the mythical theory, accommodation theory and hallucination theory are too vague to inspire confidence.

The view that the dead relatives do not communicate with the living is often justified in the popular thought by making reference to the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). However, as Burnett (2000:69-70) observes, this text cannot be used to conclude that the dead are unable to communicate with the living. A careful reading of the text reveal that Abraham does not tell the rich man that it is impossible for the dead to return in order to warn the living of the impending danger of hell but that it is not worth it for 'If they do not listen to Moses the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' (Luke 16:31). Furthermore, the story of Moses and Elijah conversing with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration points to the possibility of the dead communicating with living.

In spite of the possibility of communication between the dead and the living, the New Testament does not teach that the dead can help or intercede for the living or the living for them as it is assumed by those who hold on the teaching of purgatory. As Khathide (2007:381) correctly points out, there is no mention of the dead taking the initiative to contact their living relatives, to communicate, to harm or to bless. On the contrary, attempts by the living to conduct the dead are condemned. Therefore, teaching of purgatory lacks clear biblical basis. However, Simcox (1960:69) argues that there exist a helping relationship between the living and the dead. In answer to whether the dead can help the living, he says: 'We may be sure they do, in ways beyond our knowledge. Can we help them? We do not doubt it; we can pray for them and commend them to God's continuing care and love, just as we do for our friends still in the flesh'. Wright (2007:184) makes a similar conjecture arguing that since both the departed saints and

we ourselves are in Christ, we share with them in the 'Communion of Saints'. They are still our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we celebrate the Holy Communion they are with us, along with the angels and archangels. Why then should we not pray for and with them? He suggests that once we rule out purgatory as vain teaching, there is no reason why we should not pray for and with the dead that they will be refreshed, and filled with God's joy and peace. Love passes into prayer.

4.3.11 Death not romanticised

The New Testament does not romanticise death like the Greek philosophers who branded death 'the soul's great friend' and thus regarded it with equanimity (Cullmann 1958:21). Although, as Wright (2007:23 -24) notes, there were attempts in the history of Christianity to soften the blow of death by presenting it as a friend, coming to take us to a better place, in the New Testament, death is an enemy. Cullmann (1958:22) points out that Jesus shared the human fear of death. In the garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion, 'he began to be deeply distressed and troubled' (Mark 14:33f. cf. 14:36; 15:34, 37; Luke 19:50; Hebrews 5:7) of the pain and grief of death. Paul correctly describes death as 'the last enemy' (1 Corinthians 15:26) in clear contrast to the Greek thought. He further observes that death in itself is not beautiful. Death before Easter is really the Death's head surrounded by the odour of decay. Cullmann (1958:17, 27, 52) further warns that whoever paints a pretty death can paint no resurrection. Its 'sting', its power, is taken away only through the victory of Jesus over it in his death. The resurrection already accomplished is not the state of fulfilment for the believer, for that remains the future until the body is also resurrected, which will not occur until 'the last day'. Death has lost its horror, its 'sting' – it no longer has any final significance, but it remains as the last enemy.

4.3.12 Summary

In the New Testament, the concepts of death and afterlife are variously presented. Death is presented as the natural end to life. It is appointed for all to die. In this sense, death is an inescapable physical happening.

Central to the discussion of death in the New Testament is the understanding that death is a consequence of sin. Sin gives death its sting. From this viewpoint, human beings need to be concerned not only with the physical death and more importantly with spiritual death. The wages of sin is death. It is appointed for all to die and after death judgment. Those who die in sin by rejecting Christ have already been condemned to the second death which is eternal punishment. In fact, according to the New Testament those who live apart from God are considered spiritually dead.

However, in the New Testament death does not have the last word for Christ has defeated death (2 Timothy 1:10). Through his death on the cross and physical resurrection from the dead, Jesus is the firstfruits of those who die in him. Therefore, those who trust in him are assured of their own resurrection to eternal life with Christ. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Christ has paid the price to redeem them from the law of sin and death.

In spite of the hope of resurrection, death is not romanticised in the New Testament. Death is an enemy. Death will remain an enemy until it is ultimately defeated at the *Parousia*. Meanwhile, death is a source of grief both for the believer and non-believer. However, the believer does not grieve hopelessly. The greatest hope for the believer is hinged on what Christ has achieved in his death on the cross, continues to achieve in the church and will have achieved in fullness at his second coming.

4.4 Basis theoretical findings on the concept of death, afterlife and bereavement within a biblical framework

In view of the basis theoretical analysis done in this chapter, it is abundantly clear that Christianity has no easy and pleasant teaching on death and the afterlife. As Simcox (1960:47) observes, Christianity makes no pretence that dying is not real and painful to the person who dies and those who witness and are impacted by the death. In his writings, the apostle Paul refers to death as 'the last enemy' (1 Corinthians 15:26). Paul points out that death shall be destroyed at last, but in the meantime it is still with us as a hostile power, and we are in that meantime.

Mbogori (2002:206) argues that the church's teaching on the concepts of death and the afterlife is so muddled that it often times creates confusion and, thereby, unbelief. However, in view of the biblical study of the concept of death and the afterlife, it is appropriate to point out the affirmation of life, the hope of resurrection and right attitude concerning the dead as useful inferences for the bereaved as they seek to come to terms with their loss through death.

4.4.1 Affirmation of life

The Bible presents death as physical as well as spiritual. As such, there is ambivalence in the view of death as a natural end to life and as a consequence of sin. However, even as the natural end to life, death is undesirable. Death is a source of anguish and trepidation. Therefore, the Bible largely focuses on life and the living. Prayers are made and rituals performed for the promotion and preservation of life which issues from God. As Jacob (1962:803) aptly concludes, the affirmation of the triumph of life over death represents the main line of thought in the Bible.

There seems to be a progressive understanding of death, the afterlife and bereavement in the Bible. The Old Testament presents two broad views. On one hand, death is the end of life. Death leads to an uneventful *Sheol*. From this viewpoint, there is no hope after life as the rich and the poor, the righteous and the wicked end up in *Sheol*. At the most, those who are righteous will get rest while the wicked will never be remembered. There is also no information to indicate judgment followed by reward or punishment after death in the Old Testament. On the other hand, however, there are glimpses of a belief in life after death within the described portrayal of a general state of hopelessness in the face of death. The resurrection of the righteous is hinted. This wavering of opinion on death and the afterlife which has its basis in the Old Testament impacts views held in the New Testament. In New Testament, for instance, parties held opposite views concerning the resurrection.

4.4.2 Resurrection to life or damnation

However, the various Old Testament views find ultimate and concrete certainty in the New Testament event of the life, teaching and redemptive work of Jesus. Jesus taught that those who put their trust in him though they may die; they will live with him for eternity. This hope of eternal life has been made sure because Jesus conquered death through his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. At his second return, death will be finally defeated when the dead are raised. This is the heritage and confidence with which the Christians face death and bereavement. In addition, the New Testament teaches that there is judgment after death. At the second coming of Jesus Christ, those who would have rejected him will be condemned to eternal death (the second death). On the contrary, those who put their trust in him will be raised to live with him forever. Therefore, the Christian believes that there is an afterlife. The Christian faith teaches that death will be followed by judgment either to eternal death or eternal life.

4.4.3 Necromancy prohibited

Although the Bible leaves open the question of whether the dead may communicate with the living, the complete ban on necromancy (Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 8:19), indicates that it is sinful (Burnett 2000:70). Consulting the dead is incompatible with the worship of God and therefore totally unacceptable for those who put their trust in him.

Furthermore, the Bible does not teach that the living can help the dead to put right their ways with God through prayers and other forms of rituals. As Penelhum (1997:41 cf. Simcox 1960:49) observes, each human being departs from this life with his face turned towards Christ, who is the life, or away from him through his life-reaction to him.

4.4.4 Universality of grief

It was noted that the Bible does not deny the pain of bereavement by death or the employment

of culture specific responses in coping with it. However, the Bible reveals that the culture specific responses that are acceptable for believers must not compromise their worship of God. For purposes of this research, it is helpful to note that some Jewish mourning practices compare closely with those of the Abaluyia although they are specific to the Jewish culture. For instance, the Jewish customary form of disposal of the dead through burial in the family graveyard compares closely with the Abaluyia's requirement that the dead ought to be buried in their ancestral land. Like the Jews (Genesis 35:29; Job 42:17; 1 Chronicles 23:1; 29:28; 2 Chronicles 24:15 cf. Von Rad (1972:262), the Abaluyia celebrate the life of those who die advanced in age, married and with children and property. Similarly, the record of Jewish Patriarchs bequeathing their property to their children before death resonates with the Abaluyia's system of inheritance where a dying man is expected to distribute his wealth to all his sons.

In the New Testament, examples of grief also abound. Perhaps the best example is the bereavement of the Lord Jesus himself. When Jesus heard about the cold murder of his cousin John the Baptist by Herod for exposing the tetrarch's scandalous relationship with his brother's wife Herodias, he withdrew to a solitary place. In his grief, on this occasion, he still looked out for their needs, showed them compassion and healed their suffering (Matthew 14:13, 14). When his friend Lazarus died, he wept at the graveside thus identifying with Mary and Martha as they mourned their brother (John 11:1-44). Following their Saviour's example godly men who buried Stephen mourned deeply for him (Acts 8:2). Paul entreats Christians to develop the right attitude towards death not so that they may not grieve, but that they may grieve like those who have hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Therefore, the Bible is not short of occurrences of bereavement from which examples of approaches to bereavement healing may be drawn. Experiences of bereavement form the core of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Exploring bereavement beliefs and practices within a biblical framework

5.1 Introduction

Having considered the biblical views on death and the afterlife, it is apt to take a closer look at some incidences of bereavement in the Bible in order to establish biblical principles for bereavement healing. In this endeavour, a systematic exegesis of pertinent passages from the Old and New Testaments is done in order to identify practices of the bereaved and draw biblical lessons that will inform practice theory. Although the pertinent passages analysed often are intended to teach some other truths, especially in the New Testament, they however open a window for a biblical understanding of bereavement (cf. Mwiti 1999:9).

Just as death is a universal phenomenon, so is bereavement. All cultures throughout history have reacted to death variously. Generally, the death of a loved one is often a cause of grief for the survivors as they think about the deceased as well as ruminate about their own death sooner or later. In response to bereavement by death, societies have developed beliefs and practices that cushion the survivors from being destroyed by their experience of grief and disruption and instead bring about healing and maturation. Funeral rituals not only express a people's feelings of grief and sense of loss but they also indicate their hope for the future or lack of it. Such responses are also observable among the Israelites as well as Christians.

5.2 Bereavement in the Old Testament

The Old Testament is dotted with occurrences of bereavement as well as beliefs and practices related to these occurrences. In general, there is a progressive variance within different epochs of Israel's history which generates varied responses from the bereaved. Evans (2004:152) points out that religious practices relating to the dead in Israel were widespread in Ancient Canaan. This reinforces the fact that Israelites were influenced, to a certain extent, in their mourning by what was common among their neighbours.

5.2.1 The murder of Abel (Genesis 4:8-16)

This is the first death recorded in the Bible. This first death was through murder. Cain (*Qayin*) killed his brother Abel (*Hebhel*) out of anger. In Hebrew, *Hebhel* literally means 'breath' and it is used to express the brevity of life (cf. Psalm 39:4-5, 11; 144:4; Job 7:7). Cassuto (1989:202) observes that among the Hebrews names are important and so is the name Abel which seems to fit the fate that befell him. Cain was jealous of and angry with his brother.

Cain was angry because God looked with favour on Abel and his offering and not on him. Assohoto and Ndegwa (2006:18) observe, that Cain allowed envy to make him hate his brother and ultimately kill him. Wenham (1987:106) argues that because Cain killed Abel when they were out of range for help is evidence of premeditation. This act of deliberate and ruthless murder grieved God who is not only the Creator of life but also 'the Lord of life' (Von Rad 1972:106 cf. Barth CD III/4, 398). In the question, 'Where is your brother Abel?' God points to his knowledge of Cain's mean act. As Calvin (1965:207) observes, God holds human life dear to allow innocent blood to be shed with impunity. Von Rad (1972:105) argues that the question gave Cain an opportunity to confess and take responsibility which is not annulled by his sin. Cain, clearly impenitent, took no responsibility but instead lied and retorted that he was not his brother's keeper (Genesis 4:9). Contrary to Cain's retort, Leviticus 25:48 suggests that a brother should be ready to assist in time of trouble. Waltke (2001:100) suggests that Cain's actions illustrate the consequences of sin.

God announced that Abel's blood was crying out to him from the ground (Genesis 4:10). The word used here for 'cry' (*sā'aq*) is the same word used of a person's desperate call for help or appeal to legal protection (Genesis 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:24, 27; 2 Kings 8:3; Job 16:18-19). Wenham (1987:107) notes that the word is used for distressed cry of a person desperately in need of food (Genesis 41:55), one expecting death (Exodus 14:10) or ill-treated by enemies (Judges 4:3). It is also used to refer to the scream for help made by a woman being raped (Deuteronomy 22:24, 27) or, as in this case, a plea to God for justice by a victim of injustice (cf. Exodus 22:22-23, 26-27).

God responded to the plea for vengeance by pronouncing a curse upon Cain, as a consequence of Cain's mean act. The response affirms that God listens to the cries of his people (Isaiah 5:7; 19:20; Psalm 34:17-18; 107:6, 28) and he is 'the protector and guardian of all life' (Von Rad 1972:106 cf. Wenham 1987:107). Murder had to be avenged (Genesis 9:5). The curse meant that Cain was banished from the arable land, alienated from God and his family and made "a wandering vagrant" (Wenham 1987:108 cf. 2 Samuel 13:34-14:24). Westermann (1984:308) argues that the verbs used for Cain as a 'displaced wanderer' do not describe the way of life of the nomads. God's response find parallels within the Abaluyia's beliefs and practices concerning a person convicted of murder against a brother or relative. Customarily, the convict would be banished from the community and by their act forfeited the security of the community, had no share in their family inheritance and were hence numbered among enemies rather than among kin.

In spite of the Cain's sin and judgment, yet God did not completely abandon him. Instead, God extended his protection to Cain from blood-revenge which is displeasing to him and by so doing

revealed his protective relationship with humanity (cf. Cassuto 1989:195). Von Rad (1972:109) argues that God's act of protection to Cain also reveals his desire for the spirit of murder not to spread into wider circles and the punishment inflicted on Cain not to be the occasion of further killing. God put a mark of protection on Cain, not as 'a stigma' but as 'a safe-conduct' (Kidner 1967:76). Assohoto and Ndegwa (2006:19) infer that what the mark may have meant is, "this is my man to punish, leave him alone!" Vengeance belongs to God.

For the purposes of this research, it is helpful to note that the blood of Abel cried for justice from God. God put a curse on Cain and banished him from his family. The spirit of the dead brother is neither recorded to have avenged its own death nor to have appeared to Cain seeking retribution. God is clearly the recipient of the cry for vengeance and the avenger.

In the Bible, blood is associated with life. Life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). Von Rad (1972:106) observes that according to the Old Testament, blood and life belong to God alone. Consequently, murder is an attack not only against the person but also against God's right of possession. Grudem (1994:444) argues to commit murder is to attack the part of creation that most resembles God, and betrays an attempt or desire to attack God himself. Sin did not obliterate the image of God in human beings.

The loss of Abel was responded to both by God and Adam and Eve, his parents. The parents' grief is alluded to in the birth of Seth to Adam and Eve. Eve 'gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him"' (Genesis 4:25). This birth reveals hope after the death of Abel and the banishment of Cain that Adam and Eve had to endure (Waltke 2001:101). Cassuto (1989:191) argues that the birth of Seth enables the reader to measure the full magnitude of the terrible tragedy that embittered the life of Adam and Eve until they were granted compensation and consolation by God. He further suggests that one can fully appreciate the importance of this event by contrasting with the birth of Cain. Here Eve's mood is one of mourning and sorrow. In the hour of her mourning, it seems as if God is removed from her. She sees God as the remote and supra-natural creator (*'Elōhīm*) rather than as the Lord (YHWH), a personal name affirming his direct relationship with human beings (Cassuto 1989:245).

5.2.2 The death of Sarah (Genesis 23:1-20)

The death of Sarah occurred at Kiriath Arba or Hebron in the territory of Canaan. She was a hundred and twenty-seven years old. Although, long life is regarded among the Hebrews as a blessing from God (Genesis 15:15; 24:36; 25:8; Psalm 90:10; Deuteronomy 34:7; Job 42:16-17) yet one's age does not negate the anguish of bereavement resulting from death. Abraham

mourned for Sarah and wept over her as was the custom among the Hebrews (Genesis 23:2 cf. Genesis 37:34-35; Ezekiel 24:15-23).

Mathews (2005:315) points out that the term “mourn” (*sāpad*) and its noun form “mourning” (*mispēd*) refers to crying out, exclamations of grief that may be ritual but not the formal poetic lament (cf. Jeremiah 22:18; 34:5; 1 Kings 13:30; Amos 5:16). The term “weep” (*bākā*) is used for a wide range of emotions but it is related to the verbal expressions of wailing over the dead or troubling situations (cf. Genesis 35:8; 1 Samuel 1:7-8; 2 Samuel 1:11; Psalm 137:1; Isaiah 15:2-5). In Isaiah 16:9, the term “weep” is associated with “tears” (*dim’ā*). As already noted, mourning rites in the Bible are similar to those practiced in the ancient Near East which include shedding tears quietly, crying or weeping loudly, tearing clothes or wearing sackcloth (Genesis 37:34; 2 Samuel 1:11), fasting (2 Samuel 1:12), walking bareheaded and barefoot (Ezekiel 24:17), lacerating oneself (Jeremiah 16:6) and shaving one’s hair (Ezekiel 7:18) and sitting in dirt or on the ground (Lamentations 2:10; Isaiah 3:26; 47:1; Ezekiel 8:14; see Hamilton 1995:698; Mathews 2005:315). It seems more appropriate to understand Abraham’s mourning as being prompted by a deep personal loss rather than, as Von Rad (1972:247) contends, by ceremony regulated by old custom and rites for which one could hire professional wailing women (Jeremiah 9:17-18).

After the ritual of mourning, Abraham ‘rose from beside his dead wife’ (Genesis 23:3 cf. Ezekiel 24:15-23) in order to attend to the matter of her burial. Calvin (1965:578), citing Ambrose, suggests that Abraham’s action, captured in this phrase, points us to his moderation and infers from it that those who occupy themselves too much in mourning for the dead act perversely. He further observes that Abraham found consolation in his bereavement from faith in the promises of God (cf. Hebrews 11:9, 13). Abraham rose to attend to his wife’s burial.

Abraham bought land from Ephron the Hittite, paid for it in full and received a title deed. He buried his wife Sarah in this property that he had acquired. It is important to note that this burial land or cave of Machpelah was not regarded as a sacred shrine. Von Rad (1972:249) helpfully notes that Israel decisively denied any sacred character to the dead and the grave as the cult of the dead was incompatible with faith in Yahweh. Others who were later buried here include Abraham (Genesis 25:9), Isaac (Genesis 35:29), Rebekah, Leah (Genesis 49:31) and Jacob (Genesis 50:13). In death Sarah, and the patriarchs after her, was heir and no longer a “stranger” (*tôšāb*) in the Promised Land. The customary form of disposal of the dead in Israel is thus shown to be through burial in the family graveyard.

5.2.3 The death of Abraham (Genesis 25: 7-11)

Abraham died peacefully at ‘a good old age’ of a hundred and seventy-five years. This was a long period given the traditional average of seventy years (Psalm 90:10). Abraham’s long life is acknowledged as divine blessing. It was not only long but it was filled with inner *shalom* and contentment which is the thrust of the phrase “full of years” (Hamilton 1995:167 cf. Von Rad 1972:262). This is true of some other patriarchs like Isaac who was a hundred and eighty years when he ‘was gathered to his people, old and full of years’ (Genesis 35:29) and David who ‘died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honour’ (1 Chronicles 29:28). Von Rad (1972:262) remarks that in ancient Israel one accepted life not with a defiant claim to endlessness but in resignation as something limited, something assigned to human beings, in which the state of satiation was to be reached (cf. Genesis 35:29; Job 42:17; 1 Chronicles 23:1; 29:28; 2 Chronicles 24:15). He further points out that the use of a qualifier ‘good’ in the expression ‘he breathed his last and died at a good old age’ reveals that only an early or “evil” death would be perceived as a judgment from God.

According to Hamilton (1995:168), the expression “he was gathered to his people”, which only appears in the Pentateuch (Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29, 33; Numbers 20:24; 27:13; Deuteronomy 32:50), suggests the reunion of the deceased with his forefathers. This may imply either a belief in a continued existence after death or that the spirit of the deceased joined the ancestors in the underworld, and that even in death family solidarity was not broken. Von Rad (1972:262) argues that the use of this expression is not correct here for it presupposes the notion of an ancestral family grave. On the contrary, it is possible that the narrator wants to show that death at “a good old age” is the way of all humankind.

Peacefully, both Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham, their father. The reunion of the two brothers at the burial of their father was in spite of Ishmael’s expulsion reported earlier (Genesis 16 and 21). Hamilton (1995:168) expresses the possibility that these brothers who were ordinarily deeply at odds with each other may have had a real or artificial reunion at the death of father. A similar case is reported with Esau and Jacob putting aside their long time differences to attend their father’s funeral (Genesis 35:29). In the Abaluyia’s reading, that can only be the case. For the Abaluyia, the death of a father brings together siblings who on any other occasion would kill one another.

At his death, Abraham left everything he owned to his son Isaac (Genesis 25:6). Earlier, he gave ‘gifts’ to his other sons including Ishmael and those by his second wife, Keturah. This act of distributing his wealth to all his sons indicates that he acknowledged them. Mathews notes that designating Isaac as the main recipient confirmed, beyond any shadow of doubt, Isaac’s place as the appointed heir (Mathews 2005:348).

Abraham was buried in the land he had purchased at Hebron. This burial, as Mathews (2005:356) points out, gives concrete expression to God's faithfulness and to Abraham's faith. God's promise of blessing becomes a reality and endures even after the patriarch's death as revealed in the blessing of Isaac (Genesis 25:11).

5.2.4 The death of Rachel (Genesis 35:16-20)

Rachel died in childbirth (Genesis 35:16-18). The reader is suddenly introduced to Rachel's pregnancy and 'difficulty' (*qāšā*) in her labour pains or birth 'pangs' (*šīrīm* cf. 1 Samuel 4:19; Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; see Mathews 2005:625). In her anguish, Rachel is comforted by her female attendant with the assurance that she is giving birth to 'another son' (35:17 cf. 1 Samuel 4:20). The phrase 'another son' may also point to the fulfilment of Rachel's prayer, when naming Joseph (*yōsēp*), for another son (Genesis 30:24). According to Hamilton (1995:384) the fact that there is no account in biblical literature in which the birth of a daughter is announced, one may infer that giving birth to a son was the supreme consolation to a woman dying in childbirth.

Hamilton (1995:384-385) finds unlikely the suggestion by some commentators that *Ben-oni* means 'son of my wickedness' (not 'son of my misfortune' or 'son of wailing/mourning/sorrow'), implying that in giving her son this name Rachel believes that her death is punishment for stealing her father's gods and lying about them. If this was the case, then it would appear that Jacob's proposal to call him *Benjamin* ('son of the oath' rather than 'son of good fortune') would refer, at least in part, to Jacob's earlier oath that whoever stole Laban's gods should die (Genesis 31:32). Mathews helpfully points out that because Rachel was no longer a young woman when she died, her death cannot be taken as premature. The rendering of *Ben-oni* as 'son of my misfortune/sorrow' and *Benjamin* as 'son of good fortune' or 'son of [my] right hand/side' is preferred given Rachel's adversity at the child's birth (cf. 1 Samuel 4:21, see Mathews 2005:625).

Jacob, set up a 'pillar' (*maššēbâ*) to mark Rachel's tomb (Genesis 35:20). This pillar was in her memory. However, the meaning of 'to this day' is not limited to the day of the narrator but is extended as it is mentioned in other periods of Israel's history (1 Samuel 10:2; Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18). Mathews (2005:624) notes that Rachel's death and burial in the land of promise as a matriarch of Israel's clans of Joseph and Benjamin demonstrates that God's word had been faithful. He further argues that the pillar was set up for religious as well as legal purposes (cf. Genesis 28:18, 22; 31:45; 35:14 see Mathew 2005:626).

5.2.5 The death of Jacob (Genesis 49:29-50:14)

On his deathbed, Jacob blessed (*b-r-k*) all his sons (Genesis 47:28). Each son, even discredited ones like Reuben, Simeon and Levi, received their appropriate blessing from their dying father. Importantly, when the time for Jacob to die drew near, he made Joseph to vow not to bury him in Egypt but that Jacob would be carried and buried with his fathers in the land of Canaan (Genesis 49:29-32, cf. 47:29-30; 50:5). Joseph kept the vow he had made to his father (Genesis 50:5, 12-13). It is interesting to note that in a like manner, Joseph also made his brothers vow to carry his bones and bury him with his fathers (Genesis 50:25-26 cf. Joshua 24:32; Judges 8:32). Their destiny was in God's Promised Land.

Jacob died at a hundred and forty-seven years. In the 'mourning' (*'ēbel*) period that follow, the narrator concentrates on Joseph's actions and relationships. As Hamilton (1995:691) points out, the brothers and other relatives were certainly experiencing grief just like Joseph. Joseph threw himself upon his father and wept over him and kissed him (Genesis 50:1). Mathews (2005:916) notes that the actions of falling upon and kissing the dead occur only here in the Old Testament. The actions reveal Joseph's deep grief at his father's death and point to his deep affection for him. According to Hamilton (1995:691), the actions may be intended as a fulfilment of God's word to Jacob that it would be Joseph who would close his eyes (Genesis 46:4). He cites Lowenthal (1973:147) who argues that the honour to close a dead person's eyes is reserved for the survivor who is acknowledged to have been closest to the deceased.

Joseph directed physicians (lit. 'healers' *rōpē'im*) to embalm (*hānat*) his father (Genesis 50:2). Joseph is the only other biblical character whose body was embalmed (Genesis 50:26). This task took forty days (Genesis 50:3). Mathews (2005:917) observes that because embalming does not require such an extensive period, the period probably included public ceremonial rites and honours. He further suggests that embalming Jacob's body and the declaration of a formal period of mourning in Egypt indicates the prestige he and Joseph held. In Egypt, embalming was a religious rite probably related to the Egyptian's belief about the afterlife. It is plausible to believe, as Hamilton (1995:691) suggests, that because embalming was a religious observance and in view of the frequent use of magical incantations and spells as a part of ancient medical praxis, it is likely that the Egyptian physicians served in some kind of a priestly capacity. Therefore, to involve physicians (Genesis 50:2) may not point to Joseph's desire to distance the mummification of his father's body from the Egyptians religious rites (contra Mathews 2005:917). Among the Hebrews the practice was to bury the body shortly after death, not to embalm. The customary Egyptian mourning rites involved seventy days, seventy two for a king, which probably include the forty days mentioned here for embalming.

After the Egyptian mourning period, Joseph, through courtiers, sought and obtained permission

from Pharaoh to bury his father in Canaan (Genesis 50:4). It is out of character for Joseph who seems to have had direct access to Pharaoh to go through courtiers. Mathews (2005:917) remarks that Joseph chose not to seek Pharaoh's audience himself perhaps because of cultic impurity associated with death or mourning taboo due to his contact with the corpse of his father (cf. Numbers 19:11, 14, 16; Esther 4:2). Joseph's words to Pharaoh, assumed to have been said by Jacob, "bury me in the tomb I dug for myself" (Genesis 50:5) are not quoted verbatim but were meant to make Joseph's request more appealing. Hamilton (1995:693) notes that it was not uncommon among the Egyptians for a rich individual to prepare his own burial place and stock it with what he deemed necessary for a good life in the hereafter.

A large number of people joined the funeral procession from Egypt (Genesis 50:7-9). Mathews (2005:918) suggests that the large number on this procession included survivors of Jacob's family, high-ranking Egyptian officials complete with a military escort. This testified to the stature accorded to Jacob and the respect that Joseph's family enjoyed in Egypt.

The mourning procession halted at 'the threshing-floor of Atad', near the Jordan (Genesis 50:10). At 'the threshing-floor of Atad' there was intense lamentation, described as loud and bitter, and a seven-day period of mourning for Jacob was observed (cf. Genesis 27:41; Deuteronomy 34:8). Mathews (2005:919) records that mourning for seven days was a common practice (cf. 1 Samuel 31:13; 1 Chronicles 10:12; Job 2:13; Ezekiel 3:15-16). This is still the practice within contemporary Jewish mourning. However, the period varied from seven days (Genesis 50:10; 1 Samuel 31:13) to thirty days (Deuteronomy 34:8; Numbers 20:29).

The manner of mourning for Jacob was influenced by Egyptian beliefs and practices (Genesis 50:11, cf. Exodus 12:30). This can be deduced not only from embalming and the extended period of mourning but also from the comments by the Canaanites when the procession of mourners pitched camp near the Jordan. When the Canaanites, who were the local inhabitants, 'saw' the happenings, they concluded that it was a solemn Egyptian mourning ceremony. Joseph and his brothers carefully heeded Jacob's dying words (Genesis 50:12). They carried and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought (Genesis 50:13). Mathews (2005:920) observes that Abraham's purchase of the burial site is mentioned to highlight the right of ownership that the family had amidst their Canaanite neighbours. However, the mourning of Jacob reveals the impact of the residence culture. Mourning is often culture specific and the impact of the Egyptian culture is here clearly attested to.

5.2.6 The death of Aaron's sons (Leviticus 10:1-7)

The book of Leviticus is at the heart of the Old Testament Torah or Pentateuch. Leviticus continues the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. It consists of ritual laws and particularly records how sacrifices and offerings were to be performed in order to worship God in purity and holiness (Rooker 2000:39 cf. Gane 2004:23-24; Wenham 1979:155f.). Wenham (1979:16) observes that Leviticus expresses God's character and will as embodied generally in his dealings with Israel and particularly in the laws he gave them.

Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron (Exodus 6:23; 24:1-2; 28:1; Numbers 3:2-4; 26:60; 1 Chronicles 6:3), acted contrary to the proper practice as stipulated by the Law of God leading to their demise. On the occasion recorded in chapter 10, the two brothers 'offered unauthorised fire before the Lord' (Leviticus 10:1). The exact nature of the 'unauthorised fire' (lit. 'strange fire' *'ēš zārā*) is rather obscure. However, it is clear from the narrative that the fire was other than what the Lord 'had commanded'. Gane (2004:188 cf. Milgrom 1991:598) suggests that their action amounted to 'deviations from protocol'. Acting in a way that had probably been 'expressly forbidden' had dire consequences (2 Samuel 6:6-7; 1 Chronicles 13:9-10, see Bonar 1978:188). Harrison (1980:108-109) also assumes that an act of sacrilege, perhaps motivated by pride, ambition, jealousy or impatience, was perpetrated by Nadab and Abihu. In a swift response to their disobedient carelessness, the fire of divine retribution consumed them to death (Leviticus 10:2 cf. Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; Numbers 11:1; 16:35; 2 Kings 1:10, 12). Although they were set apart for God's use, priests had been warned that any form of profanity would be judged (Exodus 19:22 cf. Ezekiel 24:16, 17). Their deaths seem to fit in the general view of death in the book of Leviticus as resulting from the violation of the Lord's commandments (Kiuchi 2007:395).

Moses declared a message from the Lord to Aaron presumably concerning the tragic happening but 'Aaron remained silent' (Leviticus 10:3 cf. Job 2:12-13). Keeping silent was a common mourning practice (Pope 1973:25; Clines 1989:64). Radner (2008:96) observes that what happened was shocking and remained a sad memory long after it had happened (Leviticus 16:1-2; Numbers 3:4; 26:61). He further suggests that Aaron fell silent 'perhaps grimly, surely dazed and sorrowful' and cites other commentators including Calvin who interpret Aaron's silence as being dictated by stoic endurance and thus a virtuous expression of his blunt acceptance of God's will (Radner 2008:97). Similarly, Bonar (1978:190, 192) suggests that it is silence of submission to the act of God arguing that 'no feeling of the tender, paternal heart of Aaron is needlessly injured'. On the contrary, as Radner (2008:104) helpfully observes, there seem to be a struggle within Aaron's heart, a cry and unrequited sorrow. His unspoken grief probably underlie his refusal to eat of the final sin offering as it would ordinarily be the case (Leviticus 6:24-30). Moses lets the matter rest after Aaron gave reasons for his refusal to eat

of the sin offering by making reference to what had befallen him on that day, namely the deaths of his eldest sons (Leviticus 10:16-19).

The bodies of Nadab and Abihu were removed from the Tent of Meeting and taken outside the camp (Leviticus 10:4-5). Rooker (2000:158f.) notes that this was a necessary precaution because priests were not to be contaminated by death (Leviticus 21). Such contamination would profane their holiness and thus preclude them from officiating in the sanctuary. The bodies were removed from the 'holy' (*qodeš*) precincts by Aaron's non-priestly cousins, Mishael and Elzaphan (Exodus 6:22). It is probable that relatives played a special role in funeral rituals (cf. Amos 6:10).

Moses commanded Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, to abstain from mourning in the usual way (Gane 2004:189). They were not to let their hair be unkempt or to uncover their heads thus letting the hair hang loose, or to tear their clothes (Leviticus 10:6 cf. 13:45; 21:10). Kiuchi (2007:181) suggests that these were symbolic gestures related to death and uncleanness (Numbers 5:18). Harrison (1980:113) argues that although Israelites responded to the occurrence of death with much emotion, for the surviving priestly group to mourn these deaths would imply not only that they were not giving priority to their priestly responsibilities but it would also appear that they were challenging in some way the judgment that God had executed. They were required to continue to minister as priests and not to leave the Tent of Meeting because the Lord's anointing was upon them (Leviticus 10:7 cf. 21:1-15). Wenham (1979:157) observes that perhaps the surviving priests were forbidden to join in the customary rites of mourning because they had to identify themselves entirely with God's viewpoint and not to arouse any suspicion that they condoned the deceased's sin (cf. Kiuchi 2007:181). However, the law did not disapprove of mourning. Aaron's relatives were allowed to mourn these deaths. Bonar (1978:193) suggests that the Israelites mourned this burning both in its cause and in its effects, the sin that occasioned it and the sorrow that resulted from it.

5.2.7 The death of Miriam, Aaron and Moses (Numbers 20; Deuteronomy 34:5-8)

The twentieth chapter of the book of Numbers begins with a simple report of the death of Miriam, sister to Aaron and Moses, at Kadesh (Numbers 20.1). Miriam was one of the great leaders of Israel, a prophetess and musician (Exodus 15:20-21). There is no mention of mourning for Miriam. Cole (2000:324) observes that because Miriam was dear to Moses, her death may have caused him to enter a period of depression or even despair, which might have led him to respond so negatively when the people protested over lack of water at Meribah.

According to the narrative, Aaron and Moses died after their sister Miriam according to divine

plan. Cole points out that in Numbers God reveals himself as faithful both in word and deed (Cole 2000:43). God's word concerning these leaders was that they, like other Israelites of their generation, would not enter the Promised Land. There is symmetry between the deaths of Aaron and Moses (Ashley 1993:394; Cole 2000:338; Levine 1993:494). First, they both died in the mountains and were buried there. Aaron died on Mount Hor at a hundred and twenty-three years old (Numbers 20:27-28; 33:38-39) while Moses died on the outskirts of Mount Nebo aged a hundred and twenty years (Deuteronomy 34:1, 5f.). Secondly, the death of these great leaders was marked with thirty days of national mourning (Numbers 20:29; Deuteronomy 34:8). This extended period of mourning was clearly in their honour as the typical mourning period for the Hebrews is seven days (Genesis 50:10; 1 Chronicles 10:12; 1 Samuel 31:13; Job 2:13). As Ashley (1993:397) observes, the prolongation of mourning shows the importance of the deceased and the importance of the loss to Israel. Thirdly, their deaths were occasions for significant leadership transition for establishing continuity in the history of Israel. When Aaron was about to die, leadership was publicly transferred from him, the first high priest of Israel, to his successor Eleazer (Numbers 20:25-28) and when Moses was about to die, he was succeeded by his disciple, Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9). Lastly, in the manner of the biblical patriarchs (Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob – Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33) the phrase 'gathered to his people' is used for both Aaron and Moses (Numbers 20:24; 31:2).

As already pointed out in discussing the death of Abraham, the phrase 'gathered to his people' is unique to the Pentateuch. It conveys the idea of being reunited with one's ancestors who had entered the realm of Sheol previously, an intimation of immortality or conviction about life after death (Cole 2000:340 cf. Wenham 1981:153; Hamilton 1995:168). Levine (1993:494) suggests several other interpretations for this phrase including the sense that one is not left unburied (Jeremiah 8:2; 9:21; 25:33), secondary burial, bringing a dead person to a family grave (Leviticus 21:1, 4), and the sense that one rests with his ancestors in *Sheol*. Cole (2000:340) rejects Levine's suggestion that the phrase may describe secondary burial, when one's bones were removed from the burial chamber to the ossuary chamber where earlier family members had been gathered. Cole's line argument is supported by the knowledge that neither Aaron nor Moses was buried in a land that had belonged to their forefathers or in an ancestral grave.

The death of Aaron made atonement for some sin possible (Wenham 1981:154). At the death of the high priest, those who had been confined for manslaughter were set free to enjoy their lives again (Numbers 35:28).

5.2.8 The death of Naomi's husband and sons (Ruth 1:1-4:21)

The narrator in the book of Ruth introduces the reader to the dealings of the Almighty God with

a family during the time of the judges. 'In those days in Israel there was no king, everyone did as they saw fit' (Judges 21:25). The first part of chapter one begins with various kinds of bereavement especially through death and loss. This chapter also introduces the personal process of managing bereavement by three women, namely, Naomi, Orpah and Ruth who were left widowed and childless. Hubbard (1988:92) notes that the phrase 'was left' (*šā'ēr*) is commonly used in the Old Testament to describe bereavement by death (Ruth 1:3 cf. Genesis 7:23; 14:10; 42:38; Exodus 14:28).

Due to famine in the land Judah, Elimelech, accompanied by his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, left Bethlehem in Judah for Moab. The narrator says nothing about the family's stay in Moab after their economic migration but quickly confronts the reader with a tragedy. Elimelech died (Ruth 1:3). Tribble aptly points out that Naomi became a widow, though not without hope, since she was 'left with her two sons' who provided her with a possible future through the continuation of the family line (Tribble 1978:167). The marriage of her sons opened up the prospect of posterity.

However, during the ten years of their stay in Moab, more tragedy dashed Naomi's hopes. Her sons, Mahlon ('sickly') and Kilion ('failing') died childless (Ruth 1:5). Left without her two sons and her husband, Naomi was 'in a situation of great deprivation and despair' (Jackman 1991:318). As Tribble(1978:167-168) writes, 'From wife to widow, from mother to no-mother, this female is stripped of all identity. The security of husband and children, which male-dominated culture affords its women, is hers no longer. The definition of worth, by which it values the female, applies to her no more. The blessings of old age, which it gives through progeny, are there no longer. Stranger in a foreign land, this woman is a victim of death – and of life'. Bush (1996:57) aptly captures Naomi's bitter despair when he asks: 'What will happen to a woman in a patriarchal society when all men of the family have died?'

In her bereavement, Naomi heard reports that God had provided for Judah (1:6). She decided to return to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:7). She set off with her young widowed daughters-in-law but changed her mind about taking them with her. She determined to dissuade them from going with her to Judah feeling powerless to help and unable to meet their needs. She prayed them entreating Yahweh's covenant kindness (*hesed*) and that they would each find the security and comfort of a new husband and home (Ruth 1:8-9, 11, 12-13). Tribble (1978:170-171) observes that in order for their lives to be fulfilled, they had to remarry, because their male-structured society offered no other possibility.

Naomi's daughters-in-law responded independently to her repeated command to 'go back' or 'return home' (Ruth 1:8, 11, 12, and 15). Orpah chose to return to her people but Ruth, contrary

to Naomi's orders, chose to cling to Naomi (Ruth 1:14). Tribble (1978:172-173) observes that from a cultural point of view, Orpah acted according to the structures and customs of society. Her decision was sound, sensible and secure. On the contrary, Ruth chose death over life by not only breaking with family, country and faith, but also committing herself to the life of an old woman rather than to the search for a husband (Ruth 1:16-17). Naomi stopped urging Ruth to return and the two travelled together to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19, 22).

On reaching Bethlehem, Naomi was overcome by her agony and emptiness again. Earlier in her prayer, Naomi had pointed at Yahweh as the ultimate cause of her troubles saying that the Lord had dealt harshly with her (Ruth 1:13). In Bethlehem she asked the women not to call her Naomi ('sweet or pleasant one') but Mara ('bitter one') and repeated her earlier claim that the power of death in her life was divinely caused; 'the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty' (Ruth 1:19-21). She was clearly still mourning the deaths of her loved ones.

In the extended family system of Israel, Naomi found 'a relative on her husband's side' (Ruth 2:1) called Boaz. Naomi recognised Boaz not only as a close relative but one of their kinsman-redeemers (Ruth 2:20; 3:9 cf. Leviticus 25). She later made use of this link. Naomi encouraged Ruth to glean in Boaz's field because in someone else's field she could be molested (Ruth 1:22). Through gleaning, Ruth provided food for herself and for her mother-in-law. Gleaning was allowed by law in Israel for the poor and the alien (Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-22). The existence of such laws not only highlights the deprivation that widows, orphans and aliens faced but more importantly that Yahweh affirmed his protection of those vulnerable to deprivation and want (Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Psalm 146:9). In addition, those who took advantage of the disadvantaged were indicted (Isaiah 1:23; 10:1-2; Malachi 3:5 and Psalm 94:6-7; see Ulrich 2007:54-57).

Naomi informed Ruth of her intention to find a home where she would be well provided for (Ruth 3:1 cf. 1:9). Barber (1983:54 cf. Goslinga 1986:535; Hubbard 1988:105) points out that the Hebrew word, *menûhāh*, translated here as 'find a home' literally means 'rest' (cf. Ruth 1:9) and embraces the love of a husband, the comfort and security of the home he will provide and the provision of those temporal blessings that keep one's anxieties manageable. Bush observes that Naomi saw it as her responsibility to see to it that the destitute state and reproach that widowhood represented in Israelite society was resolved for Ruth (Bush 1996:147). Ruth agreed to the plan to meet Boaz at the threshing-floor (Ruth 3:5). Tribble (1978:184) observes that at the threshing-floor, Ruth challenged Boaz to be the occasion of divine blessing in her life. Marriage is that blessing (Ruth 3:9). Following this bold move, a meeting of elders was constituted at the town gate to discuss the possibility of a redeemer (Ruth 4:1-2).

At first, the nearer redeemer (*gō'ēl*) agreed to redemption (Ruth 4:4). However, it appears that he agreed only for personal gain, that is, the acquisition of property, rather than for familial restoration (Ruth 4:6). He showed interest when the deal was the acquisition of Elimelech's land but showed no interest in marrying Ruth to raise an heir to whom the property would revert. Since he refused to do the part of a redeemer, the outcome was assured for Ruth and Boaz who was 'the next in line' (Trible 1978:189; Jackman 1991:355). After the abrogation of the nearer redeemer, Boaz assumed the right and married Ruth, Mahlon's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property so that his name will not disappear from Israel (Ruth 4:10). The Lord enabled Ruth, the childless, to conceive and bear a son, Obed (Ruth 4:13, 17). Goslinga (1986:552) observes that without the birth of the child, Elimelech's family would have had no posterity. From this point of view, the child was the real kinsman-redeemer. Only through the child was the yoke of affliction that the Lord had laid on Naomi completely removed. Ulrich (2007:155) helpfully observes that there may not be an explanation for the deaths of Naomi's husband and sons but the birth of Obed assured her that God orders life's vicissitudes for the eventual and ultimate good of his people.

5.2.9 The death of Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 31:1-13; 1 Chronicles 10:1-12)

When Saul led the Israelite troops against the invading Philistines at Mount Gilboa, they were routed and many of his fighters were killed (1 Samuel 31:1). Among those killed were his three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua (1 Samuel 31:2). Saul was critically wounded by the Philistine archers (1 Samuel 31:3 cf. 2 Samuel 1:9). In his critical state, Saul asked his armour-bearer to kill him. However, the terrified armour-bearer would not do it perhaps fearing to kill 'the Lord's anointed' (2 Samuel 1:14 cf. 1 Samuel 24:6-7; 26:7-11). Saul killed himself rather than being killed and abused by the uncircumcised Philistines (31:4).

Saul committed suicide and was not a victim of euthanasia as an Amalekite, seeking David's favour, erroneously reported the incident (2 Samuel 1:1-14). The armour-bearer followed suit (1 Samuel 31:5). The following day the Philistines cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armour (1 Samuel 31:9). They spread news about their victory among their people. They put Saul's armour in the temple of Ashtoreths 'perhaps as objects of veneration' (McCarter 1980:443). McKane (1963:173), citing Albright, notes that Astarte was a goddess of sex and war and appears here in the character of a martial goddess. Finally, the Philistines fastened the king's body on the wall of Beth-Shan (1 Samuel 31:10; 2 Samuel 21:12). Gunn (1980:157) notes that taking Saul's armour, a symbol of his status as king of Israel, to the temple of Ashtaroth indicates that his death was a desecration. A divine judgment (cf. Arnold 2003:400f.).

The people of Jabesh Gilead, at risk to themselves, retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-Shan. Their courage and loyalty stemmed from the fact that Saul had come to their rescue from Nahash the Ammonite (1 Samuel 11:1-15). At Jabesh they burned the bodies (1 Samuel 31:12). Klein (1983:289) observes that reference to the burning of the bodies is strange since there is no evidence for the toleration or use of cremation among the Hebrews. He notes that burning was used in certain forms of capital punishment (Leviticus 20:14; 21:9; Joshua 7:25). In this incident, the people of Jabesh Gilead had to burn the bodies perhaps being unable to carry them in their advanced decay after some days in the Near-Eastern sun (Klein 1983:290). The burning of the decomposed bodies in this case was not a normal form of disposing of the human body but a matter of desperate necessity. They carried the bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree and fasted seven days (1 Samuel 31:11-13). Fasting was a common practice in Israel during mourning.

David and the rest of Israel mourned for Saul, his son Jonathan and the army of the Lord who had fallen by the sword of the enemy. They tore their clothes, mourned, wept and fasted for the dead (2 Samuel 1:11-12). They thus observed the customary form of mourning common in Israel. The action of putting dust on the head mentioned here (2 Samuel 1:2) was also common in mourning. The action was a symbolic declaration by the mourners that they did not feel worthy or fit to be alive and thus they judged themselves deserving death (cf. Calvin 1992:5).

In addition, David dedicated a mourning song to Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:17-27). In this dirge, David hails Saul and Jonathan for their bravery in battle and Jonathan for his brotherly love. In this elegy in which David praises Jonathan, his loyal friend, there is no expression of criticism of Saul who had pursued and sought to kill him. Halpern (2001:37) casts doubt on David's sincerity in his performance of mourning rituals in the case of Saul as well as in other recorded cases. He argues that rather than being sincere, David's mourning was utilitarian, a matter of practical political necessity or public relations. However, noticing that David had several chances where he could have easily killed Saul but restrained himself out of reverence to God's anointing of Saul (1 Samuel 24:7; 26:9ff.), Calvin (1992:6) declares that David's weeping was not in the least insincere.

Mourning for Saul was carried out in spite the fact that Yahweh had rejected him as king. Saul's demise is linked his unfaithfulness to God and to the incidence at Endor where he consulted a necromancer (1 Chronicles 10:13-14; 1 Samuel 12:15; 15:23; 28:19).

5.2.10 The death of David's children (2 Samuel 12:15-23; 13:23-39; 18:1-19:1-7)

David reacted variously when faced with the deaths of his children. The deaths that occur in

David's household are presented as a direct consequence of the Lord's judgment of his sin (2 Samuel 11: 1-24). It is recorded that from the roof of his palace, David saw a beautiful woman taking a bath and lusted after her. He inquired about her and was informed that she was Bathsheba wife of Uriah the Hittite. Even after finding out that she was married, David sent for her and slept with her while the husband was away on the battlefield. Bathsheba conceived and as a cover-up, David planned to get her husband killed. His plot succeeded and Uriah was indeed killed in battle. But God, who sees everything, was displeased with David's sin and attempted cover-up. He pronounced judgment against David through the prophet Nathan. Nathan declared that because David had despised the word of the Lord and done this evil, the sword shall never depart from his house (2 Samuel 12:9-10).

The divine judgment against David took effect immediately bringing tears of sorrow. David was devastated at the declaration by the prophet Nathan that the child born to him by Bathsheba would die. This child was the fruit of David's adultery and premeditated schemes which led to the killing of Uriah so that he could have Uriah's wife Bathsheba. After Nathan delivered the message, the Lord struck the child with illness (2 Samuel 12:15). On receiving the sad news of the impending death and beholding the sick child, David fasted, wept and lay on the ground for seven days. He pleaded with the Lord in prayer to save the child (2 Samuel 12:16). It is interesting to note that seven days are devoted to mourning for the dead among the Hebrews. Clines (1989:64) points out the possibility that mourning rituals were regarded as appropriate for one in great distress.

However, as Nathan had prophesied, the child died as a consequence of David's sin (Arnold 2003:536). Because of David's intense weeping and supplication while the child lay sick, his servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead thinking he would 'do something desperate' (2 Samuel 12:18). But when he sensed from their whispering that the child had died, David reacted quite unexpectedly by not engaging in the cultural mourning practices. David argued that nothing could bring back the child. Calvin (1992:591) suggests that when David saw that God had carried out what he had promised, he accepted God's judgment. 'I will go to him, but he will not return to me' (2 Samuel 12:23), David concluded. He realised that death is irreversible for *Sheol* is a place of no return (cf. Job 7:9; 10:21). McKane (1963:234) observes that the child could not be brought back from *Sheol*, but, in fulfilling the law of his mortality, David would surely end up in the shadowy world of the dead. Halpern (2001:37) argues that David's behaviour represents a practical approach to prayer and mourning arguing that these would be pointless after the child's death. Citing Olyan, Halpern (2001:38) concludes that David saw ritual as 'useful only insofar as it is efficacious, or potentially efficacious, in achieving the aim of the performer'. On the contrary, David explains his action saying 'I thought, "Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live"' (2 Samuel 12:22). It was supplication in

the hope that the Lord might save the child (cf. Anderson 1986:164). Calvin (1992:590) argues that while the child was sick, David prayed not only out of parental love and the anguish of seeing the suffering of the child, but because he knew that his sin was the cause of the child's suffering.

In his supplication for the child, David appealed to the Lord's grace. As Davis (1999:130) helpfully points out, for David grace is the peculiar bent of God's nature. It is unlikely that David had engaged in the cultural mourning rites proleptically and therefore saw no need to continue in mourning when the child died dashing his hope because on this occasion the Lord could not reverse the earlier decision (2 Samuel 12:14 cf. Fokkelman 1981:90; Halpern 2001:38). However, it is probable that David abandoned his apotropaic fast, prayer and supplication because these acts had served their purpose, that is, his hopefulness in Yahweh to forgive and deliver (cf. Anderson 1986:164; Davis 1999:131). After the death of the child, David washed, put on lotion, changed his clothes, went to the house of the Lord to worship and had some food (2 Samuel 12:20). Although David's reaction baffled the onlookers and still baffles the reader that he did not grief or mourn the child, as Anderson (1986:164) warns, his supplication should not be confused for proleptic expression of grief or mourning. However, David's reaction helps the reader not to excuse oneself of the guilt of sin but rather to get beyond the despair of sin and to turn to God in supplication (cf. Davis 1999:131). David comforted his wife Bathsheba who not so long before the death of the infant had been in mourning for her husband, Uriah (2 Samuel 11:26).

David's family continued to experience bereavement in fulfilment of God's divine judgment. His firstborn son, Amnon born by Ahinoam from Jezreel (2 Samuel 3:2), 'fell in love' with his beautiful half-sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1). With the help of his shrewd cousin, Jonadab, he feigned sickness and asked that Tamar should go to his house and prepare some food for him. Amnon, not really interested in the special bread Tamar had prepared for him, raped her (2 Samuel 13:14) despite her pleas for him not to do such 'wicked thing' (2 Samuel 13:12). After his wicked act, Amnon hated Tamar 'with intense hatred' saying to her, 'Get up and get out!' And to his servant, 'Get this woman out of here...' 'Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went' (2 Samuel 13:19). Absalom determined to take revenge against his half-brother Amnon for raping and disgracing his sister.

Two years later, Absalom plotted and had Amnon murdered by his servants at his command (2 Samuel 13:28-29). This happened at a sheep-shearing party which Absalom had strategically organised at Baal Hazor. Amnon's incestuous rape had thus brought about feelings of fury (David), desolation and disgrace (Tamar), hate (Absalom), murder (Amnon) and thus great

anguish and bereavement for the entire royal family.

Following Amnon's murder, the other princes who were also at the party fled the scene to return to Jerusalem. While they were still on the way to Jerusalem, an erroneous report reached David that Absalom had killed all his brothers. On hearing this sad news, 'the king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground' (2 Samuel 13:30-31). The shrewd Jonadab son of Shimeah, who had been privy to Absalom's expressed intention to avenge the rape of his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:32), corrected the error by saying that only Amnon had been killed. This, however, did not diminish the king's pain. The surviving princes arrived, 'wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his servants wept very bitterly' (2 Samuel 13:36) for Amnon. Absalom fled after the murder of his brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13:37).

Halpern (2001:39, 88) argues that the statement at the end of the narrative that 'the king's heart longed for Absalom' (2 Samuel 13:39; 14:1) exposes David as one who took no stock of the dead. David's reaction, therefore, perfectly fits with the Lockean axiom that the earth is for the living. Such a view of life would be in direct opposition to the Abaluyia's idea of life as involving the living, the dead and the unborn (cf. Shorter 1998:84; Mbiti 1969; Wagner 1954:42). Halpern's critique is perhaps unnecessary as it is recorded that David sought Absalom only when 'he was consoled concerning Amnon's death' (13:39) after three years of daily mourning for Amnon (2 Samuel 13:37). The intense and extended mourning reflects a genuine anguish and horror that often comes with losing a family member through murder or some other violent death.

Absalom's action of fleeing following the murder of his half-brother Amnon is similar to the cultural practice among the Abaluyia. For the Abaluyia, if a person committed murder, he would flee from the community and would usually seek refuge among his maternal uncles or some other distant community. The expulsion from the community meant that the person would be considered an enemy and thus he would forfeit his inheritance from his father. This seems to have been a common custom in Old Testament times (cf. Cain, Simeon and Levi; see Halpern 2001:88).

In 2 Samuel 15 – 19, we read of a civil war against David. The *coup* is plotted by David's own son Absalom who had secretly declared himself king. David and his men had to flee for their lives. 'David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up' (2 Samuel 15:30). Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, Absalom 'lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel' (2 Samuel 16:21). Absalom's rebellion was quashed by his father's professional soldiers and Absalom killed in battle. David's reaction to the news of his son's

death was unexpected. 'The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son!"(2 Samuel 18:33). The soldier's victory turned to mourning as they grieved with David (2 Samuel 19:1-4). This deep grieving was in spite of Absalom's rebellion against David. His fatherly love swamped all other considerations as he mourned for Absalom.

During his lifetime, Absalom had erected a pillar as a monument to himself in order to carry on the memory of his name for he had no son (2 Samuel 18:18). Albright, cited by McKane (1963:266), observes that erection of a funeral stele was not a normal practice among the Hebrews. Absalom's pillar should, therefore, be traced to his Aramean connections on his mother's side.

It is helpful to note that David did not minimise the grief he felt at the death of his children as some commentators have suggested (see Halpern 2001:37). In these cases, David must have realised that it was Yahweh's judgment for his sin. Davis (1999:193) suggests that Nathan's words in 12:10-12 ought to illumine David's pitiful sorrow. It was his guilt that inflamed his grief. Finally, his actions in these incidences cannot lend support to the Abaluyia's tendency to minimise the pain of prenatal deaths, the death of infants and of childless or unmarried adults.

5.2.11 Job's bereavement (Job 1:13-22)

Job's trials were not only immense but proverbially intense. Suffering is clearly a dominant theme in the book of Job. Job's one form of suffering results from death which also raises the question of the afterlife. There are glimpses of the hope of resurrection in this book which is otherwise dominated by despair and uncertainty beyond the grave (Job 14:13-17; 19:23-27). Alden (1993:40) argues that the book of Job seeks to correct and instruct on the character of God, deliberate on the problem of the suffering of the righteous and to engender healing for those who suffer. These corrective, instructive and therapeutic purposes are interrelated and find expression in the relations and character of Job.

In the first set of Job's tribulations, a marauding band of Sabeans took all his oxen and donkeys and killed the workers (Job 1:14-15). Another loss was occasioned by 'the fire of God', probably a bolt of lightning (cf. Job 20:26; Numbers 11:1-3; 16:35; 26:10; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10-14), which burned up his sheep and the servants looking after them (Job 1:16). This was followed by an attack by Chaldeans who took off with his camels after a merciless massacre of the servants (Job 1:17). The first set of tribulations culminated with the death of all his sons and daughters. Job's children were killed when the house in which they had gathered for a party collapsed

having been ravaged by a 'mighty wind', perhaps the sirocco also known as 'a wind that brought judgment', a hot sandy wind that blows predominantly at the beginning and the end of summer (Job 1:13-22 cf. Jeremiah 4:11-12; 18:17; Hartley 1988:77). In each incident only one servant escaped to report back to Job.

Job was greatly grieved following these tragic losses. Hartley (1988:77) observes that the four plagues revealed to Job that all the forces of heaven and earth had turned hostile toward him. This can be inferred from the fact that the plagues alternate between earthly and heavenly forces from all four points of the compass: the Sabeans from the south, lightning from a storm out of the west, the Chaldeans from the north and the treacherous sirocco blowing off the desert to the east. In his deep grief, Job got up, tore his outer garment (*mē'ilô*), shaved his head (*gāzaz*) then fell to the ground in worship (Job 1:20). Alden (1993:60-61) argues that all but one of Job's responses were standard ancient Near East demonstrations of grief (cf. Genesis 37:29, 34; 44:13; Numbers 14:6; Joshua 7:6; 2 Samuel 1:11; 13:19, 31; 2 Kings 5:7; 6:30; 19:1; Ezra 9:3; Isaiah 15:2; 36:22; 37:1; Jeremiah 7:29; 16:6; 41:5; Ezekiel 27:31; Micah 1:16). Wearing of sackcloth, though absent here, appears in Job 16:15.

Apart from observing the standard mourning practices, Job distinguished himself when he fell prostrate to the ground in 'humble acknowledgment of and capitulation to God's sovereign will' (Alden 1993:62 cf. Jackson 2007:40, 77). Hartley (1988:77) points out that in his action of supplication, Job not only acknowledged God's lordship over all his possessions but also sought consolation from the Almighty. In his submissive obedience, Job declared, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised' (Job 1:21). He acknowledged that he was born without anything, and that he would take nothing with him on his death. Therefore, Job did not sin by accusing God with wrongdoing (Job 1:22). As Hartley (1988:78) comments, 'mourning in silence, Job gave his lips no opportunity to utter an angry curse or a cruel vindictive word'.

Job's wife, who undoubtedly equally suffered the catastrophic loss of their children and wealth, advised Job to 'curse God and die' (Job 2:9). Alden (1993:67) observes that Job's wife believed that there was a direct and immediate connection between sin and punishment. She was thus suggesting that he would do something to effect his death because to 'curse God' was as good as committing suicide (cf. Leviticus 24:10-16). Job responded by rebuking his wife for her irreverence and rhetorically inquired, 'Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' (Job 2:10). Job understood that God's sovereign plan for his life did not involve only goodness, but also suffering.

Three of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, agreed to go and sympathise with him and

to comfort him (Job 2:11). They wept aloud, tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat with him on the ground in silence for seven days and seven nights (Job 2:12-13). However, the friends were, 'miserable comforters' (Job 16:2). Hartley (1988:257) argues that the phrase 'miserable comforters' is a pungent oxymoron, that is, the more words the friends spoke to comfort, the more pain they inflicted. The friends ended up having to repent for their 'folly' (Job 42:7-9). In their attempt to defend God, they in fact misrepresented him.

Job's story has a happy ending. God restored his health, doubled his wealth and blessed him with another set of seven sons and three daughters (Job 42:10). Hartley (1988:540) comments that the blessing proves that Yahweh is a life-giving God, not a capricious deity who takes pleasure in the suffering of those who fear him. In his sovereign design he may permit suffering for a reason and a season but in due time he will bring total healing.

5.3 Bereavement in the New Testament

As so far as bereavement is concerned, there is a recognisable continuity between the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament attest to various party positions held in Israel concerning whether or not the dead will resurrect. The Pharisees and Sadducees held opposing views concerning the resurrection. While the Pharisees believed in the resurrection, the Sadducees maintained that there is no resurrection (Matthew 22:23-32 cf. Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40). In this study the main focus is not to develop a theology of death and the later things but rather to glean from various occurrences of bereavement recorded in the New Testament beliefs and practices that engender healing for the bereaved.

5.3.1 The bereaved widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-16)

Luke, perhaps clearer than the other gospel writers, presents Jesus not only as one having authority over all things but also as one with deep compassion for those who grieve. In this gospel, Jesus cares for the broken-hearted; he is present with them, acknowledges their mourning and brings consolation to the troubled. The story of the death of the widow's son in the small town of Nain, which only Luke tells, captures well the compassionate character of Jesus. The story comes soon after the healing of the centurion's servant. This occurrence at Nain, therefore, may have been a few days after the healing in Capernaum. Luke does not give reason for Jesus' journey to Nain. However, Luke wishes the reader to see something of Jesus' divinity and thus leaves the reason for the journey to divine purposes. Jesus was accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd (Luke 7:11).

As Jesus' party came near the town gate, a burial procession made up of a widow whose only son had died accompanied by a crowd of mourners emerged from the town (Luke 7:12). The

town gate was at the head of the main street and it was the place where people socialised but also where elders of the city met to adjudicate on issues affecting the community (cf. Ruth 4:1). At this gate of the town of Nain, divine purpose merged with divine providence. God in his sovereignty orchestrated all contingencies to bring about his purpose (cf. Proverbs 16:9, 33; Psalm 139:1-5). It may seem coincidental that Jesus' arrival coincided with the departure of the funeral procession but it was a matter of providence (Lenski 1946:397 contra Morris 1974:153).

Among the Jews, the family of the deceased goes first leading the procession 'either in front of or behind the bier' (Lenski 1946:398). The procession crowds were often large because it was the custom that anyone who passed a funeral procession was required to join it and share its lamentation (Keener 2003:843). The funeral procession was going to the burial site. The burial sites were always outside of town (Wright 2001:83). The poor were buried in a grave dug in the ground as is common today. After burial, stones were placed on the top to mark the grave in order that people would avoid it. Any contact with the grave, as with the corpse, made one ritually unclean (Numbers 19). Those who had means were buried in a cave or burial chambers hewed in a rock (cf. Isaiah 53:9). The same cave would be used over and over again. The bones of those previously buried there were stored away in a bone-box kept in the cave. The body would be interred the same day following death, not being kept overnight, but if the death occurred too late for burial, then burial would be conducted the following morning (Lenski 1946:398).

When the Lord Jesus saw the widow alone at the head of the funeral procession of her only son, 'his heart went out to her' (Luke 7:13, cf. 1:78). Jesus saw her loneliness and recognised that with the burial of her only son this widow had a bleak future and an insecure present. With her loss, not only was the future of her family gone, but the present was in jeopardy because she had lost her protector and her support. Larson (1983:131) observes that the only social security for a woman was to have some man provide for you. In the Jewish society the death of a person's only son was the greatest tragedy to befall a family. It meant the end of that family especially if the widow could no longer give birth to more children. Mourning for an only son was especially bitter. This dire state was used in Israel as a metaphor for extreme sadness (Jeremiah 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zachariah 12:10). Jesus was thus aware of her desperate state and felt deep gut-level compassion for her (*σπλαγνίζομαι*), deep emotion of sympathy with human sadness. Luke, having addressed Jesus as 'the Lord', lets the listener into the character of God who is always compassionate (Exodus 3:7; Judges 10:16; Psalm 103:8-14; Lamentations 3:22; Matthew 9:36; Mark 1:21; 8:2). God cares.

The Lord, God in human flesh, encouraged the widow not to 'cry' (*κλαίειν*), audible weeping (Lenski 1946:399). It broke his heart to see this widow's sadness, her hope dashed and her love

devastated. In this, Jesus expresses his care about human suffering. He cares compassionately about those who are in sorrow. The compassion moved him to touch the bier (*σορός*) bearing the wrapped body of the young man (Luke 7:14). The Jews did not generally use coffins (2 Samuel 3:21). This was a radical action bearing in mind the taboos of the Old Testament law which made it unacceptable to enter a tent where the body is laid before burial, touch a corpse or the stretcher bearing the body or the grave or to practice necromancy. Whereas necromancy was completely incompatible with the worship of Yahweh, according to the law, any physical contact with the dead made one ritually impure and demanded purification rituals (Numbers 19:11-22). With this act, Jesus became like her, a mourner, in mourning her loss. Out of his own volition, Jesus brought the widow's son back to life. Nobody had asked him to do so and no faith is record on the part of the widow (Morris 1974:154; Wright 2001:82). Moved by sheer compassion, Jesus unleashed his resurrection power. Morris (1974:154) observes that Luke's designation of Jesus as 'the Lord' (*ὁ Κύριος*) here is fitting because Jesus shows himself to be Lord over death.

Jesus gave the son back to his mother (Luke 7:15 cf. 1 Kings 17:23). By this act Jesus restored the hope of this family which had been dashed by death. One who had been left with nothing had her joy restored. The crowd was filled with awe when they witnessed a dead man on his way to the grave restored to life. They declared that God had come to help his people (Luke 7:16 cf. Exodus 4:31; Ruth 1:6; 1 Samuel 2:21; Psalm 106:4). Morris (1974:155) notes that the declaration is often used to denote blessing, like in this story, although it may also denote judgment.

5.3.2 The death of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:40-42, 49-55)

Although the story of Jairus' daughter is told by other gospel writers (cf. Matthew 9:18, 23-26; Mark 5:21, 35-43), only Luke reveals that she was Jairus' only daughter (*μονογενής*) of about twelve years. Several commentators including Morris (1974:155) and Lenski (1946:482) argue that the little girl was the only child born to Jairus. The depth of the pain of the death of an only child has already been alluded to in the story of the widow of Nain. Jairus was one of the synagogue leaders. He fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded with him to go to his house and heal his only daughter who lay dying (Luke 8:41-42). Jesus acceded to the request and set off with Jairus but while they were still on the way, someone from Jairus' house informed them that the girl had died (Luke 8:49). The bearer of the sad news then asked Jairus not to trouble Jesus. In this state of helplessness, Jesus gives him hope by asking him not to fear (Luke 8:50).

In Mark's version of this story, there was 'a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly' (Mark 5:38 cf. Luke 8:52) when Jesus' party arrived at Jairus' house. The commotion may be

attributed to the prominent social standing of Jairus. As already noted, the rapid gathering of mourners was normal because in the Near Eastern climatic conditions the dead were buried either on the day of death or the next morning (Lenski 1946:492; cf. Lenski 1943:375). Matthew records that flute players were among the noisy crowd that had already gathered at the home of Jairus when Jesus arrived (Matthew 9:23). Among the Jews, flute players were a mandatory part of mourners. No self-respecting Jew, even the poorest of the poor, would have a funeral without at least two flute players (Köstenberger 2004:338). The flute players would play mournful notes while others banged cymbals to project the discord and dissonance of the pain of bereavement. In addition, although not mentioned in this story, professional mourners were obligatory. Wailing at funerals was a profession in many cultures of the Mediterranean region. Among the Jews at least one female professional mourner was hired (Köstenberger 2004:338). Like lead singers, the professional mourners captured the sombre mood of bereavement by death and move the crowd to mourn for the dead. Lenski (1946:492) describes their performance as follows, 'With hair streaming wildly, beating their breasts violently, the women uttered loud, heart-rending wails and bursts of sobs'. The prominence of the family determined the number of these paid mourners (Lenski 1943:375). Morris (1974:153) cites the *Ketuboth* where it is stated that 'Even the poorest in Israel should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman'. Family, friends and whoever else heard these mourning sounds would come out to try and help and to express their sympathy, solidarity and support for the bereaved. Among the Jews, 'attendance at a funeral was considered a work of love' (Stein 1992:222).

People laughed at Jesus when he ordered a stop to the commotion saying that the little girl was not dead but asleep. According to Luke, the people laughed because they knew that the girl was dead (Luke 8:53; Mark 5:40; Matthew 9:24 see France 2002:239). They knew beyond any reasonable doubt that the girl had died and scornfully laughed at the suggestion that the opposite might be true. On another level and with the benefit of retrospection, the crowd did not know who Jesus truly was. They did not recognise his sovereign power over life and death (cf. Larson 1983:158; Lenski 1946:493; Lenski 1943:376; France 2002:240). Jesus recognised the pain of bereavement but unlike other mourners who gathered around the girl, he had authority over death. As Morris (1974:177) puts it, 'what is death to people is no more than sleep to Jesus' (cf. John 11:11-14; Acts 7:60).

The gospel writers point to Jesus' compassion as well as his power. In his power he called the little girl back to life saying, 'My child, get up' (Luke 8:54, Mark 5:41 keeps the Aramaic '*Talitha kum!*'). Jesus' call had a touch of tenderness and the power of resurrection. Her life was immediately and completely restored, and at once she stood up (Luke 8:55) and walked around (Mark 5:42). She was alive and well. Concerned with her ordinary needs, Jesus told the astonished parents to give the little girl something to eat (Luke 8:55). Jesus brought healing to

this grieving family.

5.3.3 The murder of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:13)

The story of the murder of John the Baptist is recorded in two gospels, Mathew (14:1-12) and Mark (14:29). In both gospels the murder is presented as a flashback (Hare 1993:164). John the Baptist had been arrested by Herod (Mathew 4:12) following his condemnation of Herod's plan to marry Herodias, the wife of Philip, Herod's brother. John the Baptist rebuked Herod for the incestuous marriage because Herodias was his niece as well as the wife of a living brother. According to the Pentateuch law (Leviticus 18:6; 20:21) it is forbidden for a brother to marry his brother's wife (Hare 1993:164; Hauerwas 2006:137). John was beheaded and his disciples took his body and buried it (14:12). Hauerwas (2006:137) aptly comments that 'the story of the murder of John is a story of the world of power, sex and intrigue. It is a story about our world – the one Jesus challenges, the one for which he is the alternative'.

When Jesus heard the sad news of the killing of John the Baptist, he withdrew to a solitary place (Mathew 14:13). Jesus' withdrawal is a direct response to the sad news of the murder of John. The withdrawal follows the events of 14:1-2 since 14:3-12 is a flashback. Jesus was deeply hurt by the news of John the Baptist's death and wanted to get away by himself (Bruner 2004:67). In addition, the disciples had also returned from telling the good news (Mathew 10:5). Getting away would afford them time away from the crowds to rest and recuperate as well as to retreat and have time to learn in private from Jesus (Mark 6:30-31). It is unlikely that Jesus was escaping from the danger posed by Herod as some commentators like Blomberg (1992:231) have suggested. He could not elude the crowds who followed him.

Jesus' public ministry was on the increase and news soon reached Herod. On hearing the news about Jesus Herod said that Jesus is John the Baptist (Mathew 14:2). Hauerwas (2006:138) suggests that Herod suspected that Jesus might be John the Baptist who had risen from the dead. Hare (1993:164-165) argues that probably what is meant is that 'Jesus is another John', that is, Jesus is truly John's successor. It is probable that Herod's observation was influenced by a common belief that it was possible for the spirit of a departed person to contribute to the vitality of a successor (Kings 2:9, 15). Therefore, as John's successor, Jesus was similarly a political threat to Herod's rule (Luke 13:31). Hare's observation captures the Abaluyia's belief which informs the naming of their children after only those who are considered good and blessed before death. Witches, for instance, would not be named after for fear of their spirit influencing those named after them badly.

5.3.4 The death of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

The story is only recorded in the gospel of John. Keener (2003:835) points out that in John's gospel, raising Lazarus from the dead was the immediate excuse for the execution of Jesus. Jesus dies for giving life (John 11:14-16, 50-52; 12:9-11). This excuse symbolically fits the very heart of John's soteriological message (John 3:16-17).

In response to Mary and Martha's request concerning their sick brother who lay dying at home in Bethany (John 11:3), Jesus assures them that the sickness would not end in death (John 11:4). He informed them that the purpose of their brother's sickness was to provide an opportunity for God to manifest his glory (John 11:4; cf. 11:40). According to John, suffering and death affords an opportunity for divine intervention (9:3; 12:23-24; 13:31; 21:19) achieved in Jesus death and resurrection (Keener 2003:839).

Jesus stayed where he was two more days after he was informed about Lazarus' sickness. John prepares the reader for this delay by affirming that Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary and Lazarus (John 11:5 cf. 11:36). His delay could not be attributed to trivialising their suffering. M'Cheyne (1976:26-30) suggests Jesus delayed because he is God who seeing the end from the beginning, to increase his disciple's faith and for the honour of his name. Commentators are generally agreed that because Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrived (John 11:39), he may have died before the messenger(s) reached Jesus. This argument is supported by the fact that a trip from the Jordan plains to Bethany normally took one day. Therefore, the messenger(s) made the one day journey to inform Jesus, he delayed for two days, then took a day to reach Bethany (Barton *et al.* 1993:226; Keener 2003:839; Barrett 1978:391).

Jesus travelled to Bethany in spite of the dangers involved and his disciples' reservations about making a journey to Judea (John 11:8 cf. 10:31, 39). Jesus spoke using euphemism of Lazarus' death as 'sleep'. This figurative designation of death was not unusual (cf. Daniel 12:2; 1 Kings 1:21; 2:10; 11:21, 43; 1 Chronicles 17:11; 2 Chronicles 9:31; 16:13; 21:1; 26:2, 23; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20; 36:8). However, the disciples took the literal meaning in suggesting that actually sleep helps in the process of healing after an illness (John 11:12). Jesus corrected his disciples' misunderstanding and said 'plainly' that Lazarus was dead (John 11:14 cf. 16:29). He informed them that Lazarus' death would be an occasion for them to grow in faith (John 11:15 cf. 2:11; 11:45).

Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany (John 11:17). Ndegwa 2003:210 cf. Wight 1953:44) observes that the importance of the mention that Lazarus 'had been in the tomb for four days' was to underscore the fact that he was not in a coma but truly dead. There was a common belief that the soul remained near the body for three

days after death, just in case there was a chance of it returning. Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to offer support and to comfort them in the loss (John 11:19, 31). Because Lazarus had been dead for four days, the most intense mourning period of sitting for seven days (*shiva*) was going on. Among the Israelites the standard custom was to have burial of the deceased on the day of death, usually no more than eight hours after death. Burial was followed by six days of mourning for a total of seven days of intense mourning. During the week of mourning, close family members remained at home while other relatives and community members supplied them with food and paid them visits to express their sympathy. Visiting the bereaved was an important aspect of piety (Keener 2003:842-843; Ndegwa 2003:209-210). Among the Abaluyia, similar practice is observed (cf. Mbiti 1969:197). Keener (2003:843) observes that probably it is the so-called modern cultures, more lacking in grief rituals, that may be less adapted to the needs of the human psyche.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him (John 11:20). It was out of the normal practice for Martha to leave the house as the custom was for the bereaved to stay in the house to continue mourning and receive visitors. However, the sisters paid Jesus great honour by going to meet him (Keener 2003:843). When Mary also left the house to meet Jesus, the Jews who were consoling her followed her 'supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there' (John 11:31). Jesus' tender conversations with the two sisters reveal his 'patient pastoral concerns. It is clear that Jesus did not ridicule or belittle grief but affirmed the human need for comfort by openly providing it to the sisters. On their part the sisters' faith in Jesus did not waver in spite of their pain and sorrow (Barton *et al.* 1993:231-232).

When Jesus saw Mary and those with her weeping, he was deeply moved (*ἐμβριμάσθαι*) and troubled (John 11:33, 38). Keener (2003:846) suggests that his strong emotion may have stemmed from observing their grief and wailing. Köstenberger (2004:339, 340) argues that Jesus is shown here not so much to express empathy as to bristle at his imminent encounter with and assault on death. Jesus wept with them (John 11:35). By weeping, Jesus identified himself with the mourners and acknowledged the reality of loss through death as well as response to the pain of bereavement (cf. Mbiti 1999:9). He identified with humanity by experiencing and participating in human grief (Köstenberger 2004:341). These were tears of compassion as the other mourners recognised it saying, 'see how he loved him!' (John 11:36 cf. 11:5). As he approached Lazarus' tomb, Jesus was once more deeply moved (John 11:38 cf. 11:33). Barton (1993:236) observes that his 'agitation reveals his indignation and outrage that death creates such destructive chaos and suffering in people's lives'. Jesus proceeded to raise Lazarus from the dead, by praying to the Father, so that people would believe in him (John 11:38-44 cf. 20:30-31).

The raising of Lazarus displayed Christ's power over death to his disciples and others (cf. John 5:21; 6:40, 54; 8:51; 10:17-18, 27-28). In his earlier conversation with Martha he had already revealed himself as the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-27). The resurrection from the dead is a crucial belief of the Christian faith (Barton *et al.* 1993:229). Köstenberger (2004:346) helpfully quotes Carson who observes that 'The resurrection of Lazarus, occurring before that of Jesus, could only be a pale anticipation of what was yet to come'.

5.3.5 The death and resurrection of Jesus (John 19:17-20:1-9)

Jesus was killed by crucifixion outside Jerusalem at the order of Roman authorities (John 19:17-20:1-9 cf. Matthew 27:45-28:1-10; Mark 15:33-16:1-20; Luke 23:44-24:1-12). Sanders (1985:11) concurs with the gospel account arguing that crucifixion was not the sort of fate one would invent for one's leader. The event of the crucifixion of Jesus is central in the gospel writings and has also been referred to in other historical literature. Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy and thus 'worthy of death' (Matthew 26:66). Barton (1993:368) remarks that though Pilate found Jesus not guilty because he 'found no basis for a charge against him' (John 18:38), he lacked the courage to stand by his conviction in the face of opposition from the Jews and a possible riot. Keener (2003:1133) aptly observes that in John's gospel, 'No one takes Jesus' life from him; he offers it up freely' (John 10:18). On the cross, God's divine plan was being worked out. Jesus' death was redemptive. By his death on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sin in order that we who deserve death may have life. Keener (2003:1137) further points out that the three languages used for the charge against Jesus written on a small tablet and posted on his cross suggest the universality of Jesus' reign. On the cross, Jesus drew all people to himself (John 12:32-33). As a result of Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, those who believe in him can live eternally with God and escape the penalty of death that comes from sin (Barton *et al.* 1993:380).

Of the four gospel writers, only John mentions the presence of Jesus' mother along with her sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene at the crucifixion (John 19:25). It is not difficult to imagine the incredible pain of a mother watching her son suffer and die unjustly. Luke records that the prophet Simeon foresaw her grief saying, 'a sword will pierce your own soul too' (Luke 2:35 see Barton *et al.* 1993:378). Keener (2003:1141) citing Josephus, points out that ancient Mediterranean society generally allowed women more latitude in mourning even in cases of execution by crucifixion.

In his life on earth Jesus was full of compassion for all in need. Even on the cross, Jesus showed compassion for his distressed mother (John 19:26-27). Keener (2003:1141, 1144) helpfully points out that care for aged parents was part of honouring them and a requirement of

piety in Israel. It is probably for this reason that Jewish customs invited a dying man, including even a criminal condemned to death by crucifixion, to settle the legal status of the women for whom he was responsible. Malina and Neyrey (1991:64 cf. Keener 2003:1141) suggest that Mary was probably a widow at the time of Jesus' crucifixion and thus by entrusting his mother to his disciple, Jesus was 'guarding the shame of Mary by locating her in a new family, an honourable household, the church'. According to Keener (2003:11, 44), by taking over Jesus' own role of caring for his mother, normally passed on to a younger brother, the 'beloved disciple' models how true disciples adopt the concerns of Jesus as their own and follow in his steps (cf. 1 John 2:6). He suggests that perhaps the passage provides a model for caring for widows in the community (cf. Acts 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:5-10) who have been cut off from family support because of their faith in Jesus. This may also be a model for the care of those within the Christian community who are in need especially through bereavement. Keener (2003:1145) also points out that a younger woman would be expected to remarry or return to her father's household, but Jesus' mother would be older and with greater independence than either of those alternatives. The theological import of Jesus' entrusting his mother to a disciple rather than to unbelieving siblings comports well with extra Jesus tradition. This model suggests that the ties of the believing community must be stronger than natural familial bonds (cf. Mark 3:33-35; 13:12).

On the cross, Jesus consciously accomplished the purpose for which he came to the world, triumphantly declaring that 'it is finished' (John 19:30 cf. 4:34; 17:4; 18:32; 19:28). Jesus then 'gave up his spirit (πνεῦμα)' (19:30), a common euphemism for death (cf. Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). The bodies were brought down from the cross for burial 'as evening approached' (Matthew 27:57) as the Sabbath began on Friday evening. On this occasion, the bodies had to be brought down because the next day was a 'special Sabbath' (John 19:31), it coincided with the Passover festival (Barton *et al.* 1993:380). Keener observes that the Judean authorities were scrupulous about Sabbath observance. Deuteronomy (21:23) warned that the practice where Romans normally allowed corpses to rot on crosses and to be eaten by vultures, defiled the land (Keener 2003:11:50; Hunter 1965:181; Ndegwa 2003:362). Joseph of Arimathea, later accompanied by Nicodemus, who were Jesus' secret disciples, gathered courage (Mark 15:43), got permission from Pilate (Matthew 27:58; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:52) and after Pilate had checked with the centurion and confirmed Jesus' death (Mark 15:44) gave permission to take the body (19:38 cf. Matthew 27:58; Mark 15:45), they prepared it for burial by covering it with spices and wrapping it in linen cloths and buried it in a newly cut out tomb (John 19:40, 41 cf. Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53). These secret disciples honoured Jesus lavishly in their actions. Brown (1994:1240; Keener 2003:1159f.) is certain that Jesus was indeed buried because pious Jews, given their views of burial, would not have allowed Jesus to go unburied. Burial was an essential duty among the Jews and refusal to allow burial was normally viewed as impiety (cf. Deuteronomy 21:23).

On the third day following the death and burial of Jesus, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb only to realise that it was open (John 20:1-2 cf. Matthew 28:5; Luke 24:6). She thought that the owners of the garden had removed the body. Responding to Mary's report, Peter and the beloved disciple hurried to the tomb and confirmed that the tomb was indeed empty. The disciples went back to their homes (John 20:10), leaving only Mary by the tomb crying (John 20:11). Keener (2003:11:85) observes that Mary remained not out of faith in the resurrection but out of love and desire to perform the final acts available for those already dead (John 20:13, 15). Jesus had overcome death. He was risen! The risen Jesus appeared to her (John 20:14-16) transforming her weeping into joy, as he had promised his disciples (John 16:20 cf. Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 51-57; 2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1, 6-10; Philippians 3:20-21; Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 14:3). Likewise, when he appeared to his stunned disciples, he offered them peace (*shalom*). John reports that 'The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord' (John 20:20). Their fear and grief was replaced by joy on seeing him alive. After several appearances in the resurrected body, Jesus 'returned to the Father' (John 20:17 cf. Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50).

5.3.6 Hope in grief (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

In this passage, the apostle Paul recognises the fact that Christians, common with other human beings, experience bereavement by death. Commentators have over the years grappled with what occasioned the question concerning those who die in Christ discussed in this passage (see Frame 1960:163; Bruce 1982:95; Best 1972:180-184; Marshall 1983:120-122; Green 2002:213-215). Bruce (1982:95), for instance, argues that the believers in Thessalonica wondered if the departed friends might not miss something to which survivors until the Lord's advent could look forward – some participation in the glory of the occasion perhaps. Green (2002:215), after discussing six alternatives, concludes that none of them is completely satisfactory. He suggests a reconstruction which argues that at the moment of confronting the reality of death, believers in the church at Thessalonica did not allow their confession to inform their reaction to this human tragedy. Alternatively, they may not have understood fully the reality of the resurrection from the dead. However, it is clear that the believers in Thessalonica were experiencing great grief because of the death of one or more of their members, and the apostle needed to respond with the appropriate teaching so that they are not overwhelmed with grief like the unbelievers 'who have no hope' (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Paul seeks to inform the believers in Thessalonica concerning 'those who fall asleep' (1 Thessalonians 4:13). As already noted, the use of term 'sleep' as a euphemism for 'death' was common in antiquity, for instance in the Old Testament it appears in the idiom 'to sleep with

one's fathers'. Bruce (1982:95) points out that 'Christians took it up as a congenial expression, death being viewed by them as sleep from which one would awake to resurrection life (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15; 5:10)'. Green (2002:217) observes that the phrase 'those who fall asleep' is simply a synonym for 'the dead' and implies nothing about the intermediate state.

The Christians in Thessalonica were instructed not to 'grieve like those who have no hope' (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is highly improbable that Paul was asking the Christians 'not to sorrow at all' for the departed (Frame 1960:165, 170). Neil (1950:92) points out that 'Paul is obviously not saying that it is unchristian to shed tears over the loss of a loved one. He would say, as we should, that where there is no regret there could have been little love'. Griffin (1978:116) rightly observes that in fact the issue in the church at Thessalonica is different. The question addressed in this portion of Scripture concerned how God deals with those Christians who die before the coming again of Christ and the final end of all things. Paul's answer is that Jesus' death and resurrection gives us grounds for the hope that God can be trusted to hold the dead, who have clearly not forfeited the promises of God by dying, in his loving purposes. Here, as in the rest of the New Testament, we are reminded that there is a distinctive quality in Christian grieving, a quality of hope. As Griffin (1978:117-118) further warns, sometimes the note of the Christian hope of resurrection is struck so loudly, so often and so exclusively that it becomes a denial of the right to grieve and ultimately a source of sickness rather than of healing. Instead, as Christians in Thessalonica faced the death of fellow believers, their grief was to be tempered and informed by the hope they held, based on the resurrection of Christ and the promise of his coming (Green 2002:219). The non-Christians, on their part, are hopeless when faced with death. As Bruce (1982:96) points out, those who do not know God have no hope as to be without God is to be without hope. (cf. Ephesians 2:3, 12).

The hope which Christians have in the face of death is the hope of resurrection which is grounded in faith in God who has given an assurance regarding the past by raising Jesus from the dead (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3) and a promise regarding the future, that he will also raise believers in Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:20; 2 Corinthians 4:14). Bruce (1982:104) further observes that among pagans generally there was a sad sense of hopelessness in the face of death. The Greeks, for instance, had a strong antipathy towards bodily resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13 cf. Acts 17:18, 31-32; 1 Corinthians 15:12 see Cullmann 1958:59; Johnston 2002:237). Consequently, the Greek society was fatalistic and passively bound in its attitude towards death. According to Mbogori (2002:9, 83), this attitude protected the Greeks from the threat of death. It also encouraged them to make merry in life as much as possible. This can be adduced from their not making much ado over burial rituals and from their lifestyle. The Greek method of resolving grief is found in Epicurus, in the doctrine of devaluing the body in relation to the soul, which was enticing to mortal human beings faced with the enigmatic forces of nature

and the supernatural world which they could not fully comprehend.

The basis for and the fullness of the Christian hope is that 'Jesus died and rose again' (1 Thessalonians 4:14 cf. 1 Corinthians 15). As Green (2002:216) observes 'Jesus' resurrection is the paradigm of the destiny of the deceased believer' (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, the Christian's resurrection has been guaranteed (cf. Galatians 2:19; Romans 6:3ff.; Colossians 2:20; 3:1ff. see Bruce 1982:104). Bruce (1982:97) observes that the continuing life of Jesus' followers depends on, and is indeed an extension of, his own risen life (cf. John 14:19; Romans 8:11). Frame (1960:168) points out that the presence of Christ by the Spirit in the Christians guarantees that when they actually die, they will continue during the interval between death and resurrection, and will at the *Parousia* be raised from the dead by God through the power of the same indwelling Christ (Colossians 1:27) or Spirit (Romans 8:11), and will attain the ultimate goal of Christian hope which is eternal life.

According to Frame (1960:175), the phrase 'those who have fallen asleep in him' or simply the 'dead in Christ' (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16) does not designate 'those who died in Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:18; Revelation 14:13) but 'the dead who are in Christ' and it intimates, though without precise details, the condition of the believers in the intermediate state, that as in life and at death so from death to the *Parousia*, the believer is under the control of the indwelling Christ or Spirit. This indwelling spiritual Christ, whose presence in the believer guarantees his resurrection, is also the very enthroned (Romans 8:34) Lord himself who comes down from heaven to raise the dead. Green (2002:221) argues that the phrase 'in him' suggests that in death, believers are not separated from Jesus. As such, the phrase then becomes an implicit affirmation that those who die as Christians do not cease to exist between the time of their death and the resurrection. As Bruce (1982:105) notes, nothing is said about those who are not in Christ (see John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15).

Paul asserts that his teaching is in accordance with the 'Lord's own word' (1 Thessalonians 4:15). As Bruce (1982:99) points out the exact nature and origin of the Lord's utterances has still to be left *subjudice*. According to Green (2002:221-222), the phrase refers to the message of the gospel that is proclaimed or to a teaching that was given by the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry, whether or not this teaching was incorporated in the gospels (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:10, 25; 9:14; 11:23-25).

According to the Lord's word, the living, that is, those who continue to survive until the *Parousia*, will by no means take temporal precedence over the dead. At the descent of the Lord from heaven, the dead will 'rise first' (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and then the survivors and the believers who will have been raised from the dead will together simultaneously be caught up and carried

by means of clouds, conceived as a triumphal chariot, to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), presumably in changed, transformed, redeemed bodies (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-52; Philippians 3:21; Romans 8:23 see Frame 1960:173-175; Green 2002:225; Bruce 1982:100). Bruce (1982:99) argues that presumably the Christians in Thessalonica had erroneously wondered if the believers who had died would suffer any disadvantage through not being alive to witness the *Parousia* and participate in its attendant glory. Bruce (1982:103; Frame 1960:177; Green 2002:225-228) also points out that it cannot be determined from what is written here whether the Lord, with his people, continues his journey to earth or returns to heaven. What is clear, however, is that as a consequence of the resurrection, the Lord himself coming down, the meeting of the Lord in the air, the believers shall be with the Lord, not for a moment only but forever, this is the fruition of the Christian hope, the climax of blessedness (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

In the light of the resurrection of Jesus (4:14), the word of the Lord (4:15), the confirmatory description of the *Parousia* (4:16-17), Christians in Thessalonica were to 'encourage one another' (1 Thessalonians 4:18 cf. 5:11 see Frame 1960:177). The term 'encourage' here means; 'to console' or 'to comfort' (cf. 3:7; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 7:6-7, see Green 2002:228; Bruce 1982:103). The Christians in Thessalonica are given solid grounds and need for mutual comfort and hope (Bruce 1982:103). Green (2002:215) observes that Paul's purpose was distinctly pastoral as he urged the church to use this teaching to comfort one another. He further helpfully argues that Paul does not put himself forward as one who comforts the grieving; rather he urges the members of the church to use the same confession of Jesus' death, resurrection and return, to comfort each other in their time of greatest sorrow (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 5:11, 15). In this respect, the development of a true pastoral concern among the members of the congregation was a fundamental goal (Green 2002:229). As Keener (2003:839) aptly observes, early Christian communities, not unlike Christian communities today, undoubtedly experienced death and suffering that on the level of human understanding seemed to conflict with the assurance of God's love (cf. John 11:21). However, the assurance that Jesus did care, that God did have long-range purposes in the suffering, even that Jesus joined in weeping with the bereaved as well as that he ultimately has power over life and death, means much to believers facing that universal human predicament of death.

5.3.7 Summary

In summary, incidences of bereavement in the New Testament are dominated by the theme of the sovereignty of Christ expressed in his power over sickness and death. Neither sickness nor death can deter the kingdom of Christ. In his death and resurrection, Christ decisively defeated death and was accomplished the same for those who trust in him, is being accomplished and

will be fully realised at his second coming. In the meantime, although believers continue to face the anguish of bereavement by death, yet they find abundant consolation in the hope of resurrection. In addition, the analysis displays Jesus' compassion for the bereaved. The dominant theme of compassion in Jesus' ministry to the bereaved is helpful in drawing paradigms for pastoral consolation.

5.4 Basis theoretical findings on bereavement beliefs and practices within a biblical framework

The main focus of this study remains to analyse beliefs and practices mediating healing in bereavement in order to develop an integrated pastoral approach for bereavement healing among the Abaluyia Christians. In this endeavour, normative biblical reflection is basic. The grief of losing a loved one is liberally expressed in the Bible. Every case of bereavement in the Old Testament and the New Testament provides insight for a fuller understanding of the biblical processes of bereavement healing. In view of the incidences discussed in this chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn.

5.4.1 Universality of grief

Death brings pain to all humanity irrespective of whether they trust in God or not. Grief is universal. In Israel, mourning was carried out in spite of the circumstances of death, the individual's station and status in life, gender or age. Even those that the Lord had rejected or who died as a result of his divine plan or judgment were mourned.

5.4.2 Culture specific responses

The bereaved respond to the pain of bereavement by death according to their specific cultural mourning practices. People respond to death and bereavement within their respective cultures. What was done in Israel and recorded in Scripture was specific to the Jewish culture even though it was obviously influenced to a certain degree by the general beliefs and practices in the Mediterranean region. The law did not disapprove mourning in Israel. In fact, the Israelites responded emotionally to the occurrence of death by weeping, fasting, keeping hair unkempt, tearing clothes, keeping silent, sitting in dust, composing and singing mourning songs among other customary rites of mourning.

However and in spite of the neighbours' temptations, it is unacceptable for those who have put their trust in God to mourn in ways that dishonour him and contradict his worship. For instance, no sacred character was attributed to the dead and therefore the grave cult of the dead and necromancy were incompatible with the Israelites' worship of Yahweh. On the contrary, emphasis is put on God and his relationship with the living. In the example of the death of the

sons of Aaron, those who served as priests of the Lord were expected to remain obedient to God even in their mourning. For the Christian, it is unacceptable to grieve in ways that contradict the hope that is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ or 'like the rest of men, who have no hope' (1 Thessalonians 4:13). As Bediako (1997:3) aptly observes, a people cannot be regarded as adequately encountered by the gospel when their cultural habits of thought, behaviour and practice show that those features of their life are being kept apart from the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

5.4.3 Vengeance belongs to God

God is the source of life and as such acts of murder or suicide are an attempted attack against God himself. No one may deliberately take his life or that of another person. For instance, in spite of the sin of murder that Cain committed, God protected him from being killed by others. Cain was punished by being banished and remaining under a curse from God. Christians are warned not to be like Cain (1 John 3:2). In addition, the Bible does not teach that the dead return to avenge their death. Instead, the Bible teaches that vengeance is the Lord's alone. God will not hold those who take the life of others guiltless for he is the ultimate avenger of blood (Genesis 9:5). The impenitent sinner has been condemned already.

5.4.4 Divine deliverance

Bereavement through death nearly always brings about a deep feeling of sadness. In this forlorn state, the bereaved often feel that God is far removed. They find it difficult to reconcile the relational intimate God with their state of hurt and loneliness. This feeling is particularly great if it is the death of a young person and comparatively less so if the death occurs at 'a good old age'. In the latter case, long life is acknowledged as divine blessing especially if it was accompanied by wealth and honour. Although death and bereavement is at times a divine act, yet suffering, according to the Bible, does not destroy faith in God. Instead, the Bible reinforces that believers faced with imminent death and those in the grief of bereavement by death ought to turn to God in prayer, fasting and other forms supplication for divine deliverance. David, for instance, pleaded with God for his child, Job fell down in supplication before the Lord and Jesus groaned for the Father to remove the cup, if that would be the Father's will.

5.4.5 Circle of relatives

Familial and communal ties are important for the bereaved. It is noteworthy that even in death family solidarity was not broken. Promises made in keeping with the law of God to the dying are kept. For instance, Joseph kept the vow he had made to his father Jacob. The familial solidarity is of particular help for the bereaved as they seek to come to terms with the loss of one of their own to death. In addition, family burials can be occasions for reconciliation and reunion. For instance, the Bible records that Ishmael and Isaac, in spite of the rivalry between them, united to

bury their father Abraham. The funeral rites also provided an opportunity for property distribution and focus on the care of the survivors. The relatives played an important role in the mourning rituals. In addition, although there were professional mourners for hire in Israel, bereavement by death impacted and involved everybody in the community.

In the Old Testament these familial ties were based on belonging to the nation of Israel. However, in the New Testament a new community is formed around Jesus Christ called the community of Christians. These were men and women who believed and turned to the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:21, 26). Jesus had earlier said that those who do the Father's will are his brother and sister and mother, not just his blood relations (Matthew 12:46; Luke 8:19). It is a community of those whose sins have been forgiven by the redemptive act of salvation. Anyone who belongs to Christ must give priority to the Lordship of Christ and not to the pursuance of ancestral genealogical priorities (cf. Luke 9:59-60). On the cross, Jesus commends his mother to his disciple and friend (John 19:26). It is to be a community of carers.

5.4.6 New marriage relationship

Death frees the surviving spouse to enter new marriage relationships. In Israel, this was provided for in the levirate marriage system whereby the deceased's brother or close kin would marry the widow in order to continue the deceased man's lineage. The marriages provided a home where the widow would be protected, comforted and provided for. In the Bible, the Lord perfectly provides this desired consolation for he is the husband of the widow and father of the fatherless.

5.4.7 Remembrance of the significant other

It is acceptable for the survivors to remember the significant other who has died. For instance, Jacob erected a pillar in memory of Rachel his wife. Although the pillar served other practical purposes, its main purpose was remembrance. However, in the Bible, remembrance is clearly not veneration of the dead which would be contradictory to the worship of God. In the Old Testament, national remembrances were limited to the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were remembered not as mediators but because of the everlasting covenant that Yahweh made with them for Israel and, through them, with the nations. The New Testament is largely silent on any memory of the dead. Abraham, for instance, is remembered not as an ancestor but as the father of faith (Romans 4:16). However, perhaps the best example of remembrance in the New Testament is that instituted by the Lord Jesus in memory of his death and resurrection commonly called the Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

5.4.8 Efficacious rituals

Rituals related to burial and mourning are important. Among the Jews, for instance, contact with a dead body in any way caused ritual impurity. Any such contact, therefore, demanded for ritual

cleansing by washing. Most of the rituals associated with death and bereavement served to observe the law of God and for practical hygiene purposes to help control infections. Furthermore, the rituals ensured that the bereaved would be re-integrated into the community following the unsettling occurrence of death.

5.4.9 Hope of resurrection

The most abundant consolation in their bereavement found in the Bible is the hope that those who die in Christ will be raised to eternal life with him. This hope is a shared hope among the community of believers. What Christ has achieved through his death and resurrection means that even now the real sting of death is drawn for the believer, for it is no longer the herald of coming doom. The emboldening is not just the Christians post-mortem destiny. Wright (2007: xii, 5) observes that the hope of resurrection is not synonymous for 'life after death' or 'going to heaven'. The Christian hope is for God's *new creation*, for 'new heavens and new earth' which has already come to life in Jesus of Nazareth. Christians can therefore live today in the confidence of the purposes of God revealed in Jesus. The resurrection hope is the single most important predisposition for bereavement healing. For those who have put their trust in the Jesus Christ, death is a great enemy, but it has been conquered through his death and resurrection and will at the last be completely defeated at his return. Christians especially look forward to that day when God will wipe away every tear for then there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away (Revelation 21:4 cf. 7:17).

Chapter 6: Integrated pastoral care model for bereavement healing among Abaluyia

6.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to design a new practice model in order to engender pastoral care to the bereaved among the Abaluyia. The new practice model responds to the need for a biblical approach to bereavement healing that is sensitive to Abaluyia cultural beliefs and practices that are not contrary to God's revealed essentials as outlined in the Bible (basis theory). As such, the new practice model is reformative in its assessment of the pathologies of the cultural beliefs and practices and the limitations of the existing ecclesiastical praxis (meta-theories) in order to engender healing in bereavement and nurture people to grow and mature in Christ-likeness.

6.1.1 The problem

Early missionaries to Africa in modern times were moved, by God's grace, to bring the gospel to Africa. Their dedication to the call and contribution to the mission of God in Africa is evident in the spread of gospel and the evidences of the grace of conversion among the African peoples. However, the missionaries like their contemporaries in their countries of origin were not free from the impact of cultural movements of the time. The missionaries were especially impacted by the concepts of rationalism brought about by the Enlightenment and its subsequent movements particularly in Europe and America.

The result of the missionaries' rationalistic worldview was that African traditional beliefs and practices were held in suspicion. In fact, they were simply dismissed as being heathen superstition and thus anti-Christian. Rejected as meaningless or at best superstitious, the traditional beliefs and practices needed to be replaced. As this research has revealed, the Abaluyia culture like any other human culture is flawed and in dire need of the gospel. However, along with the gospel the missionaries sought to civilise the African peoples. To achieve the so-called civilisation, the converts were often uprooted from their communities into 'Christian villages' where they imbibed European values which were considered superior. This practice created frustration among Africans and set the stage for cultural conflict (cf. Sindima 1994:105-108).

Unsurprisingly, the impossible mission of the missionaries to remove the 'africanness' from the African converts failed. The result has been that Christianity is often erroneously perceived in Africa as a foreign, Whiteman's religion. Furthermore, most of those who convert to Christianity practice a form of parallelism whereby Christianity is what happens largely on Sundays at

church with the help of a book while the rest of life is lived within and dominated by the traditional values, just slightly adjusted to accommodate Christianity.

This parallelism has been variously interpreted. Deducing from this study, it is a misnomer to label the practice of Christianity among the Abaluyia as 'syncretism' (cf. Williamson 1965:158). Syncretism implies a cocktail or fusion which would render both the traditional beliefs and practices and Christianity indistinct. Syncretism results in a new teaching. According to Meier and others (1991:29), syncretism is 'a mixing of paganism and Christianity to produce a sub-Christian'. It is equally improper to argue as Mwaura (2000:73) does when she asserts that nowadays the traditional beliefs and practices are largely 'clothed in Christian dogma and ritual'. This implies a hypocritical persona able to put on or remove Christianity as circumstances may dictate. Such is clearly not the case as the two dogmas are held and practised apart. They are two distinct dogmas. For instance, before burial, a family representative marks the grave, selects the ritually viable men to dig the grave on a specified axis, a fowl is slaughtered for the grave diggers and eaten by the gravesite, the tools used for digging the grave are not stored inside the owner's house until after a tool-cleansing ceremony, the burial takes place at preset times dependent on the age of the deceased, ritually viable men lower the body in the grave and fill the grave with soil, those involved in the burial are given water to wash as a symbol of washing *olumbe* (death) away so that they do not take it to their own homes. After participating in burial they return to their homes first before they can plan to visit another home or perform other chores. Parallel to this clearly defined cultural sequence of events, pastors take the mourners through the Christian burial rites by reading the burial liturgy. The people engage in both cultural and Christian rituals conscious of and keen to maintain their distinction.

This parallelism often brings about unease and guilt for the individual as well as the local community of believers. The uneasiness and guilt necessitates a formulation of a corrective model that is cognisant of the traditional bereavement healing beliefs and practices in the light of the normative biblical injunctions and models. Louw (1998:1) aptly captures the present need by pointing out that the challenge facing pastoral theology is to develop models which not only take the salvation of the gospel seriously, but also tries to understand and to interpret individuals' existence within their social context.

6.1.2 The method

The study is undertaken from a pastoral viewpoint. As Simcox (1960:2-3) points out, pastoral inquiry is theocentric rather than anthropocentric. It starts with God rather than with the human being. The Christian's basic question is: what do we know about God and about his will and purpose for the human being? The pastoral agenda is clearly informed by God's word, the Bible,

and the quest to make it relevant and applicable in people's lives. Louw (1998:2) points out that pastoral theology seeks to interpret and understand the Christian truth in terms of the human experience of the world. It endeavours to bring about concrete and meaningful actions of faith in order to develop a model of human and contextual transformation, interpret God for the contemporary situations and formulate a theological theory for practice which expresses Christian faith as it addresses the human quest for meaning and identity. Louw (1998:90f.) further argues that the focus of this endeavour is to enable a critical dialogue between 'the truth', that is, biblical text as the normative source, and the 'practice' in an attempt to transform society. In other words, the concern is to understand and discern God's will for the real world. This endeavour follows a 'hermeneutic circle' that connects the world of human action and the Christian tradition in order to bring about a transformative practice.

In order to achieve the desired transformative practice, Hendriks (2004) suggests that the God we encounter in Jesus Christ ought to be at the centre of shaping and giving meaning to our lives. In this encounter cultures are transformed by the good news in the power of the Holy Spirit. Helpfully, Zerfass operational model engages with the transformation of an existing inadequate praxis (Praxis I) in the light of the biblical norm in order to develop a practice theory for a second praxis (Praxis II) (cf. Heyns & Pieterse 1990:35-36).

Therefore, following Zerfass model, the current praxis of the Abaluyia Christians in their effort to cope in bereavement is analysed in the light of the normative biblical teaching. The intention of the analysis which reflects the task of practical theological hermeneutic is to correct defective praxis. In this research, therefore, the task was to let Scripture speak to the reality of the Abaluyia as they grapple with and seek healing in their bereavement. Literature review, in-person interviews, participatory observation and focus group discussions were used in an effort to understand the reality of the Abaluyia (meta-theory) while systematic biblical hermeneutics and paradigmatic analysis was done in order to understand the biblical teaching for bereavement healing (basis theory). This chapter seeks to design a new practice theory.

6.1.3 Model of integration

Crabb (1977:47) suggests several models of integration and adopts what he terms 'Spoiling the Egyptians'. This model involves a careful screening of meta-theories to determine their compatibility with biblical presuppositions. Consequently, Crabb (1977:49-50) proposes certain conditions for 'a truly evangelical integration'. First, he notes that, meta-theories or the concepts drawn from social studies such as cultural anthropology or naturalistic psychology must come under the authority of Scripture. The essential content of Scripture must not be compromised. Second, the Bible must be affirmed as God's revelation to humankind and upheld as inspired

and inerrant in its propositional form. Third, in the integration process, the Scripture must guide and control the thinking process. It must have priority over contrary non-biblical opinion. The scriptural functional control is more critical where the subject matter under discussion overlaps greatly with biblical content. Finally, the integrationist must have a level of competence in both the meta-theoretical study area and biblical hermeneutical studies (theology). The desired competence must not preclude the work of the Spirit and the profit of fellowship in a Bible-believing local church. Crabb (1977:28) argues that the overall goal for the desire to change is to please the Lord. Crabb's model of integration informs the present process of integration. The goal of the integrated model sought is not limited to healing in bereavement *per se* but to enable the bereaved to look beyond their suffering with hope and to deepen their trust in God.

6.2 Final meta-theoretical inferences

6.2.1 Meta-theoretical inferences on cultural bereavement healing approaches

Irrespective of the one's beliefs and practices, death is a source of fear, anxiety and grief for both Christians and non-Christians. As Carson (1978:71) observes, bereavement is the supremely crushing blow which makes so many other trials seem minor by comparison. Death deprives people of their earthly activities, honours and possessions as it brings an end to a life which they have grown to hold as dear and done everything humanly possible to protect. More importantly but at varying level, people dread the apparent dissolution, meaninglessness or uncertainty which death does threaten. This dread is exacerbated by the pain and suffering which often accompanies death.

Understandably, therefore, every culture has established beliefs and practices to respond to and provide support for those faced with the loss and pain that is associated with bereavement by death. However, whereas the impact of bereavement by death is common to all human beings, Christians and non-Christians deal with their grieving differently. It has been noted in this study that among the Abaluyia the cultural means of support persist even among Christians. The cultural means are often used parallel with the biblical models. This parallelism is often a source of individual and corporate conflict for the Christians and thus an impediment to healing. The cultural approaches are largely defective for use by the Christians when viewed against the biblical norm.

6.2.1.1 Death does not annihilate life

The Abaluyia hold that death does not annihilate life. They hold that the deceased is dead physically but lives on among them in another form that needs to be recognised. In other words, the event of bodily death does not terminate the existence of the human individual and his

spiritual life but only transforms the *nature* of his existence (cf. Wagner 1970:447). The dead are thought to still have influence upon the living. The Abaluyia, therefore, have elaborate rites to rightly send off the deceased and to remember them. It is believed that after death, the deceased enters *Emakombe*(land of the dead), where he continues to live. Life in *Emakombe* is thought to be similar to life on earth. The deceased exist in *Emakombe* in the state in which they depart this life. Although the thought that death does not annihilate life is sustained among Christians, yet the Bible introduces the concept of judgment after death to either eternal life or condemnation. Death, therefore, does not simply act as a gate to another life but rather life with God or apart from him. It is only for those who have put their trust in Jesus that the understanding of life as indestructible will be a source of consolation in bereavement.

6.2.1.2 Death socialisation

The Abaluyia receive education in matters pertaining death and bereavement in their early socialisation through instruction and participation. This early socialisation ensures that they are not overwhelmed when death occurs. The early socialisation also includes the set procedures and performances for the disposal of the body, remembrances and healing. Unfortunately, the death education received also reinforces the people's fears concerning death and the relationship between them and the ancestors.

6.2.1.3 Priority of the community

The community as a therapeutic agent is both helpful and destructive. It is helpful in that the bereaved do not have to go through their loss and pain alone. There is comfort in knowing the help and encouragement of other community members. In addition, there are communal support systems for the general care of the bereaved, re-marriage, property inheritance and distribution, remembrances as well as rituals that help in healing and re-integration into the community following the alienation of death.

However, the priority of the community is often a source of pressure to conform to some communal standards which may be contrary to biblical teachings. For instance, among the Abaluyia, communal support is often limited to blood relations including the ancestors. The Abaluyia have a strong sense of the presence of ancestors who are part and parcel of the community. On the contrary, the Bible attributes community not through human blood relations but to those called into the fellowship of believers in Christ.

6.2.1.4 Rituals for meaning and healing

The Abaluyia engage in elaborate rituals during death and bereavement. The rituals help the people to come to terms with the various life occurrences which are otherwise unexplained. Rituals give meaning to life occurrences. However, for the Christians there is no need for

groping in darkness for meaning as God has revealed what the Christian needs to know for salvation and life. In addition, some rituals are informed by the fear of death and the veneration of ancestors. Although the strong sense of the presence of the ancestors disposes the Abaluyia to accepting Christian teachings on spiritual beings, yet their veneration is inconsistent with the biblical teaching on the dead. The Abaluyia believe that the dead are able to bring help or cause suffering to the living. Those offended before their death, whether the offense was real or imagined, are believed to be capable of taking vengeance against the alleged offender. The regard accorded to the dying and some of the rituals following death among the Abaluyia largely find basis in this fear of the dead. For instance, although the meat from an animal killed on the day of burial serves the practical purpose of providing food for the mourners, yet it is assumed to be killed in honour of the dead and as a gift to the ancestors. This ritual feeds the people's fear of the dead apart from increasing the economic burden and the unease of those who cannot afford to honour their dead in this manner. The ritual sacrifices made in honour of ancestors for protection or any other form of assumed benefit contradicts the Christian trust in God. Furthermore, the Bible does not attribute reality or power to the dead to harm or bless the living.

6.2.1.5 Eulogy and remembrances

The Abaluyia recount their relationships with the deceased and remember them through rituals of remembrance, memorial performances and naming of children. In these ways, the Abaluyia are able come to terms with their bereavement. It is also argued that the knowledge that one will be remembered by those who survive him helps in their reconciliation to their own death. In spite of the benefits of the beliefs and acts of remembrance, the missionaries largely rejected the Abaluyia's remembrances of the dead. This rejection was informed, to a large extent, by the cultural veneration of the dead common among the Abaluyia.

6.2.1.6 Systems of inheritance and care

In their bereavement, the Abaluyia can rely on the cultural systems of inheritance and care for healing. Culturally, the Abaluyia encouraged widow inheritance which made sure that the bereaved widows as well as their children are cared for. The physical and emotional needs of widows were thus not neglected. In addition, there was a predictable system of property inheritance and distribution. Furthermore, the family welfare system meant that the orphans and the aged were looked after. Although biblical and contemporary realities demand changes in these cultural systems, their importance in bereavement healing is still invaluable.

6.2.1.7 Therapeutic performances

Performances such as song and dance have a therapeutic value for the bereaved. They often help in lifting and shifting the bereaved from an emotional quagmire brought about by death.

However, the performances often lead to the glorification of the deceased, fatigue and promiscuity. In addition, the lyrics of cultural dirges are often contrary to biblical teaching.

6.2.1.8 Hospitality and philanthropy

The practice of hospitality and benevolence is common among the Abaluyia. This is an important resource in times of bereavement. However, among the Abaluyia there exists a strong principle of reciprocity in practice of hospitality and philanthropy. Reciprocity is contrary to the biblical teaching on giving which demands that the giver should not broadcast their benevolence or seek favour and similar treatment in return. Concern for only those who have shown one concern also defeats the biblical view of hospitality (*philoxenia* literally, 'love of strangers') which is hinged on God's free gift of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7). In their practice of hospitality, believers love and care for those in need in gratitude to God's love ultimately shown in the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:23; Romans 12:9-21). Furthermore, the Abaluyia believe that the deceased can see the acts of kindness or meanness shown by the living and thus reward or punish them accordingly. They say that *Abafwa shibali ehale ta* (the dead are not far). That the dead do not return to bestow favours or punishments is a consistent biblical teaching.

6.2.1.9 Rules of conduct

Among the Abaluyia the bereaved are expected to conduct themselves in a certain manner. The rules of conduct are designed to engender healing following bereavement by death. There are rules of seclusion to ensure that the bereaved take time to mourn and to rest from the activities of the funeral. It is believed that the period of seclusion rejuvenates the bereaved. The end of the period of seclusion is marked by prescribed rituals of re-integration into the community. However, some rules of conduct make it difficult for certain family members to interact and learn from one another. For instance, the strict respect towards one's parents-in-law (*oburie*) makes caring for each other especially during bereavement extremely difficult. In addition, the rules of conduct do not help in developing loving relationships to encourage Christian lifestyle that will hold and help the concerned individuals (cf. Appleby 1943).

6.2.1.10 Forgiveness and reconciliation

The Abaluyia are known as 'the people of *mulembe* (peace)'. This is not limited to their form of greeting but extends to other areas of their life. The Abaluyia are particularly concerned about forgiveness and reconciliation before the occurrence of death. Like the traditional Abaluyia, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation is an important process for bereavement healing among Christians. However, the motivation and focus for repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation between the Abaluyia and Christians is dissimilar. For the Abaluyia the motivation is often to avoid the repercussions from the deceased person. In fact, the desire for forgiveness and reconciliation is hinged on the fear of the repercussions in case one may have offended the

ancestors. On the contrary, Christian forgiveness and reconciliation is motivated by the love of God and the desire to be at peace with fellow humans. From the Christian point of view, forgiveness of sin and the consequent reconciliation with God is paramount. The forgiveness of sin is an entirely free gift of God by faith in the Lord Jesus (1 John 1:9). This act of mercy which makes reconciliation with God possible in turn informs the need for Christians to be reconciled to one another.

6.2.1.11 Office and role of elders

Among the Abaluyia, age confirms a status of seniority and respect. As a result, the elders' word and counsel is sought for and respected. In matters of death and bereavement, the elders' are held in high esteem as custodians of traditional beliefs and practices and counsellors. Although the role of elders in guiding and counselling is important, the principle can be an impediment to the young people who are gifted counsellors.

It is clear, therefore, that although there are various beliefs and practices which help to engender healing in bereavement among the Abaluyia they are defective when measured against the biblical norm. Some of the beliefs and practices are either contradictory to biblical teaching or burdensome to the bereaved. As such, only principles that conform to biblical teaching may be drawn while retrogressive and repressive cultural practices ought to be discarded.

6.2.2 Meta-theoretical inferences on existing ecclesiastical bereavement healing approaches

The church acknowledges the pain of bereavement by death. Bereavement by death often makes other hurts seem petite. In response to this pain, the church is involved in the pastoral ministry of consolation. This ministry is deemed important not only in engendering healing for the bereaved but also in Christian maturity. As Tidball (1986:1) observes, the aim is to make grief an avenue to constructive growth rather than an occasion for destructive deterioration of the personality. In an effort to cope with the mystery and grief occasioned by death, the church draws its resources from the bible and the practice of the church over the years. The approaches for bereavement healing deduced from the biblical analysis and traditionally adopted by the various groups within the church (Anglican) in corporate worship, proclamation and private devotion include belief in the presence of the Triune God, edification from reading the Bible, efficacy of prayer, grace of the sacraments, the hope of resurrection and the mutual help of believers (cf. Autton 1967:20). According to Louw (1998:367f.), pastoral healing is communicated by means of the Word, the sacraments, the fellowship of believers and prayer. In agreement, Magezi (2006:517) points out that pastoral healing utilises resources unique to the

Christian faith such as the Holy Spirit, Scripture, prayer, sacraments and the faith community. These approaches avail much comfort (*paraklesis*) for the bereaved when used sensitively and appropriately.

6.2.2.1 Presence of God

The Bible presents God as being present with his people and as perfectly compassionate in character. God is present in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. God is not like an absent landlord but a father who is involved in the life situations of his children. Because God is personal and immanent, he not only relates to believers with compassion but he is also faithful to honour his word. God cares. In this regard, the Abaluyia's image of God as only transcendent is limiting. It was noted, however, that the belief in the presence of God does not undermine in any way the need for fellowship with other believers during bereavement. The role of the church community in bereavement healing is enhanced rather than diminished by the presence of the triune God.

6.2.2.2 Hope of resurrection

Although dying and death is still an enemy to life and bereavement still hurts, yet the sting of death has been removed, death has been swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54-55, 57) through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of his death and resurrection, believers have assurance of their own resurrection and a sure eschatological hope for eternal life. This hope is grounded in the believers' faith in God who has shown his faithfulness in the past by raising Jesus from the dead (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3) and promise regarding the future, that he will also raise those who die in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:20; 2 Corinthians 4:14). However, it was observed that this important element in bereavement healing is sometimes abused. Such abuses occur, for instance, when the bereaved Christians are stopped from mourning their loved ones especially by weeping which is often seen to be a lack of faith in the resurrected Christ.

6.2.2.3 Fellowship and mutual help of believers

A loving and serving Christian fellowship exists for mutual encouragement, comfort, support and healing. The believers are enabled by the Holy Spirit who indwells them as comforter to typify their compassionate heavenly Father. The circle of Christian brothers and sisters was considered perhaps the most important element in bereavement healing by most respondents. However, it was noted that some church members had formed small cliques of close friends or only identified with particular church groups like the Revival Fellowship. The need for an integrative approach that transcends the various groupings was thus underscored.

6.2.2.4 Words of healing

There is wisdom in reading the Bible or hearing it clearly explained for in it there are promises

for life and the words of healing. Reading the Bible brings an awareness of divine involvement in the welfare of the people concerned and transforms their culture to conform to the word of God. It was noted that there exists some wrong uses of the Bible which believers must shun. For instance, the Bible is handled as though it is a magical talisman alongside traditional magical objects. This misuse was noted in cases where a Bible is put in the grave during burial or placed on the grave daily following burial. In other cases the survivors put the Bible under their pillows before sleep as protection against evil powers or bad dreams involving the deceased. These erroneous practices, though rampant among some African Independent Churches, were also noted among some Christians in the mainline churches.

6.2.2.5 Efficacy of prayer

Believers find power for healing and wholeness by means of prayer which is hinged on the assurance that God hears and answers prayer. Prayer points to the believers' knowledge of where their help comes from and their trust in God who is the source of true healing. Through prayer, believers also have opportunity to confess their sins and find assurance of their forgiveness. However, it was observed that prayers are not gimmicks or quick fixes and ought not to be used as though they were. Prayer is a fruit of a believer's trust in God. It is an acknowledgement that God is compassionate in his character.

6.2.2.6 Grace of the sacraments

The church teaches that the believer can find grace in the sacraments for comfort in their bereavement. The sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ are baptism and Holy Communion. The sacraments are particularly crucial in relation to ecclesiastical burial rituals. In this regard, the church has attempted to be an agent of cultural sensitivity. An important example of this sensitivity is the liturgical inculturation expressed in the new ACK burial liturgy.

6.2.2.7 Medical means

The church recognises the role of medical practitioners in diagnosis, prevention and treatment of disease. The church has also been keen to develop medical institutions for medical practice, train medical personnel including professional counsellors and to provide chaplains for spiritual help to people who use the medical facilities. The church in Butere has a long history of medical missionaries who have contributed greatly to the medical means of healing.

6.2.2.8 Social concern

The church is concerned about the ills in society and actively seeks to bring about change in conformity with biblical teaching. For instance, the diocese of Butere Mothers' Union is involved in advocacy against retrogressive and repressive cultural beliefs and practices that disadvantage or demean women and the girl-child. Such practices include ritual cleansing and

widow inheritance. In addition, the church is involved in poverty alleviation programmes especially in aid of widows and orphans. Bereavement brings about costs which easily overwhelm the bereaved when help is not given. It also often leads to age inappropriate tasks such as child-headed families or grandparents having to raise children all over again in their advanced age. In other cases, the survivors face various forms of social injustices on issues such as land and property inheritance. The church community's concern and action in such matters is often a great source of relief to the bereaved.

6.2.2.9 Pastors as carers

All respondents acknowledged the role of pastors in caring for the bereaved. The Bible teaches mutual encouragement among believers without negating the caring and teaching roles of pastors. These roles underscore the need for the pastor's proper training, personal submission to the revealed will of God, servant leadership, godly example and conscious enabling of others in order to encourage mutual care and Christian maturity in the face of grief.

6.3 Final basis-theoretical inferences

6.3.1 Basis-theoretical inferences on the concept of death, afterlife and bereavement

6.3.1.1 Universality of grief

Bereavement is a major theme in the human story. The discussions on death and the afterlife in various ancient cultures and in the Bible indicate not only the general attitudes towards death and the afterlife but also towards the process of bereavement. The biblical example of what it means for the people of God to be bereaved is expressed in part in the beliefs and practices of the Jews and perfectly in the life of Jesus Christ. Although the Bible does not condemn culture specific responses to bereavement as in the case of the Jews, yet it shows that it is unacceptable for those who have put their trust in God to mourn in ways that dishonour him and contradict his word. The cultural habits beliefs and practices ought to show obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ (cf. Bediako 1997:3).

6.3.1.2 Affirmation of life

The Bible does not deny the existence of death or minimise the anguish of the bereaved. It presents death as physical as well as spiritual. However, the Bible largely focuses on life and the living. The affirmation of the triumph of life over death represents the main line of thought in the Bible (cf. Jacob 1962:803).

6.3.1.3 Resurrection to life or damnation

There is a progressive understanding of death in the Bible. Two broad views dominate this understanding. On one hand, death is the end of life. From this viewpoint, there is no hope after life except perhaps remembrance for the righteous while the wicked will never be remembered. On the other hand, the Bible teaches that there is life after death. This belief finds ultimate and concrete certainty in the life, teaching and redemptive work of Jesus. The hope of eternal life has been made sure because Jesus conquered death through his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. By his resurrection, Christians can look forward to their own resurrection at the *Parousia*. The New Testament also introduces the concept of judgment after death to life or condemnation (second death).

6.3.1.4 Necromancy prohibited

It was noted that although the Bible leaves open the question of whether the dead may communicate with the living, it completely prohibits necromancy (Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 8:19). This prohibition clearly indicates that consulting with the dead is sinful (cf. Burnett 2000:70). Necromancy denies the sovereignty of God and jeopardises the believer's trust in him. The practice also ascribes power to the dead contra to biblical knowledge. The Bible does not teach that the dead can help or harm the living or *vice versa*. Furthermore, the Bible does not teach that the dead return to avenge for ills committed against them. Instead, the Bible teaches that vengeance is the Lord's alone (cf. Genesis 9:5). For the Christian, therefore, it is unacceptable to grieve in ways that contradict the worship of God as revealed in Scripture.

6.3.2 Basis-theoretical inferences on beliefs and practices in bereavement within a biblical framework

6.3.2.1 Prayer

As already observed ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing, prayer is motivated by the trust that God is at work and in full control of the universe. It is a recognition that God is near and listening (Psalm 145:18). Although God can grant the desires of the believers without them asking (Matthew 6:8), yet he has appointed prayer as an ordinary means between him and the believer (Matthew 7:7, 8). Through prayer, Christians not only ask from God, they also find an opportunity to give thanks and praise him for all his goodness. In prayer, the bereaved find consolation.

The Bible instructs believers to pray solely to God. Christians can freely approach God through prayer. The Christian has immediacy of access to God through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Christ has made this access possible and now humankind has no need for any other intermediary to God. There is no teaching or example in the Bible to pray for or to the departed

(cf. CE 1859:336).

6.3.2.2 Communal support

Family or communal support is important in bereavement healing. Death is a communal affair. The community provides the opportunity for mutual help, remembrances, rites, forgiveness, reconciliation and care for the survivors. In the Old Testament, communal ties were based on belonging to the nation of Israel while in the New Testament a new community is formed around Jesus Christ called Christians. It is a faith community of the followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:21, 26). Jesus taught that his family was not just his blood relations but whoever does the will of the Father (Matthew 12:46-50 cf. Luke 8:19-21; 9:59-60). On the cross, Jesus asked his beloved disciple to take care of his mother (John 19:26). The qualitative character of the Christian community is thus to do the will of the Father which is to honour him in their care for one another.

6.3.2.3 New caring relationships

The Bible teaches that death frees the surviving spouse to enter new marriage relationships. In Israel, this was provided for in the levirate marriage system whereby the deceased's brother or close relative was expected to marry the widow in order to continue the deceased man's lineage and keep family property within the clan. The levirate marriages provided a home where the widow would be protected, comforted and provided for. In the Bible, care for the fatherless, widows and aliens is required of believers.

6.3.2.4 Remembrances

The Bible does not condemn remembrance of the deceased. Jacob erected a pillar in memory of Rachel his wife. However, in the Bible, remembrance is clearly not veneration of the dead which would be contradictory to the worship God. In Israel, there were national remembrances for the Patriarchs due to the everlasting covenant made between them and God for the nation of Israel and ultimately for all nations of the world. The New Testament is largely silent on remembrances. However, the sacrament of the Holy Communion was instituted by the Lord Jesus for his remembrance until he returns.

6.3.2.5 Efficacy of rituals

In the Bible, most of the rituals associated with death and bereavement served to observe the law of God and for practical hygiene purposes to help control infections. The rituals also served social purposes. Ritual washing, for example, ensured that the bereaved would be re-integrated into the community following the isolation of death. However, rituals that contravene the revealed law of God are forbidden.

6.3.2.6 Resurrection hope

Hope is the distinctive quality in Christian grieving. When Christians face death, their grief, though not diminished, is informed by the hope they hold based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of their own resurrection at his return. This is the most abundant consolation for the Christians in their bereavement.

6.4 Hermeneutical interaction of meta and basis theory: towards a new practice theory

6.4.1 Critical hermeneutical interaction

The gospel transforms both individuals and communities to conform to Christ. It is important to note that those who have been truly transformed neither lose their essential identity nor persists in that which is contrary to the gospel. Instead, the transformed entity acquires gospel-enabling for the desired purposes. In pastoral care for the bereaved, the desired purposes are healing and Christian maturity.

The examined meta-theoretical approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia demand the need to integrate the therapeutic cultural beliefs and practices that engender biblical practice in pastoral healing. The implication of such integration is desire to engender healing and avoid the feeling of guilt that often accompany Abaluyia Christians' involvement in cultural practices. However, the limitations of cultural beliefs and practices underscore the need to beware of and avoid those beliefs and practices that are contrary to the teaching of the Bible as the basis for pastoral practice while being sympathetic to those that are not. As such, the criterion for integration is not simply the isolation of cultural interventions that engender healing in bereavement from those that impede it but rather their conformity to the revealed will of God, the biblical teaching.

6.4.2 Circle for pastoral concern

In spite of some identified limitations of the priority of the community among the Abaluyia, this study reveals the centrality of communal help for the Abaluyia as well as the church (fellowship of believers) in bereavement healing. It was noted when death occurs among the Abaluyia, the bereaved are surrounded by a caring extended family (community). This is captured in the concept of *okhukura*, which means to 'protect or shield from harm'. Culturally, the carers form a virtual ring or circle around the bereaved (*okhukura*). It is within this circle of carers that bereavement healing occurs. In the cultural setting, the circle of primary carers was formed to engender healing though making sure that cultural beliefs and practices are observed. As it has been observed in the meta-theories, the cultural beliefs and practices enforced are often

contrary to the biblical teaching. This socio-cultural organisational systems and philosophy of care among the Abaluyia resonates with the centrality of mutual help in the church as underscored in the biblical concept of *koinonia*.

Drawing from the concept of *okhukura* and *koinonia*, a circle for pastoral concern in bereavement is proposed. The proposed circle of carers, like the cultural one, seeks to bring about healing but by the use of biblical resources available to the believers such as prayer, hearing God word and holding on the hope of resurrection. For effective application of the proposed circle of carers, the following elements ought to be borne in mind:

- The emphasis is on the spiritual family of believers rather than blood family. In this respect, the term 'circle' is preferred in this formulation rather than 'family' because the latter heavily connotes blood relation for the Abaluyia. The default understanding of 'family' is limited to biological relations. For believers, on the contrary, the circle consists of those who, by grace, have come to the saving knowledge of Christ within their local community of faith (*koinonia*) and beyond. Thus defined, the circle for pastoral concern is not restricted to biological affiliation. The term 'circle' also points to a pastoral approach that avoids the hierarchical pyramid form of ecclesiastical and institutional organisation often favoured by missionaries. Helpfully, the idea and symbolism of a circle is dominant among the Abaluyia. The circle is the shape of the sun, which the traditional Abaluyia face in their daily morning prayers. It represents the creative life-giving power of God. The circle also dominates the Abaluyia's architectural designs. For instance, it is the shape of the traditional house. At the centre of each house was erected a centre pole (*isiro*) which stood for stability. In addition, the elders' court usually sat in a circle as a symbol of cohesion and harmony. The circle also represents inclusiveness. All are included and their part and role is important. With this symbolism in mind, a circle of concerned believers is to be formed around the bereaved as an indication of interest in their plight as opposed to apathy and indifference.
- Each believer is individually and corporately engaged in the ministry of healing through prayer, reading of the Bible, fellowship, compassion, hospitality, counselling, communion, forgiveness and reconciliation. The individuality of the carer and those cared for is thus not only respected but also informed through interaction with others. All the biblical means of healing reach optimum efficacy as they are continually appropriated to the local cultural milieu.
- It is important to note that the concern shown to the bereaved is pastoral and as such it derives from God who forms its basis and gives it meaning. In this respect, the image of

God as the Shepherd informs the attitude and manner of care carried out by the circle for pastoral concern.

- The core of the circle is the sacred space of God from whom everything issues. He is *Were Khakaba*, the giver of life and all that human being need. The Abaluyia acknowledge that *Nyasaye niye oufwisinjia omubasu* (God is he that causes the sun to shine). However, God is not just a transcendental Creator of the universe. God is also immanently relational. He has made himself known in Jesus Christ so that those who lived in darkness may come to his saving knowledge. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the relationship between humankind and God that was interfered with due to sin has been restored. This relationship will be fully realised at the *Parousia* when the Kingdom of God will have finally been established and its greatest enemy, death, conquered. In the meantime, the believer has the benefit of God's presence with her by the Holy Spirit, the comforter. Therefore, the believer in her bereavement draws encouragement firstly in her relationship with God and the knowledge of his presence with her. In view of this relationship, the bereaved can make a cry of trust to One who hears. God does not forsake the bereaved but he is concerned for their comfort and healing. He sets the lonely in families (Psalm 68:6). This understanding of God and his character fosters peace and comfort.
- The circle is characterised by love – love for God and for neighbour. The circle for pastoral concern is composed of believers called to show loving care not only to those within the circle of faith but also to aliens and even enemies. God in his providence enables others to be conduits of his relief and grace in stress causing times. Love for and communion with fellow believers in the body of Christ characterise the believer's transformed life. It is within this circle of loving concern for and fellowship with other believers that deeds of compassion, hospitality, pastoral visitation and presence, Bible study, teaching, caring, forgiveness and reconciliation for the encouragement of the bereaved happen.
- As already noted, in the Abaluyia's traditional setting, the circle of carers (*Abakuri*) is mainly made of members of the bereaved person's extended family (community), related to them by blood. Those who have stepped into a living relationship with Jesus Christ and desire to live under his lordship are at once members of the fellowship of believers (*koinonia*) as well as members within their cultural settings. Thus, the Circle for Pastoral Concern is composed of all whose sins have been forgiven and whose life has been transformed to conform to Christ above all things within their cultural world. For the Abaluyia, the community is the context in which death is encountered, meaning

understood and healing appropriated. Armed with this understanding, the believers engage in their world with a view to bring it to submission to Christ. It is important to note that, Jesus did not condemn the Jews for mourning the way they did but joined with them, for instance, to comfort Mary and Martha following the death of their brother and his friend Lazarus. However, Jesus sought to correct misconceptions in the Jews view of death and resurrection. This understanding and example prompts the believer to live a life that is honouring to God even in their bereavement. The believer is enabled to so live by the Holy Spirit who is the encourager and enabler. The circle of believing helpers draws from and is guided by the example of Jesus.

- The greatest example drawn from Jesus and promised to those who put their trust in him is resurrection from death. Members of the circle of believers have hope of their resurrection to life with him. Because he rose from the dead, those who have put their trust in him have life in him. Hinged on the gracious gift of the hope of life and the sovereignty of God to accomplish his good purpose, believers are confident to approach God with their needs in prayer. Furthermore, as a result of what Jesus achieved, is achieving and will have achieved through his death and resurrection, the believers can confidently continue his memory through the breaking of bread and drinking wine which symbolise his body and blood in accordance to his holy institution until he returns. The believers also have confident that those who have died in him are equal heirs of the Kingdom of God with them.
- To achieve the full measure of the joy of membership in the *koinonia*, a radical disengagement with chants, deeds, performances and rituals that are contrary to the teaching of the head of circle, the Lord Jesus. His perfect will has been fully revealed in the Bible. Contrary beliefs and practices such as veneration of the dead or the fear of other spirits or powers are defeated by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the knowledge the revealed word. Luckily, the believers who form the circle of carers is endowed with a variety of talents to encourage, heal, restore, rebuke, correct, enable and mature one another in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Finally, the circle is both outward looking and eschatological. The circle members are concerned that whatever happens within the circle would bring glory to God and form a basis for witness. The believers new being in Christ exerts influence on the present life. It is when the believers are seen to sincerely love and care for one another that the world will come to know that they belong to Christ. The believers are indebted to gospel witness which works permanent changes in the lives of those who trust in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:14). A time of bereavement presents a unique opportunity for believers to be

witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel and the sure hope in Christ as they await his return and look forward to life with him where there shall be no more mourning for death will have been defeated.

6.4.3 Guidelines for implementation

6.4.3.1 Teaching

Although the church has biblical resources for healing in bereavement, she has largely failed to teach them faithfully and consistently. As noted in this study, for example, the ACK Provincial synod's discussion paper on guidelines on funerals does not make any explicit reference to biblical text. Such omission encourages some people to assume their own worldly starting point in seeking healing in their bereavement rather than seeking to understand and conform to biblical norms.

6.4.3.2 Example

Because the Abaluyia greatly honour elders (pastors), their example is invaluable. The church elders and pastors are therefore in the best position to effect change or influence others by their godly/biblical example especially in matters of bereavement by death. This has two main aspects to it. First, it requires personal submission and faithfulness to the Bible. Second, it calls for aptitude and spiritual maturity of the individuals as they engage in mutual care and encouragement.

6.4.3.3 Conformity to the Bible

The envisioned concept of a circle implies boundaries or limits. The limits are defined by the Bible. Those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus step into the circle of faith. They are therefore beneficiaries of the gifts of grace that belong therein. As members of the body of Christ the believers find their relevance and meaning within the body. In other words, to step into the circle of faith is to be in a sphere of security in Christ. In the place of desperation the believer has confidence in the assurance of belonging to the circle of the pastorally concerned.

6.4.3.4 Mutual concern

The term 'circle' also implies belonging and engagement with others, a relationship. The bereaved are not deserted but rather they are engaged with through loving and caring concern. The community of believers (*Koinonia*) is the context of the grace and the members are the dispensers of the gifts of grace they have received from God through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. As God is present with each one of them, so the members are present with each other. The believer is individually and corporately engaged with the pastoral concern for those in need.

This loving and serving concern which purposefully exists for mutual encouragement and comfort engenders healing. The dispensation of the gifts of grace work out through the members by being present with those in need in order to encourage, care for, support, build-up, heal, host, serve, listen to, talk with and share in their bereavement. Jesus Christ became man so that human beings can relate with and learn from him. Jesus is the perfect example for the believers as they pastorally engage or become actively concerned with the ministry of healing.

6.5 Conclusion

This study has considered the Abaluyia's cultural approaches to bereavement healing with a view of drawing principles for an integrated pastoral care model. The evaluation of the main cultural principles in the light of biblical approaches led to the design of circle for pastoral concern for new practice. The circle for pastoral concern model of bereavement healing puts the gospel at the centre of the Abaluyia's world but clearly does not overlook their world. It recognises that the bereaved mourn within their context and seek healing as Abaluyia who are in a relationship with Christ. Their relationship with Christ encourages faithfulness, informs trust and assures hope. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the bereaved believer can live as light and salt to their world as they care for one another and seek to mature in Christ.

Chapter 7: Research findings and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, conclusions are drawn from the entire research. In this endeavour, three overarching tasks are undertaken. Firstly, the research framework including the central theoretical argument, procedure and sampling is stated. Secondly, the research findings which include a summary of the findings regarding the traditional Abaluyia beliefs and practices related to bereavement healing, the empirical study and the normative biblical approaches. In addition, mention is made of the resultant integrative model – Circle for Pastoral Concern. Finally, recommendations accruing from the findings and the new integrative model are suggested.

7.2 Research framework

7.2.1 Preliminary observations

This research is hinged on the researcher's experiences and preliminary observations concerning the coping approaches in bereavement among Abaluyia Christians. These preliminary observations established that in times of bereavement, most Abaluyia Christians consciously or otherwise seek healing through cultural approaches. However, the rampant application of cultural beliefs and practices by Christians during bereavement often bring about feelings of guilt. The guilt feeling is largely due to lack of meaningful engagement between the Abaluyia culture and the gospel message. The disengagement and the resultant guilt either for involvement in or detachment from cultural approaches poses a pastoral concern.

The role of pastoral care in bringing about healing in bereavement through death forms the backdrop of this research. The term healing here is not restricted to the medical process of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. On the contrary, healing is used comprehensively to indicate that healing does not only concern the physical and the psychological aspects of a person but also the spiritual and social aspects. Healing involves a reconciliation of the meaning an individual ascribes to distressing feelings and events with his perception of wholeness as a person. Bereavement healing thus refers to the process by which the bereaved person is able to work through his traumatic experience, adapt to his changed status and find new meaning.

7.2.2 Theoretical argument

The pastoral concern led to the central theoretical argument that a sympathetic assessment of

cultural bereavement healing approaches alongside a biblically informed understanding of death, bereavement and the afterlife provide a basis for the development of an integrative pastoral model to address the limitations of the current syncretistic and parallelistic models and thus engender bereavement healing among the Abaluyia Christians. The sympathetic assessment not only acknowledges the categories of discernment that the Abaluyia bring to their engagement with the gospel but also seeks to correct the initial suspicion with which the traditional categories of belief and practice related to death and bereavement are often held. Most importantly, the assessment acknowledges the transformative character of the gospel in its encounter with wanting cultural beliefs and practices.

7.2.3 Research procedure

This is a study utilise Zeffass's hermeneutical model of doing practical theology. This method employs a dialogical interaction of basis, meta and practice theories. The researcher adapts this model to begin with discerning and articulating Abaluyia's cultural approaches to bereavement healing followed by an understanding of the biblical teaching on death, bereavement and the afterlife and then constructing an integrative model.

The researcher employed a combination of data collection procedures including in-person interviews, focus group interviews and direct and indirect participatory observations. The interviews were semi-structured which best suited the research. The empirical study was mainly by interviews. The researcher personally met with all the respondents. The data was collected and recorded through note taking, analysed and results drawn on the basis of the data analysis

7.2.4 Empirical study sample

The sample of the empirical study included willing respondents from every deanery of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Diocese of Butere as well as representatives of each of the focus groups – the Mothers' Union, Revival Brethren, ordained clergy and lay leaders. All the respondents were Abaluyia Christians bereaved within one year prior to the study. A sample of one hundred (100) respondents was selected through simple random sampling.

7.3 Research findings

7.3.1 Cultural approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia

It emerged that cultural beliefs and practices associated with death, bereavement and afterlife form the basis for healing approaches employed by the Abaluyia. This assertion is supported by the fact that observable practices are often grounded in learned or shared cultural beliefs even

though they may not be overtly present in the contemporary trends and tendencies due to inevitable cultural changes. In other words, a people's worldview, the overall framework for their interpretation of life, encapsulates their way of coping with life issues and challenges for meaning and adaptation. Consequently, the following findings may be drawn from this research:

- It emerged that the Abaluyia's conception of life, death and afterlife impacts how they cope in bereavement. According to the Abaluyia, the cosmos in its entirety is the work of God (*Were Khakaba*). As creator, God is the only source of life. God created human beings and gave them life as the greatest gift. As God's greatest gift to human beings, life must be honoured, protected and promoted. For the Abaluyia, it is life in the physical world that is of paramount value. Consequently, life promoting occurrences such as marriage, the birth of a child, good health, wealth, absence of calamities and general social welfare are desirable. On the contrary, life threatening forces and conditions such as sterility, singleness, illness, poverty and especially death are abhorrent. The desire for well-being in this life is expressed in daily prayers made only to God for protection and provision, the veneration of ancestors often through rituals, sacrifices, remembrances and performances and the enforcement of social support systems.
- Although loss through death is devastating and a source of pain and suffering, yet death does not annihilate life. Instead, death is perceived as a passage through which the individual enters the world of the ancestors (*emakombe*) where life continues in some form. As such, death brings about a transition from the physical to the spiritual, from the limited physical world to the unlimited spiritual world. In spite of the vague conception of the afterlife among the Abaluyia, the belief system and practices associated with death and bereavement point to an understanding of the continuity of life after death. This understanding helps to lessen anxiety that is otherwise brought about by the occurrence of death.
- Among the Abaluyia, God is never blamed for death. Causes of death include violation of taboos (*emisilo*), curses from parents or other elderly people, disillusionment and illnesses all of which are thought to be as a result of some human agency. This understanding informs the elaborate rituals that accompany death and bereavement. The rituals give meaning to occurrences such as death, strengthen the group solidarity and shape social values. A high concentration of rituals associated with death and bereavement is necessitated firstly by the fact that death is believed to cause ritual contamination which requires ritual cleansing. Secondly, because death is overwhelmingly blamed on witchcraft or some other human machinations, rituals give assurance of protection. Thirdly, the strong beliefs in the continuity of life whereby the

ancestors acquire a higher status with powers to give favours as well as to harm demand that the living be in good standing with the deceased. Lastly, rituals are used to separate the deceased from the living and to unite them with the ancestors as well as to re-integrate the bereaved into the community following the isolation brought about by death and bereavement. The rituals are performed in the context of the extended family (community).

- It is within the community that bereavement healing among the Abaluyia occur. Restoration to normal life following the occurrence of death through consolation and care is hinged to the value of co-existence among the people. Death concerns all members of the extended family (community). Consultative meetings are held and deliberations made communally concerning all issues occasioned by death and bereavement. In a similar manner, specialised opinion which is part and parcel of seeking well-being finds approval and interpretation in the community. The specialists included elders, dream interpreters or prophets, diviners and healers. The specialised opinion is often sought in order to ascertain the cause of death and to seek protection and healing for the survivors. In addition, acts of hospitality and philanthropy are required from community members. The obligations are hinged on a strong kinship consciousness that exist within the extended family which mutually seeks solutions to the needs brought about by death and bereavement. These community support systems contribute immensely to the well-being of the bereaved.
- The dying and the bereaved are never left alone without support. Relatives and friends visit the dying to show their concern and to encourage both the dying and their immediate family members. They also visit to offer their farewells and often to be witnesses to the dying man's will or last words. The visits are also believed to put the visitors in good standing with the dying. The visitors seek to receive his favour when he joins the ancestors and to reduce the possibility of being cursed or haunted. The deceased are believed to have power to favour those who were kind to them while in the physical body or harm those who were mean to them. The visits to a dying person also avail opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation. Therefore, these visits engender feelings of unconditional acceptance and loving care for those in need in spite of their situation. In bereavement, family members and friends who cared for and were reconciled to the deceased significant other are less likely to be burdened by guilt and regrets.

7.3.2 Current ecclesiastical approaches to bereavement healing among the Abaluyia

In addition to the described findings relating to cultural beliefs and practices, an empirical study was undertaken in order to discover current practices towards bereavement healing among the Abaluyia Christians within the bounds of the Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Butere.

- The data analysed elicited that early missionaries to Africa largely failed to adjust to the African milieu. Influenced by modern forms of enlightenment, many missionaries indiscriminately denied, degraded or dismissed African cultural beliefs and practices as meaningless superstition. There was lack of dialogue and sympathetic listening during these initial encounters. Unfortunately, this lack of dialogue was inherited by the mission churches. The result has been suspicion and pluralism whereby most African converts at once, but separately, appeal to cultural values as well as Christianity. The ensuing pluralism is particularly visible during life crises such as bereavement through death. Inferences from St. Luke's Parish Council Minutes (1932 – 1945) reveal that the missionaries' lack of sympathetic engagement with cultural beliefs and practices meant that the African converts' fears were not properly addressed. This partly explains the persistence of the cultural beliefs and practices in the church today.
- It emerged that in Butere, the Revival Brethren best represent the continuation of separation between culture and Christianity. The Revival Brethren uphold a hard demarcation between traditional beliefs and practices and the gospel. They especially reject all cultural beliefs and practices related to death and bereavement as well as any pseudo-magical practices. They maintain that they cope in bereavement by bearing in mind gospel promises especially the promise of resurrection and eternal life for those who are in Jesus Christ. As a Christian fellowship, the Revival Brethren model the New Testament church in love and care for one another. However, the Revival Brethren have been faulted firstly for their stoic endurance of pain and suffering especially by inhibiting the expression of emotions of grief such as weeping. Secondly, they are accused of leaving their bereaved prematurely and requiring them to get back to normal life almost immediately after the funeral of their loved ones. Thirdly, their exclusiveness has led to accusations of being judgmental, hypocritical and having a holier-than-thou mentality. Lastly, they are faulted for developing their theological understanding around single verses and doing little or no contextual application by their refusal to engage with the local culture.
- Contrary to the hesitation with which the Revival Brethren's approach to bereavement healing is viewed, the Mothers' Union (MU) model is hailed for its attempt at

inculturation. The MU has helping those whose life has met with adversity as one of its goals. This goal is fitting for an organisation whose primary purpose is to promote Christian marriage and family life. In Butere, the MU is at the forefront in providing both emotional as well as practical support for the bereaved especially widows and orphans. It has formed support teams and established support programmes not only for emotional and spiritual support through prayer, Bible reading and counselling but also for social advocacy and income generating projects. The MU has incorporated several cultural therapeutic values and practices that are not contrary to the biblical teaching in the care of the bereaved. By openly joining in weeping with those who weep, the MU members help the bereaved to correctly and honestly express their feelings of grief. Through advocacy, lobbying and campaigns, the MU seek for the change or removal of oppressive cultural beliefs and practices such as ritual cleansing of widows, widow inheritance and certain patrilineal systems of inheritance or other social injustices that disadvantage women.

- Apart from the various church organisations, the Anglican Church in Kenya has also been involved with issues related to death and bereavement among its members. The involvement is not just restricted to burying the dead but also extends to the plight of the bereaved. This involvement is perhaps best captured in the production of guidelines on funerals, development of a new burial liturgy and provision of medical services. The guidelines on funerals are intended to guard against cultural beliefs and practices that are either contrary to biblical teachings or inconvenience or disadvantage the bereaved especially along gender lines. In addition, they recognise that funerals provide opportunities for pastoral care and the proclamation of the gospel. Therefore, church leaders are encouraged to be present at and available to conduct Christian burials in order to minister to the living. The new burial liturgy in *Our Modern Services*, is informed by a desire by the peoples of Kenya to express their unique cultural identity in worship. In the new burial liturgy, cultural beliefs and practices relating to death and bereavement are considered. Pastoral and liturgical guidance given on how to use the burial liturgy emphasise the importance of providing pastoral care before, during and after the actual burial service. Lastly, the church seeks to bring relieve to those who suffer not only through pastoral care but also through medical means of diagnosing, treating and preventing disease. It continues in the legacy of medical missionaries. In order to achieve this goal, the church is involved in establishing health facilities, providing medical equipment and drugs, education, training, counselling, advocacy and reconciliation.
- The affairs of the church at the local level are coordinated by the pastor. Among the

Abaluyia, the pastor is held in high esteem. He is seen as the human face of the church, a representative of the sacred and a lead carer. As such, a pastor is an important agent in the process of bereavement healing. It was noted that there is overwhelming trust in the efficacy of pastoral means. The study further revealed that the pastor's efficiency as an agent of bereavement healing is impacted by his identity, training, experience and exposure, ability to teach, availability, integrity, leadership character and his use of the Bible, prayers and sacraments. In particular, it emerged that a proactive loving pastor achieves more in helping the bereaved than one who is reactive and condemnatory.

- In spite of the identified value of cultural beliefs and practices in bereavement healing and their persistence in the church, it was highlighted that some are clearly limiting and deserve renewal or rejection. They include firstly, the Abaluyia's image of God (*Were Khakaba*) as only transcendent and thus not involved directly in human affairs. Secondly, the belief that the deceased are alive and involved in the affairs of their living relatives is unsustainable. The deceased are, in fact, considered to be really present and to have power to help as well as to harm the living. This belief necessitates the performance of ritual sacrifices in order to appease the ancestors. The greatest harm that the ancestors are believed to be capable of causing is death and this explains the concentration of rituals and sacrifices around death and mourning. Some of these elaborate rituals and performances are demeaning, costly and most importantly, they contradict biblical teaching especially on love, justice, sexual morality, marriage and idolatry. Lastly, cultural stigmatisation of spinsters, bachelors, the barren, widows especially those who are not inherited, albinos and the physically or mentally challenged only add to the angst of bereavement.

7.3.3 Normative biblical teachings on death, afterlife and bereavement

In line with the central theoretical argument, the normative biblical teachings on death, afterlife and bereavement were explored.

- The research reveals that the Bible does not present an easy answer to death and bereavement. However, the Bible acknowledges that dying is real and painful both to the dying and the survivors. The apostle Paul refers to death as 'the last enemy' (1 Corinthians 15:26). He points out that death shall be destroyed at last, but in the meantime it is still with us as a hostile power, and we are in that meantime.
- It was noted that although the Bible death as both physical and spiritual, a source of anguish and trepidation, yet it largely focuses on life and the living. Life triumphs over

death in biblical line of thought.

- It was observed that the Old Testament presents two broad views concerning death. On one hand, death leads to an uneventful *Sheol*. From this viewpoint, there is no hope after this life. At the most, the righteous will get rest while the wicked will never be remembered. On the other hand, the resurrection of the righteous is hinted.
- The various Old Testament views find ultimate and concrete certainty in the New Testament event of the life, teaching and redemptive work of Jesus. Jesus taught that those who put their trust in him though they may die; they will live with him for eternity. This hope of eternal life has been made sure because Jesus conquered death through his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. At his second return, death will be finally defeated when those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ are raised to eternal life. Those who would have rejected him will be condemned to eternal death. This is the heritage with which the Christians face death, bereavement and the afterlife. Therefore, the Bible speaks not only of the bodily death which is common to all humans but it also speaks of spiritual death which results from sin. It is emphasised, especially in the New Testament, that it is sin which gives death its sting. However, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ those who put their trust in him have no need to dread death. Instead, the believers look forward to the final defeat of death when, like Jesus, they will be resurrected to eternal life.
- The Bible prohibits the practice of consulting the dead (necromancy) because it is incompatible with the worship of God and annuls trust in him. Furthermore, it was noted that the Bible does not teach that the living can help the dead nor that the dead can bless or curse the living.
- It was noted that the Bible does not deny the employment of culture specific responses in coping with death and bereavement. Rituals related to burial and mourning are, in fact, observed to be important. Most of the rituals associated with death and bereavement served to observe the law of God and for practical hygiene purposes to help control infections among the Jews. Furthermore, the rituals ensured that the bereaved would be re-integrated into the community following the unsettling occurrence of death. However, it reveals that the culture specific responses that are acceptable for believers must not compromise their worship of God.
- Several examples of bereavement from the Bible were discussed. It emerged that in spite of the sure hope of resurrection, the Bible does not negate the pain of bereavement. On the contrary, the Bible presents God through the Lord Jesus and in the

power of the Holy Spirit as compassionate in character. Jesus showed compassionate love as he encountered those who faced all sorts of sufferings including those who were bereaved through death. He shed tears at the post-burial gathering following the death of Lazarus and taught his followers to mourn with those who mourn. Therefore, in view of Jesus' example and teaching and indeed in the example of other biblical characters, believers realise not only that it is important to participate in the healing ministry but also that their mourning must not involve beliefs and practices that are contrary to the true worship of God revealed in the Bible. The apostle Paul entreats Christians to develop the right attitude towards death not so that they may not grieve, but so that they may grieve like those who have their hope secured in Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

7.3.4 Integration model – Circle for Pastoral Concern

- The study revealed that one of the impediments to a vibrant pastoral healing ministry among the Abaluyia emanates from lack of a sympathetic analysis of cultural beliefs and practices which formed the main focus in this research. It was noted that such sympathetic analysis ought to be prioritised in order not only to minimise the angst that result from the feelings of guilt of engaging in syncretistic and parallelistic approaches in relation to traditional Abaluyia approaches and Christian approaches to bereavement healing but also in order to truly address the fears of the people relating to death, the afterlife and bereavement which cannot just be wished away.
- Based on the data collected, analysed and interpreted, the researcher designed an integrative model for bereavement healing among the Abaluyia – Circle for Pastoral Concern.
- The concept of integration emanated from a sympathetic listening to the traditional Abaluyia approaches to bereavement healing. It was underscored that in spite of various concerns accruing from the dangers of syncretism and parallelism and the likely undue pressure on individuals or families to hold to beliefs or indulge in practices they deem inappropriate the extended family or community is as a crucial component in bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. The community is present with and concerned for the bereaved. Hinged on the concept of *okhukura* (to protect or shield from harm), it was concluded that for meaningful and sustained bereavement healing to occur among the Abaluyia, the curative role of the circle of extended family members or community has to be upheld. For the Abaluyia, life is lived within and validated by the community and as such, healing is largely a community issue of which the individual is an important part.

- Traditionally, the occurrence of death within a community is the concern of all members of the community. They naturally fall into their position and strive to play their roles in bringing about healing for the bereaved. It was noted, for instance, that among the Abaluyia, elders command a high respect. They form the highest regarded group of specialists in the circle of communal organisation and their counsel is particularly sought for in matters pertaining to cultural prescriptions and prohibitions related to death. As they come along (*okhukura*) the bereaved, they participate in the process of coping in bereavement.
- Based on the biblical studies it was noted that familial and communal ties are of particular help for the bereaved as they seek to come to terms with the loss of one of their own to death. In addition, family burials are presented as occasions for reconciliation and reunion. The funeral rites also provided an opportunity for property distribution and focus on the care of the survivors. The relatives played an important role in the mourning rituals as bereavement by death impacted and involved everybody in the community. When death occurred, the community gathered around the bereaved in order to comfort and encourage them. In the Old Testament these familial ties were based on belonging to the nation of Israel while in the New Testament a new community came into being – the community of believers in Jesus Christ otherwise called Christians (Matthew 12:46; Luke 8:19). This is to be a community of carers (John 19:26).
- On the basis of the research data the circle of carers was considered the most important element in bereavement healing among Abaluyia Christians. The socio-cultural organisational systems and philosophy of care advanced among the Abaluyia (*okhukura*) resonates with the centrality of mutual help in the church as underscored in the biblical concept of *koinonia*. Drawing from the concept of *okhukura* and *koinonia*, the Circle for Pastoral Concern model of bereavement healing among the Abaluyia is proposed.
- The proposed Circle for Pastoral Concern, seeks to bring about healing to the bereaved. The ensuing circle of carers, unlike the cultural circle of *Abakuri* (carers), is not restricted to blood affiliation. It is thus inclusive rather than exclusive. It fulfils its mandate on the basis of biblical teaching with a sympathetic view of the cultural means which informs the appropriation of biblical means to the local cultural milieu. It engages in prayer, reading of the Bible, fellowship, compassion, hospitality, counselling, communion, forgiveness and reconciliation and engenders healing, love and eschatological hope.

The research findings helpfully answered the research questions and met the research

objectives. Perhaps the greatest contribution of this research is the development of a new model – the Circle for Pastoral Concern model in bereavement healing among the Abaluyia. This research makes a contribution to the study of integrative models between traditional culture and the Gospel.

7.4 Recommendations for further study

On the basis of the research findings and conclusions, some recommendations may be made for further study. Firstly, this research reveals the need for research endeavour on the African take on the interplay between traditional beliefs and practices and the call to faithful Christian living. Among the Abaluyia, in particular, many doctrinal and ethical issues still need to be worked out in order to avoid the dangers of parallelism and syncretism. Such researches will help in isolating further the cultural beliefs and practices that do not engender acceptable Christian belief and practice. Pertaining to bereavement in particular, efforts need to be made on the part of church leadership especially the pastors to further explain the biblical teachings on death, afterlife and bereavement. There is need for clear biblical teaching and reflection on these issues. It emerged in the course of this research that some of the bereaved as well as carers have an erroneous view of the biblical teaching on these matters. Among the Abaluyia, for instance, the biblical doctrinal analysis on the concept of judgment after death to life or condemnation is greatly desirable. This issue is particularly important as the concept of judgment after death radically departs from the Abaluyia's understanding of the afterlife. Finally, however, this research reveals that such analysis ought to be sensitive to cultural modes of learning, thought forms and social organisation for its effectiveness and acceptability.

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Glossary

A. Vocabulary¹

Alala (v.int.) lend a hand; assist; help with someone else's job. Use help.

Amabanga (n.) blood. (*amatsayi; amalasire*)

Amachesi (n.) intelligence; wisdom; cleverness; usually used of acquired wisdom – that which one has learnt – while *obuchesi* is used more of common-sense, etc. *Okhukhalaka amachesi* – to think out a plan; to make a wise decision. (*-chesi; obuchesi*)

Amakaka (n.) thorny branches, used for closing a path. (*olukaka; likaka*)

Amanyasi (n.) a concoction assumed to have both magical as well as medicinal use. For instance, it may be given (usually by an *Omukanda*) to drive out *omusambwa*, or to counteract *obufira*; it may be sprinkled on a field, house, etc. to remove a curse; and it is drunk in many ceremonies – often those in some way binding or affecting two persons, when both parties drink.

Amasika (n.) tears; the time of mourning after a death, when relations and friends are expected to pay visits of sympathy and respect, and to wail; food must be provided for these mourners. *Okhutsia amasika* – to pay one's ceremonial visit of sympathy after a death; even if months or years have passed since the death, the first visit is regarded as the ceremonial one.

Amasira (n.) trouble; sorrow; bereavement. *Okhulola amasira* – to have trouble; to be bereaved. In this expression the word 'amasira' is sometimes omitted: *Alutsi!* – He has seen trouble! He has been through a bad time!

Amasirisi (adv.) secretly; privately.

Ambula (v.tr.) find dead or dying – either an animal or a person; to come on something useful unexpectedly. (*inyambula*)

Amola (n.) pieces of the bark of a tree; chips. (*eliula*)

Ara (v. tr. and int.) demarcate a boundary; *ara omukunda* – demarcate a land; drain off flood waters in channels. *Ara olunyali* – rule a line.

Ara (v.tr.) split; cut into; break (pot, etc.). *Ara ing'ani* – dig out the last bit of a grave where the coffin is placed. (*atikha; ararasia; arasia; asiaka*)

Baka (v.tr.) flay; skin an animal.

Bayira (v.int.) (of a girl), go to live with a man who has not paid dowry or made the usual marriage arrangements. (*baya*)

Beera (v.tr.) help; aid; assist. *Beera tsimbabasi* – show pity, or mercy. (*omubeeri; obubeeri*)

Beka (v.tr.) shave. *Beka lituma* – shave the neck and forehead, leaving a sharply defined edge

¹Term explanations are based on *A Luluhya-English vocabulary* by L.L. Appleby (1943)

to the hair. (*ibeka; olubeko*)

Chenda (v.int.) walk; travel; conduct oneself; behave – referring to moral behaviour.

Achendanga obubi – she is living an evil life. (*ichenderesia; oluchendo; omuchendi; chesia*)

-cheni (adj.) foreign; strange; novel; unusual. (*cheniha; omucheni; ebucheni*)

Cheniha (v.tr. and int.) pay a visit, more or less formal, including a meal and possibly staying the night or longer. Simply in for a brief visit is *okhukonya*. Use visit. (*-cheni*)

Chera (v.tr.) measure; weigh. *Chera amakhuwa* – weigh a matter; consider and make a decision. (*cherasia; cherekha; cherekhasia; cherekhana; obucherachi*)

Chesia (v.tr.) cause to travel; drive; lead. (*chenda*)

Chimba (v.tr. and int.) bring rain, by spells and charms – used of the rainmaker.

Ebukwe (n.) east.

Eliuba (n.) sun; note that sunshine is *omubasu*. The sun is supposed to have power to affect the lives of men and women. Previously, its power was recognised by a ceremonial spitting towards the rising and setting sun.

Emakombe (n.) the country/place of the dead.

Emasaba (n.) north.

Emiyimo (n.) the games and feasting in honour of a man who has died, usually held about a year after his death. The word is also frequently used in a more general sense, of any festival, sports gathering, etc. Only occasionally used in singular. (*omuyimo*)

Emulambo (n.) south

Eshiamberi (n.) fore-quarter, (adj.) the first. (*amberi*)

Eshibanga (n.) hole or gap in hedge or wall; an entrance formed into a hut or village. Use hole (in wall), gap (in hedge). (*wabanga*)

Eshibeyo (n.) a woman who gets married to her late sister's husband.

Eshibinze (n.) house where girls sleep in charge of an old woman. As most houses were single-roomed round huts, it was customary for the older girls from several villages or kraals all to sleep together in the hut of some old woman; the hut in which boys sleep is called *isimba*.

Eshifunyo (n.) goat killed at a woman's memorial feast, *eshikunene*.

Eshihembekho (n.) cemetery; burial grove; grove of trees where the chiefs and other important men (at one time it was all circumcised men) were finally buried; the body was first buried for a period of about a year in the hut of the man's chief wife. Beer and a portion of meat from sacrifices were taken to the *eshihembekho* for the spirits of those buried there to share.

Eshikhutu (n.) a large flat bell tied to the neck of a bull; a cow-bell is called *inyimba*.

Eshikongolio (n.) small piece of broken pot; potsherd. (*likonjio; oluchio*).

Eshikunene (n.) memorial feast for a woman who has died held at her father's home. It

corresponds to *omuyimo* for men.

Eshikwoli (n.) revenge. *Okhumala eshikwoli* – to take revenge.

Eshilaka (n.) a curse – in the expression ‘*okhulaka eshilaka munwa*’. (*laka*)

Eshilama (n.) roof; ceiling. (*lama*)

Eshilindwa (n.) grave, after it has been filled in; *ing’ani* refers to an open grave.

Eshinabandu (n.) ghost; spirit of a dead in visible form; also used of an infant born deformed; see also *eshinamakabi*, *eshinanyenze*.

Eshinamakabi (n.) an infant born deformed; a monster. See *eshinabandu*.

Eshinanyenze (n.) 1. ghost; spirit of a dead person in a visible form. 2. centipede.

Eshinini (n.) 1. shadow. 2. a memorial feast for a woman who has died held at her people’s home; or for a man who has died at the home of his wife’s people. See also *eshikunene* and *omuyimo*.

Eshiralatsi (n.) makeshift tent.

Eshiribiti (n.) a small drum, which can be beaten as it is carried along; used mainly in dances.

Eshisheno (n.) evil spirit; the spirit of a dead person returning to haunt and trouble the living (*shena*)

Eshitongoli (n.) a small harp (*indongoli*; see also *litungu*, *licheng’i*).

Eshitsiriba (n.) the horn of an animal (other than a cow), made into a musical instrument, blown sideways after the style of a flute.

Eya (v.tr. and v.int.) sweep; wipe; dry with a cloth. (*eshieyo*; *ameyo*)

-fu (adj.) dead; the relative (*owafwa*, etc.) is more frequently used than this adjectival form, except in the expression *omufu Wane* – the late So-and-so.

Futsa (v.tr. and int.) spit saliva; expectorate. See also *bita*. *Okhufutsa mungokho* – a form of oath, in which an accused person will offer to spit down the throat of a fowl while protesting his innocence; the belief is that if he is lying he will then be taken by serious illness or death.

Fwa (v.int.) die. This word is used not only of actual death, but of unconsciousness, or of a weak and apparently dying condition. *Yafwa mana nalamukha* (lit. he died, and then he came to life) would really mean he fainted and then revived. *Okhufwirwa* – to be bereaved. *Okhufwirwa inganga* – to lose over a business transaction. *Okhufwa omwoyo* – to despair. *Oluchendo lufiire* – the trip is off. Note that the near and intermediate past tenses of *-fwa* are often pronounced *-fiire* instead of *-fwire*. (*-fu*; *olufu*)

Fwa (v.int.) shine – of sunlight. *Omubasu kufwa* – the sun is shining.

Fwinda (v.int.) of the sun – to rise; of teeth – to come through; to appear in the gums; of crops – to sprout.

Fwirwa (v.int.) 1. be found guilty. 2. be bereaved. *Yafwirwa nyina* – he lost his mother. 3. make a loss. *Okhufwirwa inganga* – to make a loss on a commercial transaction. (*fwa*)

Fwisia (v.tr.) cause to shine – of the sun, etc. (*fwa*)

Fwola (v.tr.) shame; disgrace; degrade; despise. *Bafwolire amasika ka wane* – they degraded so-and-so's funeral. (*eshifwolo*)

Habana (v.int.) cry for help (*habira; habina; ?habasia*)

Habina (v.tr.) come in response to a plea for help; succour; come to.....' help. (*habana*)

Habira (v.tr.) cry to; appeal to; express a longing for the help of some person who is absent (*habana; habina*)

Hala (v.tr.) inform others the sad news of bereavement through death

Hona (v.int.) recover; escape; avoid a danger. *Yahona mukhufwa* – he escaped death. (*honokokha; honia; omuhonia*)

Honia (v.tr.) heal; cure; save. Most commonly used of a person being saved from illness, accident, death, etc.; also occasionally e.g. of money definitely saved – not merely put aside, but saved from wasteful or unnecessary use (*hona*)

Huka (v.int.) marvel; wonder; be surprised, or sorry, or grieved, or disappointed.

Hulukha (v.int.) rest. (*obuhulushi*)

Ibibulia (n.) Bible

Ifumberera (v.int.) fold the arms; be wrapped up in one's own grief or disappointed. (*fumba*)

Ihabini (n.) help; assistance; aid. (*habina*)

Ikala (v.tr. and int.) close, or be closed; shut, or be shut. (*omwikalo; omwikalanda; ikalira; ikalirisia; eshikalo*)

Ikayakaya (v.tr.) set apart for a sacrifice; make morning and evening prayers.

Ikhoya (v.int.) be happy; be pleased with oneself.

Ikhupa (n.) lighting when it strikes; otherwise it is called *oluhenu*.

Ikhuula (v.tr. and int.) wail for a person who has died, or who is dying.

Imana (v.int.) be mean; be tight-fisted; be miserly (*ima*)

Imba (n.) clod; lump of earth.

Imba (v.tr. and int.) sing. (*olwimbo; omwimbi; inyimba*)

Imbako (n.) short-handled hoe; *jembe*; the chief implement used in cultivation. In olden days dowry payments were made chiefly if not entirely in *tsimbako*.

Imbusi (n.) a goat. *Imbusi yeshinini* – lit. 'the goat of the deceased's shadow/spirit'. In the past the goat was brought by a deceased man's daughters during *obukoko*.

Imero (n.) nature; life; make-up; habits; customs; what a person is like, in character and appearance. (*mera*)

Imika (v.refl.) hang oneself – the usual method of committing suicide; commit suicide; choke oneself. (*mika*)

Imongo (n.) fortune – either good or bad – which is either the result of, or a suitable reward for, one's actions; justice; nemesis.

Indabukha (n.) drink-offering; beer used in connection with funeral (and probably other) ceremonies. (*eshirabu*)

Indoboyo (n.) trouble-making; quarrelsomeness.

Indubukha (n.) beer pot; the beer used at the *omuyimo* for a man who has died; the dancing and drinking at an *omuyimo*.

Ing'ani (n.) a grave, open. When it has been filled in it is called *eshilindwa*.

Ing'oma (n.) drum.

Ing'ombe (n.) cow, bull.etc. *tsing'ombe* – cattle. *Ing'ombe yebiosio* – lit. cleansing cow, cow or bull previously slaughtered during a family reunion ceremony after burial.

Ingara (n.) head-pad – a ring-shaped pad made of grass, banana-bark, etc., for supporting a load on the head. Used of many ring-shaped articles, and for a circle.

Ingoka (n.) instantaneous death.

Injinia (n.) extravagance; unstinting generosity. *Oweinjinia* – one who is always generous, not only with gifts, but also with help.

Injira (n.) road; path; way; method.

Injira (v.tr. and int.) enter; go in; to through.

Inono (n.) the name used to indicate the clan to which a woman or girl belongs by birth, when she is thought of as a wife, actual or potential – i.e. an *omukoko* e.g.

Place	Clan	Abakoko (inono)
Ebuchenya	Abachenya	Nanjenya
Ebukambuli	Abakambuli	Nandayi
Ebutere	Abatere	Nangulu
Ebuwanga	Abashitsetse	Bwibo
Eshirotsa	Abashirotsa	Nanzoyi

Inyungu (n.) pot with wide mouth, used for cooking and for storing grain etc.; *tsinyungu* is used as a fairly general term for pots.

Inyuru (n.) bird whose song at night is supposed to foretell death.

Inzu (n.) house. *Okhunyoza inzu* – to get married. *Omwene inzu* – the wife. *Abomunzu ndala* – the children or descendants of one woman. *Owomunzu yefwe* – my brother (or sister), the child of my own mother.

Iranya (v.tr.) work iron in a forge; make of iron, etc. (*omwiranyi*)

Isanda (n.) cloth used to wrap/cover the body of the deceased before burial.

Isimba (n.) hut where the young men sleep. (cf. *eshibinze*)

Isira (n.) hatred; an unforgiving spirit. *Okhuhambanaisira* – to become bitter, unforgiving enemies, of open hatred because of some wrong done.

Isiriya (n.) song of triumph, marking victory in battle, the killing of a leopard, deliverance from a common danger, etc. (*obwisiria*)

Isiro (n.) centre pole supporting the roof of a house.

Isisikhana (v.int.) sob; catch one's breath and be unable to speak because of grief, anger, etc.

Isukuti (n.) a small drum. (*eshibiriti*).

Itisa (v.tr.) sacrifice (a sheep) under certain circumstances, or in a particular manner. (*itutuma*)

Itsuba (v.int.) vow; promise solemnly; call down a curse.

Kaba (v.tr. and int.) divide; allot; share; give out. (*kabira; kabukhana; kabukhasia; kabula; omukabo; omukabukhasi; Khakaba*)

Kalusia (v.tr.) answer; return; give back; inherit the wife of a relative. (*kalukha*)

Khakaba (n.) a name of God, emphasising his function as Giver of life and gifts. (*kaba*)

Khoonya (v.tr.) help; assist. (*ikhoonya*)

-khulu (adj.) old. This word gives an idea of a venerable state of old age, not of a thing or person grown old and worn out and of little use, for which the verb *kofula* would be used. (*-khulundu*)

-khulundu (adj.) chief; biggest; eldest; senior, etc.

Khwa (v.tr.) pay dowry, equilibrium guarantee, 'or bride-price' (*ikhwe*). The dowry may consist of cattle (often between 8 and 15), goats, and money; in the old days it consisted of hoes. When a man's family starts to pay dowry no bargain is struck; they take one or two head of cattle at a time, usually, until they have given nearly enough; then the man asks if he may have his wife. The girl's father will then say how much more he wants, and bargaining begins. This equilibrium-guarantee is a form of compensation to the clan for the loss of a woman, and can be used to bring another woman in, as a wife to one of the men of her clan. It is supposed to be paid in full, or at least the main part of it, before the marriage takes place; but in actual practice payments continue over a long period – sometimes even when the wife is an old woman. Return of the cattle constitutes a divorce under traditional custom; and should the bride die without leaving children part or the whole of the dowry may have to be returned. (*ikhwe; khwebwa; khwererana; omukhwe*)

Koma (v.tr.) visit for the purpose of giving news of a death; break the news. (cf. *hala*)

Kona (v.int.) lie; sleep; sometimes used of death. (*obukono; konera; koneshera*).

Konya (v.tr.) test; taste; take a little; look at critically; visit – a short informal visit. See also *cheniha*.

Kulukha (v.int.) ascend; fly upwards (*hekulu*)

Laama (v.tr. and int.) pray; pray to; beg; beseech. *Laama Nyasaye* – Pray to God.

Laka (v.tr.) command; order; promise. *Laka ebilaka omunwa* – curse. (*lilako; indache; lakana; lachirisia; lakula*)

Lakaya (v.int.) shout; cry; weep loudly.

Lakulusia (v.tr. and int.) prophesy; foretell.

Lama (v.tr.) bequeath; leave to.... (*omulame*)

Lamukha (v.int.) come to life; arise from the dead; revive after being unconscious or helpless. *Okhulamukha* – the Resurrection. (*-lamu; lamusia*)

Lamusia (v.tr.) bring to life; revive; bring round. (-*lamu*)

Landa (v.int.) creep; spread out; throw out runners (grass, etc.). (*emilandila* – creepers)

Lekha (v.tr.) leave; allow; stop, or leave off. (*lekhula; lesheera; obulekhuli; obulesherwi; obwileshesi*)

Leta (v.tr.) help; come to the aid of; benefit (also *Khonya*)

Libombola (n.) wild creeper, tied to baskets used in ceremonies connected with the beginning of the planting, and also in other ceremonies; used for fomenting swellings. (*bombolokha*)

Libwi (n.) a wrestling match. (pl. *amabwi*)

Licheng'i (n.) harp, larger than the one called *litungu*; *eshitongoli*.

Lichina (n.) stone; used of slates used in school. *Amachina* very often refers to the ancestral stones in the village, where sacrifices were made. These stones were planted opposite the door of the old man's chief wife's hut, and at his death they were passed down to his heir, usually his oldest son, who then becomes 'omumali wemisango' (the one who offers sacrifices) in his place.

Likale (n.) hollow reed – used by children to make musical pipes.

Likhaniafu (n.) chameleon.

Likhoola (n.) strip of dry banana bark.

Likoko (n.) banana tree.

Likunda (n.) site of a deserted village. (*omukunda*)

Liloro (n.) dream. Dreams are treated very seriously by the local people and very often influence their actions. An unusual dream, or one involving the appearance of a person who has died, would necessitate a visit to a seer or a medicine-man, who would interpret the dream and say whether any sacrifices was necessary. (*lora; amaloro*)

Linani (n.) a general term for wild animals especially the hyena

Lisabo (n.) feast; supper. Often used for Holy Communion and memorial ceremony.

Lisero (n.) skin; hide; dried ox-hide used for sleeping mat; goat-skin worn by an old man. *Akona khwisero*, or *Ali khwisero* – he is ill in bed.

Lisiri (n.) metal bracelet worn by a man who has completed the memorial rites (*emiyimo*) of his father, and is therefore now considered an elder.

Lisolo (n.) quarrel (*sola*)

Litonde (n.) albino.

Litungu (n.) harp, smaller than *licheng'i*.

Liula (v.tr.) hunt out charms or medicines that are said to have been hidden in a house, village, etc., to cause illness or other bad fortune to the inmates. The person who does this is called *omuliuli*.

Loka (v.tr.) bewitch; cause illness, failure, or other misfortunes by looking, pointing, touching, praising, etc. – the evil eye. (*omulosi; liloko*)

Lola (v.tr. and int.) see; the near and intermediate past tenses are formed from the stem *-lutsi*; *endutsi*, *ndalutsi*. (*lolekha*; *lolerera*; *lolosia*; *eshilolero*; *akhalolero*; *omulolereri*; *indolero*)

Longa (v.tr.) create; make; more particularly to form existing raw material into something new; e.g. pottery. (*omulonji*; *eshilonje*)

Mala (omusango) (v.tr.) perform or offer a sacrifice.

Mama (n.) mother; my mother. It is often used, either alone or as *A, Mama!* as an exclamation of pain, grief or dismay. *A, Mama ko!* repeated many times indicate continued pain or grief. (*nyina*; *mawo*)

Mika (v.tr.) choke; kill by suffocation (hanging, strangling, drowning, etc.)

Mira (v.tr.) swallow. (*mirikha*; *miring'asia*)

Mulembe (greet.) the usual word of greeting – literally, “peace”

Mumbo (n.) west.

Nabongo (n.) chief; king; lord. Also *omwami*.

Nashikoko (n.) an unmarried woman (spinster or separated from her husband).

Nyababa (n.) a rite of banging items believed to ward off death and other calamities.

Nyira (v.int.) become cold; stiffen, particularly in death or unconsciousness; be silent and dead, as an empty house; be calm and peaceful. Intensified with the particle *tsi*; thus *Inzu inyirire tsi* – the house is absolutely silent and deserted. (*-nyifu*)

Obufira (n.) medicine or charm often procured from a medicine-man, to cause illness or death or bad fortune – hence the word is sometimes used for poison. It may be ‘administered’ in various ways; it is commonly put in food, or buried in the house or village, or placed in the path of the person for whom it is intended. *Okhushinga obufira* – to place *obufira* in a person’s way, so as to cause them harm. (*Omufira*)

Obufumu (n.) magic; prophesy; the doings of an *omufumu*. (*omufumu*)

Obuhabini (n.) assistance given in response to someone’s appeal. (*habina*)

Obuheeri (n.) love (*heera*)

Obukhana (n.) music; musical instrument of any kind.

Obukoko (n.) mourning ceremony by daughters at their paternal home after an occurrence of death and burial in the family. (*Omukoko*)

Obulamu (n.) life; health (*-lamu*)

Obulamushi (n.) resurrection; coming to life. (*lamukha*)

Obulemia (n.) comfort; consolation (*lema*)

Obuliba (n.) a trap for rats, etc., usually consisting of a weight that falls on the animal. Also *omubero*, *omuteko*.

Obulosi (n.) witchcraft (*loka*; *omulosi*)

Obundu (n.) personality. (*-ndu*; *omundu*)

Oburie (n.) the respect, honour, and fear towards one’s parents-in-law, and certain other superiors. One would always feel to some extent at least self-conscious or even a little

nervous in the presence of an 'omurie'. There are various restrictions on behaviour and on conversation; e.g. one would not shake hands with an *omurie*; and certain topics of conversation are taboo. There is no *oburie* between grand-parents and grand-children; so a child is much more free and intimate with his grand-parents than with his parents.
(*ria*; *omurie*)

Oburiima (n.) anger; also bitter disappointment or grief; e.g. a bereaved person feels *oburuma* – an angry grief.

Obusanjirani (n.) fellowship.

Obusolo (n.) strife; quarrelling; war (*solana*)

Obwikho (n.) relationship; kindred. Membership of the same clan, or of one's mother's clan, constitutes *obwikho*, and persons so related may not intermarry. (*omwikho* – a relative)

Obwitsusio (n.) remembrance; memorial. (*itsulira*)

Okhubayira (v.int.) of a girl, to live with a man who has not paid dowry and often without the knowledge of parents or guardians

Okhubayisia (v.tr.) of a man, take a girl as wife without having paid dowry, often without having sought the consent of her parents or guardians for marriage

Okhukhalaka eshina (v.tr.) deliver a judgment; pass sentence

Okhukhalaka omuse (v.tr.) judge; hear a case and deliver a judgment

Okhukura (v.tr.) protect; shield from harm

Okhushina (v.int.) dance; play dancing games.

Olubaka (n.) generation; age-group. *Nowolubaka lulala nende wane* – he was born at the same time as so-and-so.

Oluchio (n.) piece of a broken pot; also a very large beer-pot. (*likonjio*)

Olufu (n.) death. (*fwa*)

Oluhenu (n.) lightening (in the sky).

Oluhungu (n.) shrill; cry of alarm, distress, terror or grief, usually indicating that a person has just died, or that someone is in great danger and requires help – e.g. a girl being carried off by men. More commonly used in plural form – *tsimbungu*. The verb is *okhupa tsimbungu*. Also *olwang'a*; *eshikhule*.

Olukhana (n.) girlhood; virginity; hymen. *Olwimbolwolukhana* – the song of virginity, which used to be sung by the party of girls carrying news of a bride's virginity back to her home.
(*omukhana*)

Olukhanya (n.) a long bundle of fire-wood.

Olukhono (n.) a grudging spirit, in phrase *okhuhana nolukhono* – to give grudgingly.

Oluluyia (n.) the language of the Bantu people of western Kenya. (*Oluyia*)

Olumbe (n.) disease, usually a fatal disease.

Olusambwa (n.) stick (of *olusiola*) set up alongside ancestral stones, in honour of some particular spirit. (*omusambwa*)

Olusiola (n.) markhamia lutea

Oluyali (n.) glory; honour; beauty; virginity. *Omukhana yanyolwa nali noluyalilwe* – the girl (bride) was found to be a virgin.

Oluyia (n.) ethnic group; clan. People of the same *oluyia* cannot inter-marry. Thus the Abamarama are an *oluyia*, while the Abasamia consist of several clans (*tsimbia*). Abaluyia is used to indicate all the Bantu clans of western Kenya.

Olwika (n.) a horn - either on the animal's head, or when used as a trumpet.

Olwikhuulo (n.) song of mourning; lament. (*ikhuula*)

Omubero (n.) trap (*eshibero*). Also *obuliba*, *omuteko*.

Omucheni (n.) visitor; stranger; new-comer.(-*cheni*)

Omuchimba (n.) rain-maker.

Omufu (n.) a dead person; one fairly recently dead; the deceased, or the late; *omufu Wane* – the late So-and-so. (*fwa*)

Omufumu (n.) witch-doctor; sooth-sayer. It is the *omufumu* who is consulted in case of any illness, death or other misfortune, to find out who (or whose spirit) is responsible, and what sacrifice must be made or other steps be taken to avert further trouble; this is done by what is apparently a question to the spirits, to be answered by whatever apparatus he is using – e.g. wood; animal parts, shells, water on potsherds etc and adherers often await an affirmative reply. The *omufumu* also supplies medicines and charms, particularly those for winning favour from superiors, etc.

Omufutu (n.) a certain large tree, the leaves of which are used for an *omusango* to bring harm of some sort to an enemy.

Omukabo (n.) a share; an allotted portion. (*kaba*)

Omukhonyi (n.) helper; assistant. (*khonya*)

Omukhulundu (n.) an elder; the senior; an old man; the oldest of the family; a person having authority or seniority; etc. (-*khulu*)

Omukoko (n.) a girl considered as a bride or potential bride – usually in this sense, that wherever she goes to be married, she is an *omukoko* of the clan of her father. See *inono*.

Omukulikhwa (n.) the person a child is named after; often identified through a dream or referred to by *omufumu* as the cause of illness or other trouble. (*kulikha*)

Omulakusi (n.) dream prophet (dream interpreter)

Omulame (n.) heir; inheritor. (*lama*)

Omulina (n.) friend.

Omuliro (n.) fire; heat. *Okhubwana omuli*ro – to set and light a fire; to re-arrange firewood and blow on fire so as to make it burn up. *Okhun*ia *omuli*ro – to bring trouble that will cause loss or require payment.

Omuloli (n.) witness; one who saw. (*lola*)

Omulonji (n.) maker – more particularly of pots, etc.; potter; may be used for creator. (*longa*)

Omulosi (n.) whistle. *Okhupa omulosi* – to whistle. If a girl whistles, it is commonly said that she will cause the death of her brother or some other male relative.

Omulosi (n.) witch, or sometimes wizard. The main work of a witch seem to be that she wanders at night knocking on peoples doors or throwing stones on roofs, etc.; that she keeps some wild animal, snake, etc., as her *liloko*; and that she has power to cause illness or bad fortune of some kind, often merely by a look or touch. Apparently some women definitely regard themselves as *abalosi*, but many others are quite falsely accused of witchcraft. (*loka*)

Omuluyia (n.) a person belonging to any of the Bantu clans of western Kenya; literally a member of the same clan. (*oluyia*)

Omumali (n.) *omumali wemisango* – the one who offers a sacrifice, being the head of the family. *Omumali weshikwoli* – an avenger.

Omumenyani (n.) neighbour; tenant. (*menya*)

Omurembe (n.) tree with red flowers and round, greyish leaves. It is used in taking an oath of innocence; an accused person attests his innocence by spearing the *omurembe*; if he is lying, illness or death will follow. Children suffering from mumps (*tsindeyindeyi*) are also taken to dance round the *omurembe* tree singing a song of which there are varying versions, such as '*tsindeyindeyi hwera, tsindeyindeyi hwera khumurembe*'. This is supposed to bring about a certain cure.

Omusambishi (n.) one who on his own accord offers to help. (*sambikha; okhusambikha*)

Omusambwa (n.) the spirit of a person who has died. Dead members of the clan are considered as really present as, and considerably more powerful than, those still living; and their power always seems to be shown in bringing illness or other bad fortune. The head of the family would erect three stones at the centre of which was erected an upright stick from *olusiola* in the homestead opposite the hut of his chief wife, as a place where sacrifices could be made and the *emisambwa* consulted, appealed to, and even scolded. Practically all kinds of trouble are thought to have a supernatural origin – either witchcraft or the spirit of an ancestor. The *omufumu* would be consulted in order to find out who is responsible, and what sacrifice will be acceptable; but it is the head of the family alone who can make the sacrifice. *Emisambwa* were also consulted or at least notified of any important events affecting the life of the clan, such as the beginning of the planting or harvesting, and their blessing invoked at the time of a marriage, etc.

Omusango (n.) a sacrifice; used sometimes of what appears to be more in the nature of a charm to bring illness or bad fortune. See note on *omusambwa*, also on *omumali*. (*sanga*)

Omusilo (n.) taboo; the animal etc., that is the totem of the clan, and which can never be used

by members of the clan as food, the skin as a mat, etc.; it is thought that touching one's *omusilo* causes skin eruptions; anything that is strictly forbidden or absolutely renounced is called *omusilo*. (*sira*; *eshiruchi*; *pl. emisilo*)

Omusaloli (n.) one who collects gifts, subscriptions, taxes, etc. (*solola*)

Omusalolo (n.) contribution. (*solola*)

Omusomi (n.) a reader (*soma*)

Omusuku (n.) foreigner; enemy; one not of your own clan, and therefore a possible husband or wife.

Omusumba (n.) an unmarried man (bachelor or widower), or a slave or servant.

Omuyabululi (Omuyabulusi) (n.) one who may be called in to dig up something buried – e.g. to find and dig up *obufira* (a charm), etc., buried in the homestead, or to dig up the bones of a person whose spirit has been causing trouble. Although a man may just become an *omuyabulusi*, it is usually a position inherited from a relation. (*yabulula*)

Omwikalo (n.) a magical concoction, or charm, used to ward off illness, locusts, *ebikhokho*, or other evils. (*ikala*)

Omwikho (n.) a relative. (*obwikho*)

Omwikhoyo (n.) celebration; rejoicing; enjoyment; joy; (*ikhoya*)

Omwimani (n.) a mean person; a tight-fisted, stingy person; a miser. Also, *omukhunja*. (*ima*)

Omwimbi (n.) a singer. (*imba*)

Omwisalisi (n.) a person who offers a sacrifice. (*isalisira*; *omumali*)

Omwitsa (n.) friend. *okhuhambana obwitsa* – to become friends. The word *omwitsa* is often used for sweetheart or fiancé (boy) or fiancée (girl). (*itsa*)

Papa (n.) father; my father; your father – so; his father – *samwana*; our father – *sefwe*; your (pl.) father – *senywe*; their father – *sabwe*. These are formed from the stem *se* (?)... father, with the appropriate pronouns.

Saaba (v.tr.) wash (one's hands.)

Sambikha (v.int.) offer help; come to the rescue. (*omusambishi*)

Sambukha (v.int.) come un-roofed; start to come down, (of house).

Sambula (v.tr.) raze; pull down a house – particularly taking off the roof. (*sambukha*).

Sanda (v.int.) suffer. (*sandia*)

Sandia (v.tr.) cause suffering; trouble; oppress; persecute. (*sanda*)

Sheba (v.tr.) cut; slice; circumcise. (*eshishebo*; *-shebano*).

Shena (v.tr.) haunt; return from the spirit-world to trouble those who are still alive. All spirits of the dead are believed to be interested in the doings of the clan, but it is only when one becomes really troublesome, and repeated bad fortune is attributed to him or her, and possibly the dead person appears in dreams, that the term '*shena*' is used. It may, for instance, be used if a child becomes quite ungovernable, or a person does something quite unreasonable. (*eshisheno*)

Shenga (v.tr.) cut.

Sinjira (v.int.) stand; may be used for coming to a stand-still, but more accurately it refers to rising from a sitting to a standing position; for the other, use *okhwema*. (*masinjira*; *sinjira*; *sinjisia*; *amasinji*)

Sioma (v.tr.) threaten; warn. (*siomera*; *siomesia*)

Sira (v.tr.) renounce; refuse on principle; make a vow or strong resolve never to touch; dislike intensely; taboo; refuse on ceremonial or religious grounds. *Sira olukaka* – erect a fence, hedge, or other barrier.

Sirana (v.tr.) detest each other. (*sira*; *isira*)

Sirikha (v.tr.) give medical attention. (*omusirishi*; *lisirishiro*; *obusirishi*)

Sitikha (v.int.) revive; breathe again; come round.

Siukha (v.int.) (sometimes pronounced *sukha*) appear as a ghost; haunt; appear unexpectedly; look ugly; bring a curse.

Siushira (v.tr.) curse; put a curse on a person so that he may be haunted. (*siukha*)

Sola (v.tr.) launch an attack on behalf of a murdered relative.

Solola (v.tr.) collect; go round collecting. Used, for example, of a young boy who has just been circumcised and goes round visiting relatives and receiving presents of fowls, cereals, money etc. from each; also of a woman collecting millet to brew beer after her husband's death.

Soma (v.tr. and int.) read; study; go to school; be educated. (*omusomi*; *omusomesia*)

Subira (v.int.) hope; trust; expect; believe. (*subirira*; *subisia*; *obusubisie*; *omusubiri*; *obusubiri*)

Suuba (nende) (v.int.) be contemporary with; be the same age as. See also *olubaka*, *tsimbasi*.

Talatala (v.int.) throw oneself down; throw out arms and legs.

Tianya (v.tr.) put a curse upon an unborn child so that it is born deformed.

Tiba (v.int.) be completely lost; be completely lost sight of; perish. Although not used transitively, this verb usually seems to imply loss in relation to another person or group e.g. *Yatibira mu Banyolo* – he is quite lost to us, having gone to live among the Luo. Also used of loss by death. (*tifia*)

Tola (v.tr.) pick up something lost, dropped, or thrown away; cannot be used of picking up something from an appropriate place; find; used also when a person comes to the rescue of some orphan or poor or helpless person – to adopt.

Tserera (v.int.) sing – used of kettle singing, of women wailing, crickets, etc

Tsia (v.int.) go. *Okhutsia elwany* – relieve the bowels; *okhutsia amatsi* – to go for water. *Okhutsia amasika* – to pay a ceremonial visit of sympathy after a death; see note on *amasika*. (*tsiririra*; *obutsi*; *tsira*)

Tsila (v.tr.) be plucky; be stoical in sorrow; endure bravely.

Tsimbabasi (n.) pity; mercy. *Okhubeera tsimbabasi* – to show pity; to have mercy.

Tsinzikhuulu (n.) lamentations.

Tsoma (v.tr.) sheath; insert; pierce. (*tsomokha*; *tsomola*)

Tsomoshela (v.int.) repair a leaking hut by inserting newly prepared thatch.

Tunduma (v.int.) become warm (by fire); still warm.

Tura (v.tr.) contribute – e.g. food for a feast.

Wabo (poss.) their; theirs. *Omwana wabo* – his/her/their sister or brother;

Yabira (v.tr.) bury. (*yaba*)

B. Idiomatic expressions

Abatsia hasi/mwiloba – lit. ‘those who have gone down into the ground’; the dead

Amasika okhweya – the end of a funeral (not the end of mourning)

Atsile emakombe – lit. ‘he has gone to the land of the dead’, often used when an elderly person dies

Eshikula muliango – ritual goat slaughtered for every remarried woman.

Ingokho yamachenga – chicken prepared and eaten on the last day of vigil after burial. The ritual fire is then left to die out.

Ingokho yeshilindwa – chicken for grave diggers formerly killed by strangling and roasted over the ritual fire (*amachenga*) and prepared by one of them

Ingokho yomukulukha – chicken for those who bury the body of the deceased

Khupa tsimbungu – an idiomatic expression from *khupa* (‘beat’) meaning ‘wail’ or ‘raise a cry of alarm’

Likaka – protector

Okhufwa nomurwe – to die without bearing a child

Okhukhalaka amakhoola – to inherit a widow (consummated by sexual intercourse)

Okhukhalaka omwoyo – to breath one’s last, to die

Okhukhola obuloli – to testify

Okhukhola tsimbalabalo – to joke about something serious, especially death

Okhumala eshikwoli – to avenge

Okhumala omusango – to make a sacrifice

Okhumupa Setani – to condemn a believer who lapses into cultural practices (used by the Revival Brethren)

Okhuraka amachina – to establish a new family shrine using three stones and *olusambwa*

Okhusaaba – to have a ritual meal prepared by a newly married wife for her husband with foodstuff from her paternal home

Okhushina eshilemba – to perform the ritual of mock fight against death after the burial of a notable elder (include driving cattle through the compound of the deceased)

Okhushina eshilemba – to perform the war-like dance in honour of a man who has died usually held soon after burial

Okhutorera khwisero – to be bed-ridden for long before death
Okhutsoma eshipili – to coarsely but jestly point out a person's mistake
Okhwenda eshinini – the rite of bringing home the spirit (shadow) of the deceased
Okhwichera – rite of simulation of an intimate posture over the body of deceased spouse
Okhwikhola omulimo – to commit suicide
Okhwikula olukala – the rite of clearing and marking ground for the establishment a new homestead
Okhwinjira irumbi – to be circumcised (used even of post-mortem circumcision)
Okhwinjisia abacheni – to welcome visitors; practice hospitality
Okhwubohwa omukoye munda – to be encouraged
Olumbe lumukhalache – to die abruptly especially at a young age
Olumbe lumukochile – lit. 'death has wrestled him down', used when a brutal person dies
Omukhasi omulekhwa – a widow
Omuliwo kwamachenga – lit. 'embers fire', a ritual fire lit outside the house following the death of a family member
Omusatsa omulekhwa – widower
Omwana omushisandu – an orphan. Also *Omwana omulekhwa*

C. Proverbs

Abafu bachemela abalamu (The living suffer because of the dead)
Abafwa babula olutseshe lurera (The dead have no clear drinking straw)
Abafwa shibali ehale ta (The dead are not far)
Abalamu bebilila abafu (The living forget the dead)
Abalamu bebilila olufu (The healthy forget that death exists)
Abanji nabalulu (A mob is daring)²
Abatsia batsia – (The dead are dead)
Aha ofwira niho aha ohonera (Where you might die is where you might very well survive)
Akabiya kakasilibungwa mumasika (A funeral reconciles people)
Akhwesimirisia inzala yera (He who did not cry out for help died of hunger). Also *Eyesimirisia yafwa khumubero* (That which did not shout for help died in a trap)
Amasira nobwayi (Bereavement is like grazing, we take turns)
Batsekhanga kata mumasika (They laugh even at a funeral)
Binji bibisi; bihwera oufiire (Many things are still unripe; only the dead are time-barred)
Endi omucheni omuhuyi shioletuyatuya (I am only a visitor so don't bother with me too much)
Endi owabakhotsa abanji yakona inzala (The one with many uncles slept hungry); also,

²This proverb was used in a funeral of a young man gunned down by a police officer during a demonstration against the death of another villager who had died earlier in police holding cells. It is often used to warn people against the danger of either joining in a mob or fighting against a mob.

Khotsanyene abaanji yakona inzala (The uncle of many slept hungry)

Eshilahwa nishi? (What lasts forever?)

Eshilama shikhonyanungwa (The roof is raised onto a structure only by joint effort)

Eshiminywi shibula nyina shisakulira (An orphaned chick fends for itself)

Eshimwero nishira ingokho babeyera omufunishiri (If a basket used to cover a chicken kills the chicken, its death is blamed on the person who covered it)

Eshisheno shisira omwikho (The evil spirit often attacks a relative)

Eshituyu shialira omufumbulusia (The hare blamed whoever revealed its hide-out)

Eyekhuyunga yera nyina (That which was reluctant to be born killed its mother)

Eyili khumwalo shiifwitsanga obuloho (A cattle which is already in the river cannot die of thirst)

Imongo ishira obululu (Fate is greater than bravery)

Induyirisi yafunaka omuhini (Constant use broke the hoe-handle)

Inyanga yofwa shiomananya tawe (No one can tell the day of his death)

Lisimba lifwiranga khumusango kwelindi (A mongoose dies on a trap meant for another)

Namulekhwa nikhole endie (Being a helpless widow/orphan, what shall I do?)

Nashikoko ashira eshilindwa (A spinster is better than a grave)

Ndafwa masinjira (I am a walking dead)

Nyasaye akhoonyanga owikhonya (God helps one who helps himself)

Nyasaye niye oufwisinjia omubasu (It is God who makes the sun shine)

Nyasaye shabalabalungwa ta – (God is not mocked)

Nyina owashio shiakhusinga walaba (Another person's mother will not wash you clean)

Obulwale buli khuwashio shibukhukaya tsindolo (Someone else's illness cannot prevent you from sleeping)

Okhulia khwera isuna (Eating killed a mosquito)

Olumbe shinolwamulala (Death does not segregate)

Omucheni shiyarirungwa iyafuka (A cooking pot is not broken on account of a visitor)

Omucheni wolashiachenihla shiomupilakhwo omukhasi (Do not beat your wife on account of a visitor you have not visited)

Omucheni yaleta mwenetala (A visitor benefited the host)

Omuyika mulala shikumala abalayi (All good people cannot die in one year)

Otamba olafwa (Better poverty than death)

Oufwa afwa lulwe (Everyone dies his own death)

Oufwa india shashena (He who dies of overeating does not haunt anybody)

Owanyina yalekha aliriranga khulusimbo (The one whose mother has left weeps by the edge of the roof)

Owasubira etsia amwabo yafwa obusumba (He who relied on his brother's cattle died a bachelor)

Shiiranga onyanyile (No one dies of hunger after eating a little)

Shiolebala tsimbala nolashiafwa (Do not count your scars before you die)
Tsisoni tsierera akhatuyu mubuko (Due to shyness, a hare died in its hole)