

"The On-going Impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian Conception of Death and Dying Among the Members of Africa Inland Church, Machakos District – Kenya."

By

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A Project paper submitted to the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Nairobi, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, in Partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy and Religious Studies.

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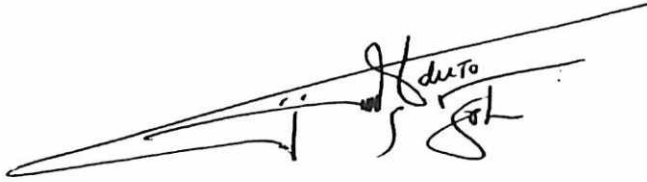
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## DECLARATION

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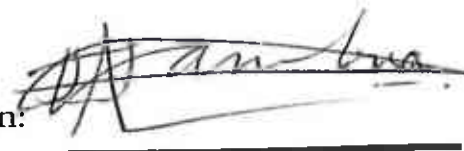
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am thankful to my academic supervisors, Fr. Dr. P.N. Wachege and Mr. A.W. Wambua, whose supervision and assistance gave me a special ability for independent thinking and judgment for the particular success of this project.

There were also other individuals whose contribution toward the general success of this project is worth noting. They provided basic facilitation and services needed for the success of this research, which included information, authorisation, typing skills, financial assistance, and moral support. These were: Miss Caroline Mueni, Rev. Silas Yego, Rev. Bernard Nguyo, Mr. Martin Munyao, Pastor Jeremy Muoki, Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Kimuyu, Mr. Stephen Kimeu, Mr. Joseph Kimote, Mr. Nicodemus Mutune, Mr. Robinson Mwanthi, Mr. Shem Ogada, Mr. & Mrs. Kivuva Mutinda, Mrs. Flora Mutua, Mrs. Alice Sandei, and Mrs. Winnie Ng'anga. I am equally grateful to the Scott Theological College students, Ministry of Education and some staff members from the Machakos General Hospital.

To all of you, I say, thank you very much. Each one of you is highly remembered, treasured and appreciated for that specific participation and commitment you bestowed upon this project.

## DEDICATION

To my wife **Bancy Muli** and our son **Eden Nguthi**  
whose love, support, encouragement, and understanding,  
made this project possible

## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the subject of death and dying which has plainly haunted people in both religious and non-religious institutions. Each person nurses a conviction that death is imminent and inescapable and though one may not, and probably never, know when s/he will die, the reality is certain and beyond doubt. This mindset affects the value and attitude of ones daily living and communal interpersonal relations. Individuals find themselves anxious in life because of this overwhelming presence of death and dying.

The above triggered investigation into the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying and how it continuously affects the Christian perception of death and dying among the members of Africa Inland Church in Machakos district. This study aims at elaborating that, despite the many years of Christian evangelisation, a considerable number of Africa Inland Church members in the Machakos district of Kenya are still influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in their belief and understanding of death and dying and the phobia thereby.

Christian evangelisation in Ukambani has a long history. As early as 1850 a missionary called J.L. Krapf had already translated and published a Kamba version of the gospel according to St. Mark that ignored the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in its interpretation and presentation. Nevertheless, the effort was commendable since as Robert Sarah asserts in his introduction to The

African Bible: “The word of God is the centre of everything. It impregnates and gives life to the faith of God’s people. It inspires, directs, and guides the existence and history of humanity ... to snatch humanity from sin and death and enable all people to live a new life”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, around and after this time many more foreign missionaries came to Ukambani where in 1895 an American missionary, P.C. Scott, came and founded the Africa Inland Mission which eventually founded the Africa Inland Church in Kenya.

It is now just over hundred years since, Africa Inland Mission, missionaries evangelised Ukambani. The missionaries were dedicated in converting and catechising the Akamba into Christianity. Unfortunately, they preached the Christian doctrine in a way that condemned, rejected, dismissed, and ‘demonised’ the Akamba traditional way of life as primitive, pagan, and incompatible with the gospel. It was required that for any Mukamba to be a Christian, one had to first denounce ones traditional ways, religious beliefs, and cultural values one is socialised in otherwise s/he would not be allowed to benefit from the favours the Christian converts were given by the missionaries like formal schooling, medical care, food stuffs, and other handouts. Many people thus became Christian converts for the purpose of improving their living conditions and benefiting from the missionaries while the Christianity they embraced remained superficial.

This study therefore intends to show how this missionary attitude and method of evangelisation has impoverished the Christian understanding of death and dying among the members of Africa

Inland Church in Machakos district on the one hand. On the other hand, the study aims at explaining that the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy still influences the above people's belief and understanding of death and dying.

With this in mind, the study endeavours to use INCULTURATION approach with the aim of helping to understand, interpret, and present, the Christian teaching on death and dying in a more relevant and meaningful way to the Machakos district members of Africa Inland Church in particular and the other Africans in general. To accomplish this, the research will use four mediations suggested by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff for its methodological approach namely, Participation, Socio-analytical, Hermeneutical, and Practical mediations

In view of the above the study will also take into consideration the insights of Pope John Paul II regarding Inculturational endeavour namely:

One of the aspects of this evangelisation is the inculturation of the Gospel, the Africanisation of the Church.... That is part of the indispensable efforts to incarnate the message of Christ. The gospel certainly is not identified with cultures, and transcends them all. But the Kingdom that the gospel proclaims is lived by man deeply tied to a culture. <sup>3</sup>

And also

It is important to carry out a thorough investigation of the cultural traditions of the various populations and of the philosophical ideas that underlie them in order to detect elements that are in contradiction with the Christian religion and contributions that enrich theological reflection. <sup>3</sup>

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AACC</b>	-All Africa Conference of Churches
<b>AIC</b>	-Africa Inland Church
<b>AIM</b>	-Africa Inland Mission
<b>ATR</b>	-Akamba Traditional Religion
<b>BCC</b>	-Branch Church Council
<b>BEBT</b>	-Bauer Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology
<b>BEE</b>	-Bible Education by Extension
<b>CCC</b>	-Central Church Council
<b>CED</b>	-Christian Education Department
<b>DB</b>	-Dictionary of the Bible
<b>DBT</b>	-Dictionary of Biblical Theology
<b>DCC</b>	-District Church Council
<b>FGD</b>	-Focused Group Discussion
<b>IBC</b>	-The International Bible Commentary
<b>JBC</b>	-Jerome Biblical Commentary
<b>LCC</b>	-Local Church Council
<b>NDCT</b>	-A New Dictionary of Christian Theology
<b>NIV</b>	-New International Version
<b>NT</b>	-New Testament
<b>OT</b>	-Old Testament
<b>RCC</b>	-Regional Church Council
<b>STC</b>	-Scott Theological College
<b>UBC</b>	-Ukamba Bible College

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

For the function of this study, and that of harmonizing the insights thereof, some terms and concepts are crucial. The following are their working definitions in this study:

**A.I.C. Members:** All the individual persons belonging to or forming the Africa Inland Church; those who have been baptized in the Church and whose names are inscribed, written or entered on the Church books or records, or with whom the Church is in touch, usually known by name and address to the Church at local level.

**A.I.M. Missionaries:** Individuals or agents sent or employed by the Africa Inland Mission board to propagate the gospel among, or to labour in the evangelisation of the Africans

**Akamba Traditional Religion:** The acknowledged pre-Christian religion among the Akamba which was handed on from one generation to another for identity and direction on matters of faith, belief, and conduct among the Akamba people.

**Bereavement:** The grief that follows after the loss and in remembrance of a loved one, among the Akamba people

**Burial Rites:** The ceremonial disposing of the body of the dead person among the Akamba people. Here, the bereaved are helped to remember



the person who died and given an opportunity to show their love for him or her

**Burial:** The Akamba Traditional way of disposing the dead body under the earth.

**Catechising:** That particular way of instruction or the process of teaching and deepening the Christian faith of the A.I.C. catechumens.

**Catechism:** Oral or written instruction in A.I.C. doctrines of faith. This is usually written in form of questions and answers and they are used for the instruction of converts.

**Catechist:** A.I.C. member, whose duty is to assist the pastor in the ministry of Christian instructions.

**Catechumen:** A converttee undergoing Christian instructions before baptism.

**Christian:** A disciple and follower of Jesus Christ

**Church:** The community of followers and disciples of Jesus Christ

**Culture:** A way in which the Akamba people do things together in a patterned method; sharing beliefs and customs with a worldview at the centre, together with values and standards of judgment and conduct,

common institutions, a common language, with shared proverbs, myths, folktales and arts, a common history, and a common land territory

**Death:** The end of earthly human life or the suspension of the personal union between the body and the soul.

**Inculturation:** A process of evangelisation by which the Christian life and message is assimilated by the Akamba culture in such a way that not only is this life and message expressed through the elements proper to this culture, but also comes to constitute a principle of inspiration as well and eventually a norm and power of unification that transforms, re-creates, and revitalizes the Akamba culture.

**Missionary implantation method:** The process of Christian evangelisation which condemned, rejected, dismissed, and ‘demonised’ the Akamba Traditional way of life as primitive, pagan, and incompatible with the gospel.

**Sage Philosopher:** A reflective thinker of antiquity who, as a profound philosopher or eminently a wise counsellor, is distinguished for wisdom.

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> **Victor Zinkuratire and Angelo Colacrai** (Eds). *The African Bible*. Kenya: Paulines Publications – Africa, (1999:7).

<sup>2</sup> **R. Hickey**. *Modern Missionary Documents and Africa*. Dublin: Dominican Publication. (1982:258).

<sup>3</sup> **Ibid.**

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Africa Inland Church is a result of Christian evangelisation which was conducted in Ukambani by the A.I.M. through its founder Rev. P. C. Scott. In 1895, he established the first mission station in Ukambani but a year later, he died of fever. Nevertheless, many converted to Christianity and were baptized after a systematic catechising. Both the missionaries and the new converts actively evangelised and planted new Churches in Ukambani and as the Church grew and spread throughout Kenya, it assumed more responsibility for its ministry and administration. Initially it was the Church of the Africa Inland Mission but on October 15, 1971, at a national service at Mumbuni in Machakos district, the mission stations formerly owned by the A.I.M. were officially handed over to A.I.C. – Kenya. However, on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1995 the A.I.C. celebrated its Centenary at the Moi International Sports Centre Kasarani in Nairobi <sup>1</sup>

This study particularly addresses the subject of death and dying in view of the Christian teaching and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying and how these perspectives can be made compatible without necessarily undermining or exaggerating their importance.

In chapter one, the researcher gives a review to the objectives and methodology used in this study while chapter two reveals an investigation into the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying and how it continuously affects the Christian

perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members. Chapter three examines the way in which the A.I.M. missionaries presented the Christian teaching on death and dying while chapter four presents and recommends an INCULTURATIONAL approach on the Christian teaching on death and dying that is more relevant and meaningful to the members of A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In Genesis 2:15-17 we read that:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

In this biblical narrative, God is introducing the concept of death and dying to Adam on conditions and in the case of disobedience. It may not be possible, due to the limitations of this study, to find out whether Adam really understood what God meant by death and dying but it is clear that, from Genesis 2:17 through Hebrews 9:27 and beyond all humanity is, through Adam, "destined to die ... and ... to face judgment," thus death was designed by God as a divine pathway to judgment. However from the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying, there are many reasons why people die and God may or may not be one of these reasons. In other words among the Akamba, death is not necessarily caused by God.

Generally, there is a conflict of belief between Christian teaching and the Akamba traditional conception of death and dying where in the former God is the only reason and one of the many reasons in the latter, as to why people die. Such was the religious context and such was the social orientation that the A.I.M. missionaries had to fully understand and candidly confront with the gospel message. But from the findings of this study, the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying has continued to affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. An indication that the missionaries did not fully inculturate the gospel message in their presentation, interpretation and application among the Akamba people. Probably their colonial mindset and cultural superiority affected their humility in Christian evangelisation enterprise among the Akamba people in particular and to the other Africans in general.

A good number of the Machakos district members of A.I.C. have shelved the Christian teaching on death and dying as incapable of satisfactorily consoling a bereaved Mukamba. Consequently, when faced with death many Christian members devote themselves into practices that ratify the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on conception of death and dying and its continued influence on their perceptions of death and dying. This study proposes Inculturation of the Christian message by drawing from both the Christian insights and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations on death and dying as a way to make the Gospel message more meaningful and fruitful to the Akamba people. Otherwise, just as **Erich Fromm** observes in his

book, To Have or To Be? “We are what we are devoted to, and what we are devoted to is what motivates our conduct.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the intellectual, social, and spiritual conduct of many Machakos district members of A.I.C. towards death and dying has insistently continued to be inspired by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying has continued to affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the members of the A.I.C. in Machakos district. As we had noted earlier, the Akamba people believe that most of the circumstances that lead to death can be prevented or dealt with. A classic example giving us a clue to this fact is about what happened in Machakos district on November 2005 after Pastor Benjamin Muli of Kyuuni L.C.C. in Kasinga D.C.C., committed suicide. His lifeless body was found on a Sunday morning by the Church members who had come for the Church service, dangling from a tree inside the Church compound. It was a shock to the Christians who saw their pastor hanging from a tree, and utter dejection to all who heard about it.

Pastor Muli, a U.B.C. graduate, was an A.I.C. pastor and one in charge of C.E.D. in Machakos R.C.C. His journey to death came after presiding over a stubborn L.C.C. meeting on Saturday evening in which he was verbally affronted by some defiant Church elders. He walked out of the meeting and after writing his suicide note, in which he had strongly implicated the L.C.C. members for subjecting his life to pain and

suffering, and the D.C.C. (his employer) for ignoring his predicament and despair, went out to kill himself. Consequently, the L.C.C. members of A.I.C. Kyuuni were immediately suspended from the Church leadership for their insensitive dishonour which plunged Pastor Muli into his own death. A considerable number of A.I.C. pastors and members, interviewed by the researcher, agreed that Pastor Muli's death was abnormal and preventable. Their feelings and faith about this matter could easily be noted from some of the statements they made during the interviews like, "If only the D.C.C. responded promptly, Pastor Muli would not have died," and "Pastor Muli was bewitched by the L.C.C." Others were emphatically of the opinion that, "God played no role in Pastor Muli's death."

This, and much more to be presented in this study, is the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying which has seriously affected the Christian perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. A conception that has continued to affect the intellectual, social, and spiritual conduct of many A.I.C. members in spite of what Christianity teaches on death and dying. This is the condition, the reality, and the problem that threatens to reduce Christianity to a mere ideology among the Machakos district A.I.C. members in particular and Africans in general, just as it is lamented by Erich Fromm: "If the religious system does not correspond to the prevalent social character, if it conflicts with the social practice of life, it is only an ideology."<sup>3</sup>



### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The goal of this study is to inculcate the Christian teaching on death and dying using both the Christian insights and the Akamba Traditional Religion and philosophical inspirations to make the Christian doctrine of death and dying more meaningful and more significant among the Machakos district members of A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general.

More specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the Akamba Traditional Religion and philosophy on the conception of death and dying that continuously affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the members of the A.I.C. in Machakos district.
2. To investigate the way in which the A.I.M. missionaries presented the Christian teaching on death and dying making a considerable number of A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district still be influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and philosophy in these beliefs.
3. To present and recommend an inculturational approach on the Christian teaching on death and dying that is more relevant and meaningful and fruitful to the Machakos district members of the A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general.

## 1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study carries the importance of inculturating Christian teaching on death and dying using both the Christian precepts and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical rationale to make the Christian doctrine of death and dying more significant among the Machakos district members of A.I.C. in particular and Africans in general. However, the specific justification of this study is worth noting:

1. It presents a dependable investigation into the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying that has continued to affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.
2. It gives a special evaluation of the methodology which the A.I.M. missionaries used to present the Christian teaching on death and dying making a considerable number of A.I.C. members in Machakos district still be influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in these beliefs.
3. It suggests and advocates for the Inculturation of the Christian teaching on death and dying that is more relevant and meaningful to the Machakos district members of A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general that has been lacking in the missionary enterprise.

## **1.5 THE SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The main focus of this study is to investigate the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the members of the A.I.C. in the Machakos district of Kenya in view of inculturation. Thus:

1. This research was conducted within the Machakos district of Kenya, to which the researcher limited himself, in order to make a detailed study within the short time allocated for the study.
2. This research is conducted among the A.I.C. members in general but particularly from the Machakos district of Kenya. This is because the A.I.C. traces its origins from Ukambani in Machakos district where the A.I.C. founding organization known as A.I.M., established its first mission station in 1895. It is also in this district where Scott Theological College, the finest A.I.C. theological institution, is located.
3. This research is limited to the investigation of the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the members of the A.I.C. in Machakos district of Kenya. The researcher chose to carry out this study in order to address its pertinence among the said group of people.

## 1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been said, done, and written about the concept of death and dying among different ethnic communities in Kenya. Nevertheless, there is no systematic study, the author knows of that tackles the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the members of the A.I.C. in the Machakos district of Kenya.

**H. Odera Oruka**, in Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy (1991), affirms the intrinsic insistence for African philosophy, its authenticity, and its originality. He warns that African religion and philosophy cannot be separated. He tells of an instance where one of the sages in Kenya was asked on what he thought about the concept of death. He reacted very negatively as follows: “Go and ask your dead grandfathers! They are very many. Why do you ask me about death? do you wish to cause my death?.” Conversely, the same question was asked to another sage, who boldly argued that:

Death is as good as life. If we imagine that there is a God, and that we are his plants, then through death God uproots some plants to enable the rest to have enough food and grow healthily. If there were no death, there would never be enough food and space for everybody. Indeed, God is very kind; he kills only a few and allows the majority to keep on.<sup>4</sup>

The first response shows that, there is nothing that can fully replace our African Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception on issues related to life and death, while the second sage’s response is the African Traditional Religion and Philosophical optimism towards the concept of death and dying.

The above helps this study to acknowledge that the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the concept of death and dying cannot be fully replaced by Christian teaching on death and dying and thus seeks to reveal how the two perceptions continue to affect each other among the Machakos district A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general.

On liberation theology, **Leonardo Boff & Clodovis Boff**, the two brothers, who are the Latin America's foremost liberation theologians, have done a commendable job in their book, Introducing Liberation Theology (1986). In this book, they narrate a story of a woman of forty who went to the priest after mass and said sorrowfully; "Father, I went to communion without going to confession first." ... She continued, "For three days I have had only water and nothing to eat, I am dying of hunger. When I saw you handing out the hosts, those little pieces of white bread, I went to communion just out of hunger for the little bit of bread." <sup>5</sup>

The moral implication of this story underscores an indispensable principle concerning issues pertinent with all people. The woman was hungry, not for the communion but, for food and she did what she did because of what she was practically experiencing. The Boffs' work is therefore embraced in this study, as an inspirational wake up call, to all African theologians and foreign missionaries, on the necessity for first understanding and pricing the practical and cultural situations that people experience before rushing into rejecting and condemning their behaviour.

Additionally, this research has remarkably benefited in its methodological approach from the same authors who have presented and proposed four mediations necessary for theologising.<sup>6</sup> The first one is participation, where this research was challenged to involve itself, specifically with the problem of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. Then the second one is socio-analytical mediation where the study analysed on the death and dying situation, and on how it has continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the targeted group. The third step is hermeneutical mediation which enabled this research to essentially judge on how the targeted group tackles the death and dying issue on the basis of Christian teachings on death and dying. Finally, through the practical mediation, the study implores upon the readers to inculturate the Christian teaching on death and dying in order to make it more relevant to the Akamba people. Yet, while the above focuses on liberation theology, ours is centred on inculturation.

**J. S. Mbiti** in, his book, African Religions and Philosophy (1969), presents a detailed study of death where he acknowledges death as the final, inevitable end, and a most disrupting phenomenon in life. He understands and explains well the African concept of death where man has since accepted death as part of the natural rhythm of life that paradoxically, every human death is thought to have external causes, making it both natural and unnatural. He further observes that:

People must find and give immediate causes of death and even when God may be seen as the ultimate cause of death, other intermediary agents may be brought into the picture to satisfy people's suspicion and provide a scapegoat.<sup>7</sup>

Such is the logic and such is the philosophy concerning the immediate functioning of death among human beings. The conception of death and dying among the human beings, as J.S. Mbiti puts it, is one of the central conceptions of death and dying found in the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy. However, this study will specifically investigate the conception of death and dying and how it continuously affects the perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya.

**P. N. Wachege's** monumental book titled, Living to Die, Dying to Live: African Christian Insights (2002), is one of the serious publications which has thoroughly addressed the subject of death and dying with remarkable optimism and unswerving courage. It handles the subject from anthropological, philosophical, and theological perspectives employing both liberational and inculturational approaches. The very title of the book is a vivid summary of the perceptions of death and dying in both the Christian and African Traditional Religion and Philosophical teachings. The first part of the book's title, Living to Die, expresses the certainty of death, a view which is upheld in both Christian and African Traditional Religions. The second part of it, Dying to Live, is the hope which inspires both the Christian and African Traditional Religion members that death is not the end of life but entrance into the realm of ancestors/saints.

Throughout this book, the author addresses the subject of death and dying so critically and profoundly. At some point, he remarkably presents the importance of death and its social, intellectual, and spiritual

implications in both Christian and African Traditional Religious communities. Not only does the author convincingly explicate the African and Christian insights into the subject. He also goes an extra mile in inculturating the Christian doctrine of death and dying in a way that is most meaningful and fruitful to the Africans. The author thus shows systematically how to inculturate and ACTUALLY inculturates.

Admittedly, Wachege's book provoked my mind to undertake a related research but from the point of view of the members of the A.I.C. in Machakos district which he does not handle in his book.

According to **J. L. McKenzie**, Dictionary of the Bible (1965), the prevailing view in the O.T. is that death is terminal. One's concept of death is ultimately determined by one's concept of life thus death is accepted as the natural end of man (2 Samuel 14:14) where the ideal death was attained in the fullness of old age (Genesis 25:8; Job 21:23ff; 29: 18-20). The N.T. adds the explicit and clear belief that death is a consequence and a punishment of sin. This is stated most clearly in Romans 5:12ff. Likewise, according to 1 Corinthians 15:22 we all die in Adam, but were brought to life in Christ.

Additionally, **J. B. Bauer's** Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology (1981), presents the basic attitude of the O.T. as contending that all people must die since they are like water spilt on the ground (2 Samuel 14:14). In this perception death is taken as inevitable necessity, and people consider themselves fortunate if they could die "old and full of years," (Genesis 25:8; 2 Chronicles 24:15). In the N.T. the fact that everybody was



destined to die was taken as granted, (Hebrews 9:27; John 6:49, 58; 8:52ff, Hebrews 7:8) and a sudden, or pre-mature, death was the abrupt result of divine anger (Job 15:32, Psalm 55:23; 90:7; Ecclesiastes 7:17).

**McKenzie and Bauer** submits a very careful biblical exegesis on the concept of death and dying which is highly embraced by this study as the missionaries' entry point for Christian evangelisations in Ukambani. This is the Christian teaching on death and dying that this study anticipates to inculturate using both the Christian insights and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations to make the Christian doctrine of death and dying more relevant and more significant among the members of Machakos district A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general.

**P. M. Mumo** in, his PhD unpublished thesis, A Study of Theological Education in A.I.C. – Kenya: Its Historical Development and Its present state (1997), recounts one of the most detailed historiography of A.I.C. and its strong foundations in A.I.M. He has devoted an entire chapter to the life and times of P. C. Scott, the founder of A.I.M. In this account, P. C. Scott arrived in Mombasa on October 17<sup>th</sup> 1885 and died on December 4<sup>th</sup> 1896 in Ukambani, at the age of twenty-nine. The author explains how this unexpected death of P. C. Scott moved A.I.M. to the verge of collapse because he died when the A.I.M. needed him most.

The information received from Mumo's thesis, and especially on the historical background of A.I.C. and the death of P. C. Scott, is of great help in this study. This study literally distinguishes itself from his since it

examines how the A.I.M. missionaries presented, interpreted, and applied the Christian teaching, particularly on death and dying and why this approach has made a considerable number of the A.I.C. members still be influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying and in view of inculturation.

**R. J. Gehman** in, his book, African Traditional Religion: In Biblical Perspective (1989) noted that, “even Christians may leave the Christian funeral led by the pastor and resort to the traditional medicine man for help... since death cannot happen accidentally.”<sup>8</sup> Gehman’s observations are right and his investigations, particularly on the concept of death among the Akamba is a special contribution for this study as it specifically investigates on the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the members of A.I.C. in the Machakos district of Kenya.

Other scholars, for the inculturational purpose of this study, have made a noteworthy contribution which gives this research the audacity to present and recommend the Inculturation of the Christian teaching on death and dying that is more relevant and meaningful to the Machakos district members of the A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general. Some of these scholars include K. A. Dickson, L. Magesa, J. M. Walligo, and A. Shorter.

In **J. M. Walligo’s** book, Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency (1986), Cecil McGarry exhorted, in his introductory remarks that,

Inculturation is the task of every Christian as he or she allows Christ to take hold of and transform their inmost being. It is in a special way the mission of all agents of evangelisation and leaders of Christian communities, whether they be lay people, priests or religious. <sup>9</sup>

This statement, by Cecil McGarry, is the herald of the inculturational mandate among all Christian agents of evangelisation in any given cultural context. McGarry's charge is a source of inspiration for this study which expects to inculturate the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya.

**K. A. Dickson** in, his book, Theology in Africa (1984), asserts that, "An attempt should be made to look at the Cross from the African perspective." <sup>10</sup> He then presents a critical analysis of the African thought on death and dying where death is caused by evil, is not the end of life, does not sever the bond between the living and the dead, is an occasion of seeking more life, does not negate natural self-expression, and affects the whole community. <sup>11</sup> This and much more insights from this author, are used in this study to solidify its appeal for inculturating the Christian message, by using both the Christian insights on death and dying and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspiration on death and dying, to make the Christian message more significant among the Machakos A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general. While K.A.Dickson focuses on the Akan people of Ghana, our study will be rooted on the Akamba people of Machakos district in Kenya.

Andrew Mutua, an interview respondent in **Laurent Magesa's** book, Anatomy of Inculturation (2004), is quoted declaring that,

The traditional Kamba concept of God is not different from the biblical one. In both contexts there is emphasis on one God, the

creator, who hates evil and reward good deeds. He is loving and protective. But the teachings about the way to be on good terms with God are different: In Kikamba one has to strictly follow the traditions, beliefs, and customs of our ancestors while in Christianity the bible is the yardstick.<sup>12</sup>

This observation, by Andrew Mutua, is of special importance in this research together with the Magesa's outline of the areas that need inculturation<sup>13</sup> which he names as the language, the Church laws and discipline, women in the Church, understanding of the bible, and the African Theology. These insights are, instrumentally used by this study to develop a proposition for inculturating the Christian teaching on death and dying in order to make it more worthwhile among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya.

Aylward Shorter in, his book, Toward a Theology of Inculturation (1998), expounds on terms that must be differentiated from the term, and the conception of, 'Inculturation' itself in order to avoid unnecessary confusion and misrepresentation of perceptions in this presentation. Some of the terms, which will be clarified later in this study, include 'Culture,' 'Enculturation,' 'Acculturation,' 'Cultural Domination,' 'Inculturation,' and 'Inter-Culturation.'<sup>14</sup> These terms just as are explained by Aylward Shorter, will be used in this study to particularly bring out the message of inculturation which is the main presentation and proposition of this study, as a better pathway to developing a Christian teaching on death and dying which is more relevant to the Machakos A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general. This will satisfy the Ela's dilemma, which is noted by Shorter, "... How can we express our belonging to God in a continent that does not belong to itself?"<sup>15</sup>

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Christian teaching on death and dying is not as meaningful and fruitful as it should be among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. This is because the Christian message, in its presentation, interpretation, and application, omitted the inclusion of both the Christian insights on death and dying and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations on death and dying. This omission made the Church evangelising agents to re-examine their Christian evangelisation methodologies, and to propose Inculturation as the crucial way of Christian evangelisation that would make the Christian teaching on death and dying more meaningful and fruitful among the Machakos A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general.

To come up with the intended inculturational approach to evangelisation, the study will use both Leonardo and Clodovis Boff's mediation theory and that of Vatican II on making Christianity truly at home in Africa.

## **1.8 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The study is hypothesised thus;

1. In spite of the many years of Christian evangelisation in Ukambani, the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying has continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya.
2. The A.I.M. missionaries' method of Christian evangelisation has impoverished the Christian teaching on death and dying among the Machakos district A.I.C. Christians.

3. An Inculturational method of Christian teaching on death and dying will make these teachings more relevant, meaningful, and more significant among the Machakos district A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The four mediations, presented by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff in their book, Introducing Liberation Theology (1986) have been carefully used for the research methodology in this study.<sup>16</sup> Thus the researcher participated and fully involved himself with the problematic Christian perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya. Then from the socio-analytical mediation perspective, analysed how the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying has continued to affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the Machakos district A.I.C. members in particular. Thirdly, in the hermeneutical mediation level, the researcher scrutinized how the A.I.C. members tackles the subject of death and dying on the basis of both the Christian insights on death and dying and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations on death and dying. Finally, at the practical mediation stage, the study presents and recommends the Inculturation of the Christian teaching on death and dying that is more meaningful and fruitful to the Machakos district A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general.

### 1.9.1 SUBJECT CIRCUMSCRIPTION

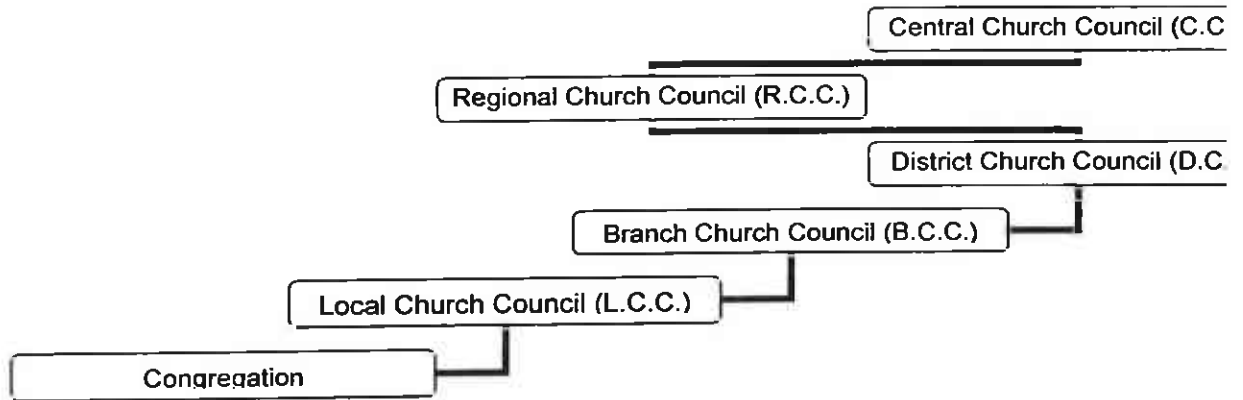
The A.I.C. has 57 R. C. C.s in Kenya with the C. C. C. at the top of the Church governance (*See Figure 1-1*). However, for the purpose of this study it was not practical to study in detail all the 57 R.C.C.s. thus one R.C.C. which is found in the Machakos district of Kenya, the oldest and the mother of A.I.C.s in Kenya and beyond, was selected and studied thoroughly. Here is a geographical compass of the Machakos district of Kenya:

Machakos district lies within the foreland plateau between the Eastern Rift Valley and Nyika Plateau. It borders Kitui District to the East, and Kajiado District towards the West. Towards the south, it borders Makueni District, while Nairobi Province and Kiambu District are to the North West. Towards the North-East, it borders Murang'a and Embu Districts. The District has an area of 5,818 sq. KM. <sup>17</sup>

During the years of European penetration Chief Masaku of Kiima Kimwe, set aside a portion of his land for any European intending to come and settle. He gave orders that European settlers in his area should not be attacked. It happened that John Ainsworth, the first District Commissioner, wanted to stay in the country. So in 1889 he was given land set aside by Chief Masaku. To show his gratitude to the Chief, the District Commissioner named his new district as Masaku District (This was later changed to Machakos District). <sup>18</sup>

Figure 1-1

*Leadership structure of the A.I.C. Kenya*

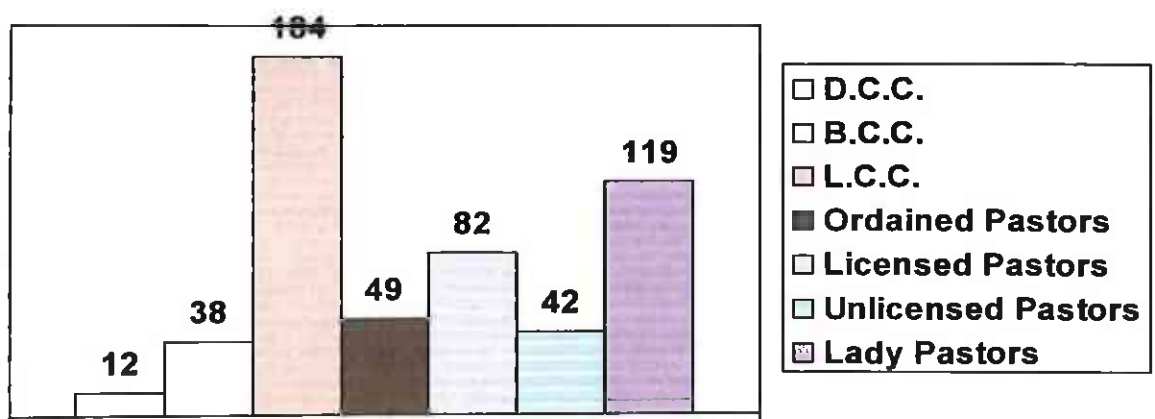


### 1.9.2 TARGET POPULATION

This research is conducted among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya and given below, in *figure 1-2*, is a sample bar diagram showing how the A.I.C., in this one R.C.C. in the Machakos district, is identified throughout the district.

Figure 1-2

*A Sample bar diagram showing the growth of Africa Inland Church – in Machakos R.C.C.*





Further still, this research concentrated on one of the largest, central, accessible, and contemporary D.C.C.s which is the Bomani D.C.C. This D.C.C. is divided into two B.C.C.s, namely Bomani B.C.C. and Katoloni B.C.C. Some of the interview and questionnaire respondents were drawn from the following sixteen (16) L.C.C.s which are found in both Bomani B.C.C. and Katoloni B.C.C. See below on *Table 1-1*

**Table 1-1**

*The names of Churches and Pastors, targeted for this research, in Bomani D.C.C.*

<b>BOMANI D.C.C. (CHAired BY REV. RICHARD MUTISO)</b>		
<b>Bomani B.C.C. (Chaired by Rev. Mutiso)</b>		
	<b>L.C.C.</b>	<b>Pastor In Charge</b>
1.	Bomani	Pastor Muoki
2.	Mwanyani	Rev. Mutiso
3.	Kariobangi	Pastor Kaveva
4.	Miw'ani	Rev. Kilonzo
5.	Mukalala	Pastor Kitong'o
6.	Kyeni	Pastor Muinde
7.	Kivandini	Pastor Mbaatu
8.	FTC (Farmers' Training College)	Pastor Malinda
9.	Kenya Israel	Rev. Nthenge
10.	Machakos Gen. Hospital	Pastor Maingi
<b>Katoloni B.C.C. (Chaired by Rev. Mutwota)</b>		
11.	Katoloni	Pastor Wambua
12.	Mikuyu	Rev. Mutwota
13.	Kakinduni	Pastor Mwikya
14.	Kyamuluu	Rev. Munyae
15.	Kisesini	Pastor Kiundu
16.	Kitituni	Rev. Musyoka

## **1.10 SOURCES OF DATA**

The main data-gathering instrument included both the primary and the secondary sources. The material was examined and presented in four steps:

**Firstly**, the research presents a review to the objectives and methodology used in this study and, **secondly**, it carries out an investigation into the Akamba Traditional Religion and philosophy on the conception of death and dying that has continued to affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members. **Thirdly**, the way in which the A.I.M. missionaries presented the Christian teaching on death and dying is examined and **finally**, a recommendation for the Inculturation of the Christian teaching on death and dying that will be more meaningful and fruitful to the members of the A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general, is proposed.

### **1.10.1 ADMINISTERING OF QUESTIONNAIRES**

Questionnaires have been used in this study in order to get a wide number of comparable replies from different respondents. The aim of using these questionnaires was to investigate, understand, evaluate, and comment on the ongoing impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. Most of the hypotheses were tested during or on the administering of these questionnaires. Both the Christian insights and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations on death and dying which are embraced by the A.I.M. missionaries, A.I.C. pastors, students, and members have been examined

and shared in spite of the fact that out of the 150 questionnaires which were prepared and distributed, only 114 (76%) of them were returned. Table 1-2 shows a general distribution and return of these questionnaires.

**Table 1-2** *General distributions and return of Questionnaires*

<b>Total number of Questionnaires prepared and given out were 150</b>			
		<b>Number of Questionnaires</b>	
<b>Respondents</b>		<b>Given out</b>	<b>Returned</b>
<b>Bomani Branch</b>			
1.	A.I.C. Bomani	36	33
2.	A.I.C. Mwanyani	12	11
3.	A.I.C. Kariobangi	4	1
4.	A.I.C. Miw'ani	4	0
5.	A.I.C. Mukalala	4	3
6.	A.I.C. Kyeni	4	2
7.	A.I.C. Kivandini	4	3
8.	A.I.C. FIC	4	3
9.	A.I.C. Kenya Israel	4	2
10.	A.I.C. Machakos Gen. Hospital	4	4
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Katoloni Branch</b>			
11.	A.I.C. Katoloni	15	13
12.	A.I.C. Mikuyu	4	0
13.	A.I.C. Kakinduni	4	0
14.	A.I.C. Kyamuluu	4	3
15.	A.I.C. Kisesini	4	3
16.	A.I.C. Kitituni	4	2
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>The Top A.I.C. College</b>			
17.	Scott Theological College Students	35	31
	<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>114</b>
	<b>General Percentages</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76%</b>

### **1.10.1.1 STANDARDIZED (FIXED ALTERNATIVE) QUESTIONNAIRE**

A standardized questionnaire was designed to get standard responses from many respondents without necessarily meeting them physically. Some of the respondents targeted for this included the A.I.C. pastors and church members inside and outside Machakos district. See *Appendix 2*

### **1.10.1.2 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE**

Open-ended questionnaires were designed in order to allow a free response from respondents who are not necessarily A.I.C. members and residents of the Machakos district.

## **1.10.2 ADMINISTERING OF INTERVIEWS**

This research could not have been possible without conducting interviews, which aimed at obtaining a large amount of information from a small number of people.

### **1.10.2.1 STANDARDIZED (INTERVIEW) QUESTIONNAIRE**

A standardized interview questionnaire was designed and used in order to get a standard response from all respondents with stated alternatives particularly from the A.I.C. Church members and leaders. The respondents were led through several levels of discussion in which they were supposed to identify the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district, then the reasons why this impact has continued to affect the Christian

perceptions of death and dying and the possible Christian evangelisation methods which would make the Christian teaching on death and dying more significant among the A.I.C. members in Machakos and the other Africans in general. See *Appendix 2*.

#### **1.10.2.2 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW**

In-depth interviews were conducted, specifically, among the A.I.C. members who have been, directly or indirectly bereaved and have developed special feelings towards death and dying. See *Appendix 2*.

#### **1.10.2.3 FOCUSED INTERVIEW**

Focused interviews were conducted, particularly, among the A.I.C. theologians in order to test a specific idea, hypothesis, or assumption in relation to the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya. See *Appendix 2*.

#### **1.10.2.4 NON-DIRECTIVE INTERVIEW**

At this level, the researcher encouraged general respondents to talk freely and casually about the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district with minimum direct questioning or guidance.

### **1.10.3 OBSERVATION**

There were several occasions where the researcher had to gather information for this study, not from direct encounter and conversation with people but from observations. This method was most applicable in funeral services.

#### **1.10.3.1 PARTICIPANT (UNSTRUCTURED) OBSERVATION**

Through the participant observation, or experiential participation, the researcher recorded firsthand information at very close range during counselling sessions for the bereaved, sermons preached on death and dying, mourning periods, burial practices and activities for the deceased A.I.C. members.

#### **1.10.3.2 NON-PARTICIPANT (STRUCTURED) OBSERVATION**

Non-participant observation was crucial especially in the occasions where the researcher did not have to interact with the subjects but investigate from outside into their general behaviour hinged on their perceptions of death and dying. Some of the places the researcher visited for gathering such data included the funeral services, homes of the deceased, general mortuary, and the burial sites.

### **1.10.4 FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS (F.G.D.s)**

Several F.G.D.s were organized and conducted during this study which were aimed at discussing at depth on particular issues, like the good and bad sides of Christian evangelisation in Ukambani. In a simple come-

together, the researcher conducted the F.G.D.s among the A.I.C. Scott Theological College students in Machakos district. See the list of informants in *Appendix 1* and photographs in *Appendix 5*.

### **1.11 DATA COLLECTION**

The researcher visited individual local Churches and requested the administration for any documentation on the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and for any information on how this has continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. From the resultant reports, the following information was extracted and analysed:-

1. Information on A.I.C. members who have continued the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death either when a close relative dies, or in speech and in practices.
2. Reports on some disciplinary measures taken, by the A.I.C. leadership, against Church members who have publicly or practically demonstrated continued belief in the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical Conception of death and dying

The researcher at the same time administered questionnaires as follows: -

1. Forty (40) questionnaires, designed for pastors in the targeted local Churches were prepared and distributed. These questionnaires aimed at providing information on the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian

conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

2. There were also other one hundred and ten (110) self administered questionnaires which were designed and used to get information from the A.I.C. members and the Scott Theological College students on their attitudes toward the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district, and the reasons why they keep such attitudes.

From general observations, Interviews were very important, especially in gathering information from the A.I.C. leaders who have been in the Church ministries among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. On the other hand, the questionnaires played an indispensable role for the practical acquisition of information during this research. The respondents were motivated to give much information on this subject without any fear for victimization. See another summary of distribution and return of these questionnaires in *Figure 1-3*.

### **1.12 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The researcher obtained, randomly, a sample of study from the selected sixteen (16) L.C.C.s belonging to the Bomani D.C.C. whose general population is estimated for 4,300 Church members. However, for convenient and serious investigations of this study, the researcher focused on 5% of the A.I.C. Church members in Bomani D.C.C. Further still, out of this small portion, 70% were targeted for questionnaires and the remaining 30% for Interviews. See *Figures 1-4* and *1-5*. This sampling



was intended to draw respondents from the A.I.C. members who have been in the Church for a long time as to make correct judgement on whether the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the concept of death and dying has continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district

Figure 1-3

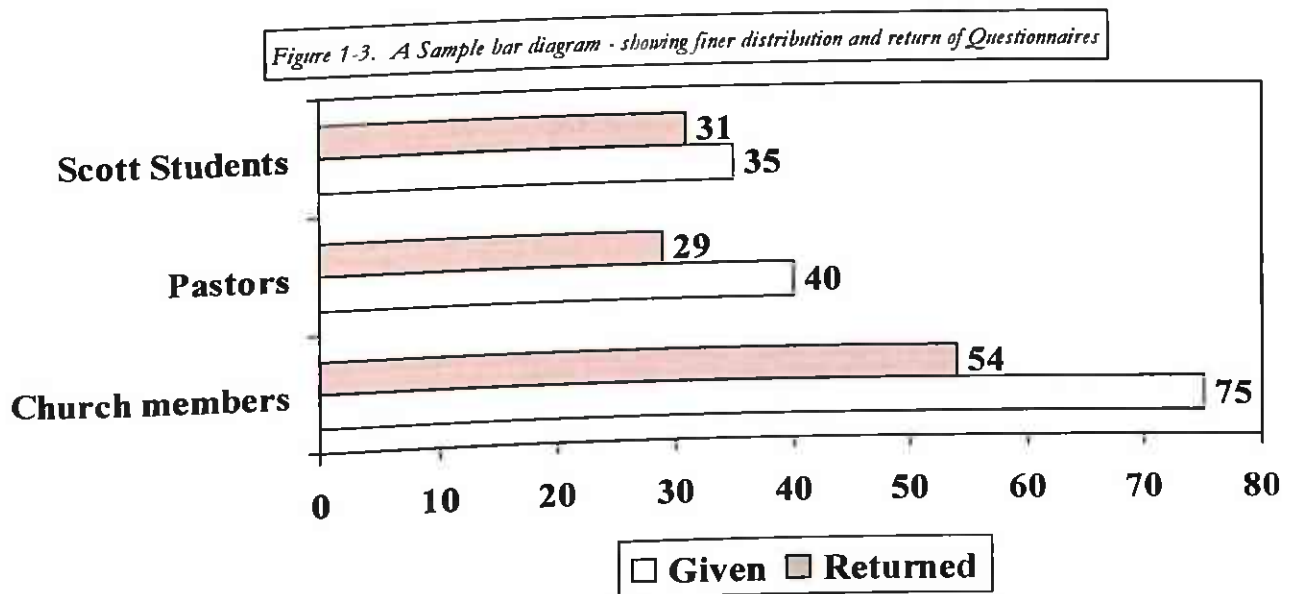


Figure 1-4

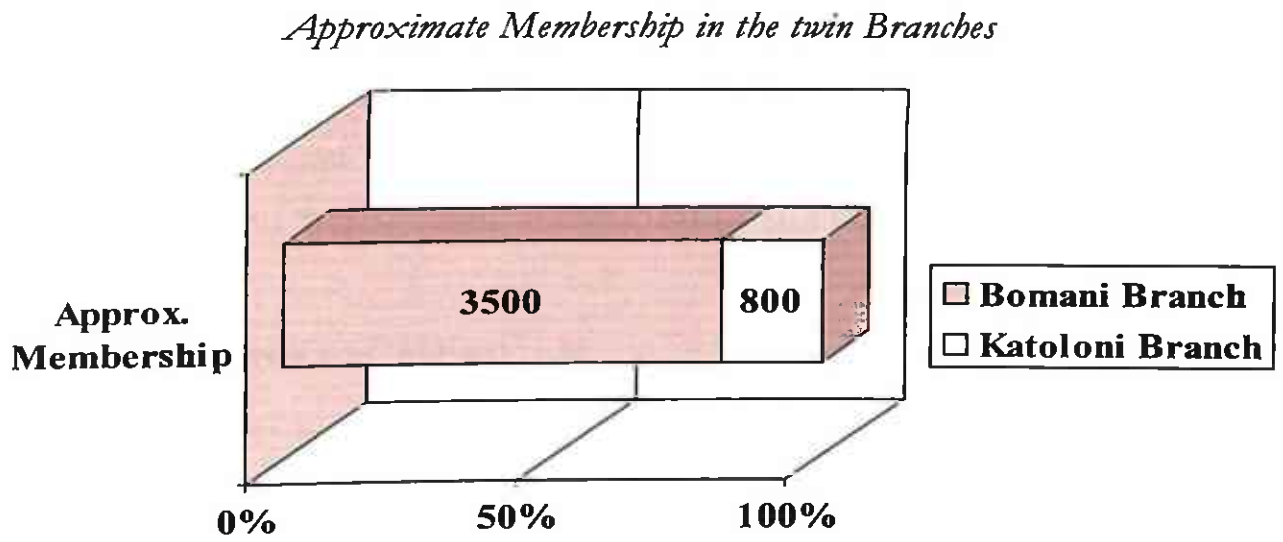
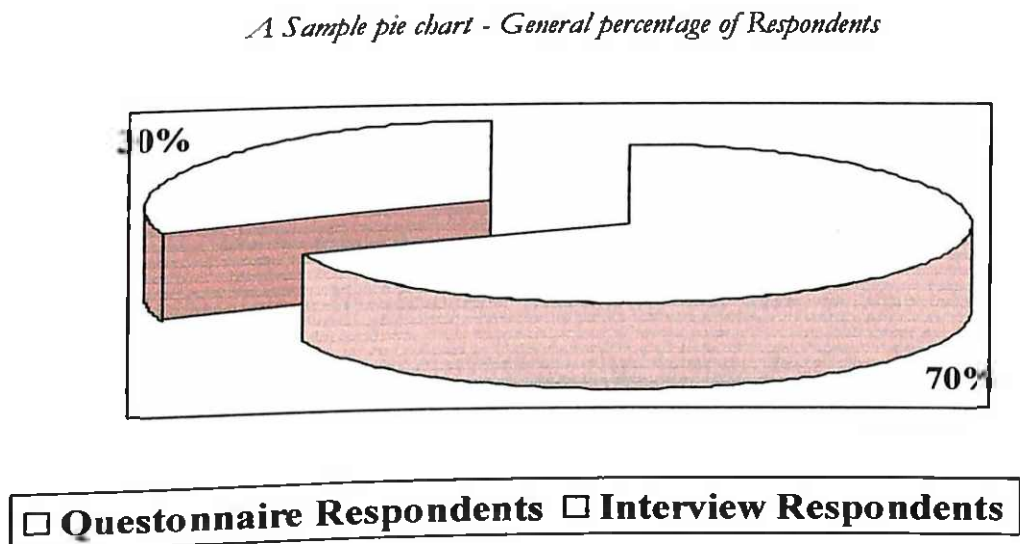


Figure 1-5



### **1.13 DATA ANALYSIS**

Quantitative and qualitative data, gathered from both the questionnaires and interviews, was used to confirm and analyse the data obtained. The information obtained was recorded by use of Computer MS word, MS PowerPoint, Internet Information and Communication, tables and figures, notebooks, paper, pens, camera, bible, and telephone services.

### **1.14 RESEARCH SCHEDULE**

This research was governed by practical schedule and deadlines, which dictated on what and when, must be done. Some of the activities that were subduced to this schedule included piloting, distribution of questionnaires, conducting of interviews, and collection of questionnaires from respondents, data analysis, and research presentation. See *Appendix 4*

### **1.15 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

This study encountered some problems, which the researcher accepted as necessary for the mature investigations of this research. Some of these problems included the following:

1. **Availability:** A good number of A.I.C. pastors and key Church leaders in Machakos district were unavailable for interviews while others were unwilling to discuss anything on the taboo subject of death and dying. In one occurrence, the researcher had to wait for seven good days in order to interview a particular Church leader.
2. **Fear of Death:** Just as expected for this research, some respondents refused to participate in any discussions concerning death and dying

because it is a taboo subject and tantamount to summoning death into their own families. In this view, the researcher encountered two remarkable instances where, in one case the researcher had to change the venue for one of the F.G.D. meeting after the respondents identified some flowers on the fence background, which are commonly used for decorating graveyards. In the second occurrence, the researcher suspended an interview-session at 8:30 pm after the interview respondent dictated that, “We cannot continue discussing on death and dying at such an hour of the night. This is a bad omen to all of us!”

3. **Language:** Most of the interviews, though initially prepared and written in English language, were conducted in Kikamba, the vernacular language for many of the respondents within the Machakos district.
4. **Lost questionnaires:** The researcher prepared and distributed 150 questionnaires but only 114 of them were recovered. It is not clear whether the remaining 36 questionnaires got lost or were misplaced, but the fact is that they were not recovered.
5. **Rains:** During this study, there were heavy downpours of rains, which made the roads impassable, weather unfavourable, and muddied the pathways.
6. **Student respondents:** Due to the tight college schedules, most of the student respondents at Scott Theological College were not

available until very late in the night. Some of the F.G.D.s were held until past mid-night hours.

7. **Suspicion:** Some of the respondents, especially questionnaire respondents, refused to write down their names on the questionnaire papers because they were not sure of the intended objectives for this study.
8. **Transport:** Sometimes the researcher had to travel long distances on foot especially to interior parts of the district where cars and bicycles could not access.

## END NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> **A.I.C. – Kenya.** “Historical Background,” *Revised Constitution*. Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, (2004:1).
- <sup>2</sup> **Erich Fromm.** *To Have or To Be?*. Auckland: Bantam Books, (1976:124).
- <sup>3</sup> **Ibid.**
- <sup>4</sup> **H. Odera Oruka** (Ed). *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*. Kenya: ACTS Press, (1991:36).
- <sup>5</sup> **Leonardo Boff & Clodovis Boff.** *Introducing Liberation Theology*. New York: Orbis Books, (1986:1).
- <sup>6</sup> **Ibid,** (pp. 41-42).
- <sup>7</sup> **J.S. Mbiti.** *African Religions and Philosophy*. Kenya: Heinemann, (1969:156).
- <sup>8</sup> **Richard J. Gehman.** *African Traditional Religion: In a Biblical Perspective*. Kenya. Kesho Publication – Kijabe, (1989:61-4).
- <sup>9</sup> **J. M. Walligo** and et el. (Eds). *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*. Uganda: St. Pauls Publication – Africa, (1986:7).
- <sup>10</sup> **Kwesi A. Dickson.** *Theology in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, (1984:186).
- <sup>11</sup> **Ibid,** (p.195).
- <sup>12</sup> **Laurenti Magesa.** *Anatomy of Inculturation*. Kenya: Paulines Publications – Africa, (2004:25).

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<sup>13</sup> **Ibid**, (pp. 38-48).

<sup>14</sup> **Aylward Shorter**. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, (1998:4-59).

<sup>15</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 248).

<sup>16</sup> **Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff**, (loc.cit.).

<sup>17</sup> **Republic of Kenya**. “Machakos District Development Plan” *Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Planning and National Development*, (1994-1996:27).

<sup>18</sup> **Sammy Nzioki**. *Akamba: Kenya's People*. Hampshire: Evans Brothers, (1982:32).

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERSISTENCE OF THE AKAMBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS ON DEATH AND DYING AMONG THE A.I.C. MEMBERS IN MACHAKOS DISTRICT

This chapter is an investigation into the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying that continuously affects the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya. However it is important to note that the African Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying has, generally, continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among many African Christians.

This reality is expressed by Richard Gehman in, his book; African Traditional Religion (1989), where he re-introduces, from J. S. Mbiti's works, a special terminology known as "concubinage"<sup>1</sup> which seeks to explain a situation where the Africans have publicly embraced Christianity as their legal partner in matters of faith, while privately keeping their African Traditional Religion as their 'concubines' in matters of practice. It is true that the African Traditional beliefs and practices are part and parcel of the African worldview. Two examples, one from the burial of John Garang and the other from some observations made by G.E.M. Ogutu vindicate this opinion.



John Garang, the chief leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, who died in August 2005, was known and respected as a dedicated Christian but after his death, his burial ceremony saw a good number of the African Traditional beliefs and practices: The traditional chiefs blessed the burial site by sacrificing a white bull, then read out names of all the ancestors.<sup>2</sup> His wife, Mrs. Rebecca Garang, did not bathe until four days after the burial, as a customary show of her distress. She pulled grass from the four corners of the Garang's house and burnt them to show that she had no ill feelings for him as the tradition demanded. She was further required to slaughter a cow to signify forgiveness and during the mourning period, she wrapped a belt around her waist and on the third day her hair was shaved.<sup>3</sup>

In a separate occasion, G. E. M. Ogutu gave his remarks on some schools in Kenya and particularly on Rurigi Primary school in Burnt Forest, which was reportedly being haunted by ghosts. His observation was clearly rooted in the African Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying. He said:

I really do not know what is happening at Burnt Forest but probably the school was built on a graveyard and the dead are not happy. The Burnt Forest community should appease the dead by offering them sacrifices. There is no scientific solution to this. It is only the old in the community who can fix the problem.<sup>4</sup>

The above two examples rightfully show how the African Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying has continued in the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the African Christians in general. This observation is assertively reckoned by Idowu in his words:

While every African may wish to be regarded as connected with one or the other of the fashionable religions, most are at heart still attached to their own indigenous beliefs. It is well known that in strictly personal matters relating to the passages of life and the crises of life, most Africans regard African Traditional Religion as the final succor.<sup>5</sup>

This observation is confirmed again and again in Ukambani where a good number of the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya have publicly upheld Christian teachings on death and dying while privately keeping their Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical persuasions on death and dying. They consciously embrace the good and the satisfying perception of death and dying in both Christianity and Akamba Traditional Religion. Hence the on-going tension between the two perceptions.

## **2.1 THE AKAMBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTION OF DEATH AND DYING**

The Akamba people are religiously devoted to their indigenous beliefs and customary practices on death and dying, something that has continuously affected the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. There is a popular belief among the Akamba people concerning death and dying which says: *Mukamba Akusaa enda, na akw'a indi ti mana* (A Mukamba dies when s/he wants to, and even if s/he dies then It is not without a cause). Most of the interviewed A.I.C. members confirmed their adherence to this belief though they committedly maintain their loyalty to Christianity. Moreover, there are several elements of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical beliefs on death and dying which the Akamba people still

take as their principles of inheritance. They defend them as they would their own estates because they were born heirs to them. Below are some of these beliefs:

### **2.1.1 THE NATURE OF DEATH AND DYING**

The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying acknowledges that death and dying is expected, universal, and necessary. Death and dying is very much an important aspect of the Akamba culture. It is not an event which just occurs, is 'handled,' and then forgotten about. When one dies, there is a series of events which usually take place to this day: Family members, relatives and friends of the deceased are often notified right away; death traditions, customs, dirges, mourning practices, and burial rites are remembered and acted upon.

All these practices are done to convey the great importance of death and dying among the Akamba people despite the fear thereby. Death and dying is regarded as the only pathway to ancestral world. It is the highest rite of passage that one can ever go through and it carries a lot of significance. It is a promotion to a different kind of life, where one exercises power over the living. There, one is set free, empowered and also enjoys the services and remembrance by the living so long as one lived well on earth. The living oftentimes consults with them. Thus, death is not the end of life among the Akamba. It even gives people the urgency to get things done in good time to merit ancestral life.

This subject of death and dying is still accorded much significance among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. Almost everyone acknowledged death and dying as expected, universal, and necessary for the envied yonder ancestral life. It is the last transition of human life in this world. A promotion to a better kind of life where, one is set free empowered and also enjoys communion with ancestors and *Ngai wa tene na tene* (the eternal God). When you look keenly into these Akamba perspectives and the Christian ones, you realize that they have so much in common. In view of this an A.I.C. pastor remarked:

Our Akamba Traditions on death and dying have been passed down to us from the oldest living members of the community, in form of expressions, sayings, superstitions, music, religious beliefs and practices. Many of the stories and superstitions relating to death and dying are very important among the Christian community in Ukambani and we must guard and transmit them on and on.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1.2 THE CAUSES OF DEATH AND DYING

In the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying, death is always caused by various causes. Some of these causes, as we learnt from the research, are magic, sorcery, curses, witchcraft, living dead, and malevolent spirits. In other words, there are, for instance, no accidental deaths among the Akamba people, just as J. S. Mbiti, puts it.

Even when God may be seen as the ultimate cause of death, other intermediary agents may be brought into the picture to satisfy people's suspicion and provide a scapegoat. Therefore, death is unnatural and preventable because on the personal level it is always caused by another agent. If that agent did not cause it, then the individual would not die.<sup>7</sup>

A significant number of A.I.C. members in Machakos district accepted that death and dying is part of the natural rhythm of life and yet, paradoxically, every human death, as J.S. Mbiti says, is thought to have

external causes and Christians must find and give immediate causes of each individual death. <sup>8</sup> A summary of this belief is well presented in the observations of Pastor J.M. Mulei, in an interview:

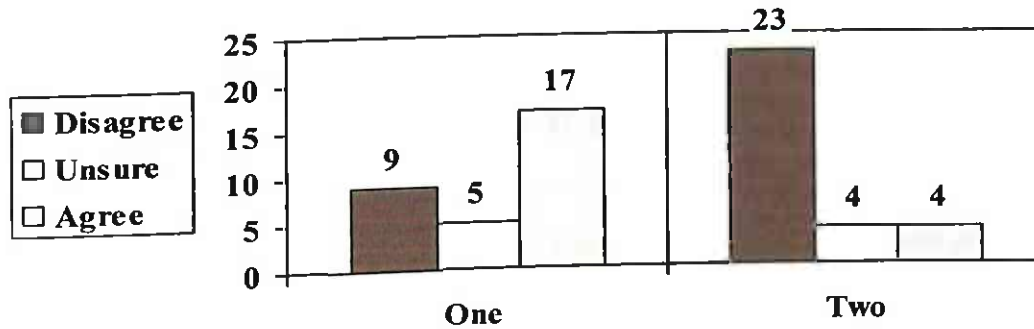
Death can be caused by many things including, carelessness, incurable diseases, accidents, curses by the elderly, disrespect for ones parents, sin, theft, and suicide. Nonetheless, the common causes are believed to be magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Curses are greatly feared and a powerful curse can bring death to the person concerned. God is also considered to cause death, especially for those which there is no satisfactory explanation, e.g. death caused by lightning. From a man's viewpoint, death is so transcendent and unmediated. <sup>9</sup>

Given below, *in Figure 2-1*, are responses given by thirty one (31) A.I.C. Scott Theological College students in Machakos district to the given affirmative statements which reveal their general perceptions of death and dying.

1. The Akamba Traditional Religion and the philosophy on the conception of death and dying has continuously affected the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.
2. Every death in both the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception and Christian perception of death and dying is contingent; a matter of chance and that in principle, there is no reason why any particular injury or disease cannot be overcome

Figure 2-1

A sample Column diagram showing 31 Scott Theological Students' Response to the given affirmative theological statements



The first response above gives an impression that the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the conception of death and dying has for sure, continued to affect the Christian conceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district while the second response shows that death is not preventable at all. However, from further investigations and interviews, a large number of the A.I.C. Christians strongly believed that death is preventable.

The deaths of P. C. Scott and Rev. W. Mulwa, two of the A.I.C. founding fathers, are some of the deaths that would have been successfully prevented. A substantial number of the A.I.C Christians ignored the stories that P.C. Scott died of fever and claimed that he died due to lack of better medical facilities and services. Some Christians implicitly claimed that, the mosquito which allegedly bit P.C. Scott was not an ordinary mosquito. On the other hand, the death of Rev. W. Mulwa was untimely and unnecessary. Some A.I.C. Christians linked his

death with a one time A.I.C. prophet popularly known in Ukambani, as Muthini. Rev. Mulwa is said to have used his bishopric powers to compel Muthini into revealing the source of his prophetic powers but shortly after Muthini had complied, Rev. Mulwa became ill and died.

In another conversation one A.I.C. pastor recounted how his beloved son was killed by *amateur* doctors at Bishop Kioko hospital in Machakos district. He said,

The medics who were given the responsibility to treat my son were all inexperienced and newcomers in the medical profession. They mismanaged my son and eventually killed him. Ever since, I have developed a deep hatred for Bishop Kioko hospital. I have never gone there for any treatment or taken any patients there leave alone directing anybody to seek medical attention from the hospital. This is because; the death of my son was due to their professional negligence.

<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1.3 ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH AND DYING

Death, in the Akamba Traditional Religion, is a welcome end to all human problems, pain, suffering, misery, unresolved anxiety, and a fact of existence. However, death and dying is to be prevented, postponed, delayed, and deferred at all cost. Doctors, drugs, and any types of treatment are frantically sought after.

A particular A.I.C. lady pastor disclosed to the researcher that when her elderly grandfather became very sick, she prayed that God would graciously take his life and spare him the much pain and suffering he was going through. Her prayers were answered. This is how she puts it:

It had come a time when I felt that it was senseless for my old grandfather to be alive. Besides, when someone is now very old, and cannot do anything for himself the most logical thing for God to do, is to end that life otherwise he becomes an un-necessary burden to the family. <sup>11</sup>

### 2.1.3.1 THE FEAR OF DEATH AND DYING

Death and dying is ardently feared by the Akamba. The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying provides that people should not speak about death and dying in a free and relaxed conversation. This is the real expression of fear and respect for death just as it was done for the dreaded people in Ukambani. It is believed that, simply by mentioning their names, they would automatically come, either physically or in ghost form, to the place where their names are being talked about. Thus death is dreaded because it has ears and it can come, almost immediately, to the place where it is being talked about.

Below are some expressions gathered from different A.I.C. pastors within Machakos district on whether the fear of death and dying is rational:

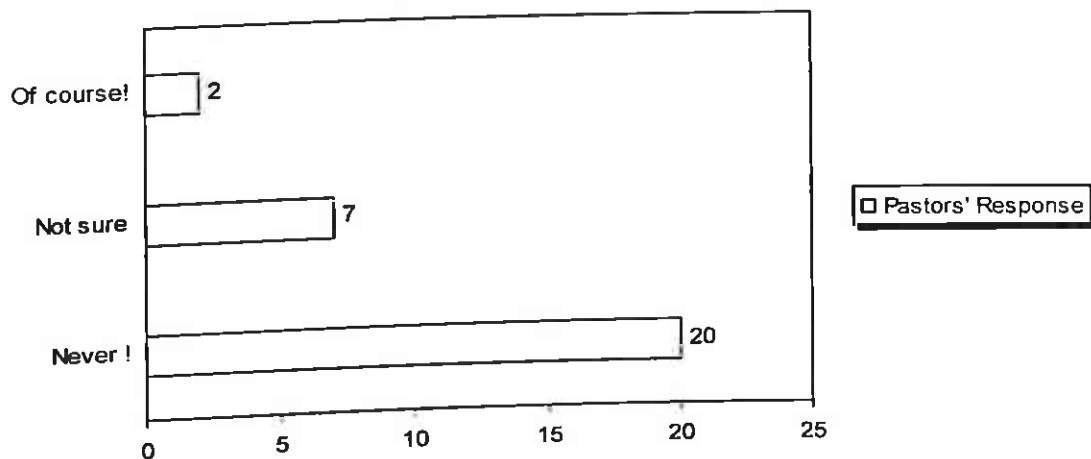
- 1) If Jesus himself was afraid of death and dying, we should even be more afraid of the same. The fear of death and dying is human;
- 2) It is also logical that death and dying should not come until a man has met enough goals in life like living long and well;
- 3) We fear death because of the implications it has on the dead and the bereaved persons;
- 4) Death and dying is generally feared because it is an inevitable reality and men can do nothing about it;
- 5) If we ignore death, we shall waste our life working for things that we shall only have to leave behind, creating many negative actions in the process. If we develop fear of death right now, we shall use our life meaningfully to merit eternal happiness.



However, from the Christian teachings, Christians who fear death and dying have no genuine faith in the salvation of Jesus Christ. This is the mind set that affected the response given below, in Figure 2-3, by twenty nine (29) pastors, on whether pastors should fear death.

**Figure 2-2**

*A sample bar diagram showing 29 pastors' response to the question: "Should pastors fear death?"*



The tension between the Christian teachings and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical perceptions of death and dying is vividly noted here. Nearly all the pastors who confess that they fear death and dying are the same who confess that Christians should not fear death and dying at all. The same pastors who confess that they do not fear death and dying at all are the same pastors who feel uncomfortable in giving sermons on death and dying in their local Churches. Hence, the necessity of an inculturated approach as this study will indicate.

### 2.1.3.2 TALKING ABOUT DEATH AND DYING

It is socially unacceptable and morally wrong to talk openly and freely about death and dying especially when there is no one who has died. This is a central teaching and caution among the Akamba people within the Machakos district. An attitude we found rampant in the research. Nevertheless, news on death and dying never got any traditional Mukamba by surprise. There are, very clear extra-sensory and extraordinary signs that would indicate to a Mukamba that someone; whether a family member or a relative or a friend, is dead even before any official communication has been done. Some of these extra-sensory happenings include: - the bananas failing to ripen, milk failing to ferment, cows withholding milk in their tits, an elderly man sliding and falling, dogs barking unprovoked throughout the night, insomnia, to mention but a few beliefs.

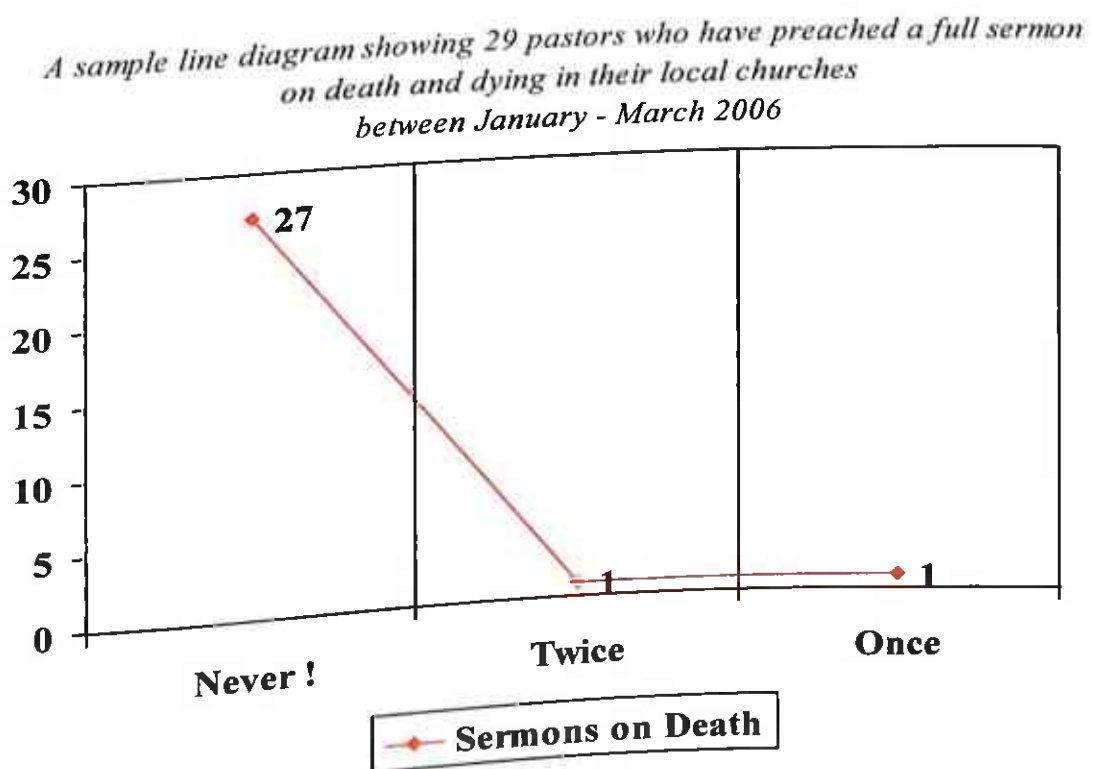
A number of A.I.C. members in Machakos district agreed with this perspective, that talking openly about death and dying is still anti-social, morally wrong and a provocation of death. They were all of the view that, even when someone has died, the sad news ought to be communicated in a very careful, sensitive, secretive, and wise manner. Open or direct language is considered arrogant: The news is also delivered in living terms. One of the respondents observed that: "Even small children should not be told the sudden truth at first and that is, not necessarily lying, but wisdom."<sup>12</sup>

Pastor Joseph Mwangi, *not real name*, confided to the researcher that whenever death has occurred in his family and specifically to a close

relative, he is always aware even before anyone has told him about it. In one instance, Pastor Mwangu reported how his dogs incessantly barked throughout the night. After checking and confirming that there was no physical danger inside his compound he got so restless and sleepless till morning when he received a call that his father had died in a Mombasa hospital. By coincidence, the time his father was said to have died was exactly the same time his dogs were barking at night. Pastor Mwangu was prepared for the sad news of his father's death thanks to those extra-sensory happenings.

Twenty nine (29) A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district were asked on how frequent they have preached a full sermon on death and dying from the pulpit between January and March 2006. See *figure 2-3* below for the results:

**Figure 2-3**



The twenty seven (27) pastors generally explained that the subject of death and dying is a delicate taboo subject that should not be spoken about too openly and explicitly. Some of them felt that, frequent sermons on such a fearful subject will irritate the emotions of the Church members and they were afraid that if someone died after such preaching, the pastor will be part of the blame.

### **2.1.3.3 LAST WORDS BEFORE DEATH**

Among the Akamba people, and in accordance with the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying, the last words before an individual's death are absolutely important and very binding. When death is imminent, the dying person would utter his or her final words, instructions, blessings, or curses to the close relatives and all the people are required to listen carefully and keenly in order to observe and keep them accordingly.<sup>13</sup>

Several A.I.C. members in Machakos district concurred with the above by referring to the biblical teachings on Jesus Christ and what he said to his followers toward and during his death. His words then are the most remembered and treasured by every Christian everywhere. Nevertheless, the researcher got an opportunity to interview five A.I.C. Christian women who are all widows. All of them revealed that they cannot re-marry even if they wanted to, because their departed husbands ordered them to remain single. One of these widows, aged 32, was asked whether she knows what the bible teaches about young widows and their permission to re-marry. This is what she said:

I know pretty well what the bible says about young widows and that they ought to re-marry if their husbands are dead. But when it comes to my case, I have to be very slow especially after I remember what my husband said to me just before he died as his last will. So, I would rather live without a man in my life than to be haunted, for the rest of my life, by his soul.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.1.4 BURIAL

Burial is the commonest method of disposing the dead body among the Akamba people. However, some burial rites and special observations deserve more elaboration.

### 2.1.4.1 BURIAL RITES

Burial rites for the dead body play a very crucial role in the Akamba Traditional Religion. For instance;

- a. Someone may be buried inside the house where s/he lived. This happens incase the person died while inside that house. The rest of the family members are required to leave this house for good and look for another place to stay but still within the same compound. The abandoned house becomes a *Mbiia* (i.e. a grave yard).
- b. Another person may be buried where his or her homestead is situated. This is especially for land ownership security and memory for the generations to come.
- c. Yet another person may be buried at ones place of birth. This is especially for men and all the unmarried women. If any of them is buried somewhere else, it is believed that their ostracized souls will haunt the whole community for years.

Thus, in the Akamba Traditional Religion, the decision on where to bury someone is always significant in its own way and must be decided on very carefully. These burial rites are very much followed among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. One Christian emphasized that:

The departed must be given an honorable burial to ensure that his or her spirit is at peace and contented in the world beyond so that it will not return and become a source of trouble to the family to which the dead person belongs. <sup>15</sup>

During the time this study was being conducted, the researcher also came across a Church elder that had just shifted into a new house. Two days later the researcher found out that the father to this Church elder had died four days ago inside that house and so he had to re-locate. At some point, this Church elder accepted to be interviewed by the researcher on this subject matter to which he said:

To be a Christian does not mean that I am not a Mukamba who has and knows his cultural values. It is culturally wrong for a Mukamba to continue living in a house in which his father died. It can be a constant trauma for the entire family. <sup>16</sup>

Despite that, the most binding burial rite is that of a dead married woman whose dowry has not been paid in full. All the respondents in the Machakos district agreed that any dead married woman whose dowry has not been paid in full must be buried at her place of birth. But if the husband wants to bury her elsewhere, he must pay the dowry first! The researcher asked one of the Pastors, who came out very strong on this issue, on what the bible teaches about such an issue and he said: "That's not important. However, the Bible is no Bible without a culture." <sup>17</sup>

## 2.1.4.2 BURIAL SERVICE

Burial service is a vital ceremony accorded to the departed member of the Akamba community. Here, the bereaved are helped to remember the person who died and given an opportunity to show their love for him or her. During this service, the attendance, testimonies, and the exact place of burial carry indispensable cultural implications.

### 2.1.4.2.1 ATTENDANCE

In the Akamba Traditional community, someone's character and popularity was told from the number of people attending his or her burial service. A small crowd showed lack of popularity and bad character. A huge crowd showed the departed's popularity. The Akamba people believe that, *Mundu ethikaa e thayu* (A person buries oneself while s/he is still living). A traditional philosophy of life that guides and challenges one's living style. Consequently, burial service which is well attended is regarded so highly as evidence of a good character and exemplary personality of the departed. This viewpoint applies both to Christians and non-Christians among the Akamba.

### 2.1.4.2.2 TESTIMONIES

Speeches and testimonies during a burial service are normally positive and edifying even if the departed person was of no good at all. This is because, in the Akamba Traditional Religion, it is wrong to talk ill of the dead person. Good words must be selected and used carefully to counsel, rebuke, or even admonish those living. Talking ill of the dead person, who can never come back to us and has no chance to correct his or her

behavior, would definitely annoy the spirits and they would hit back on the living thereby requiring propiation.

This is yet another area, in which the A.I.C. pastors have faced acute challenges among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district and especially during the burial services. Speeches and testimonies have to customarily be given in favor of the dead person. Good and soft words must be said about the dead person despite how bad, evil, and anti-social that person might have been. Some pastors have talked tough against this “distorted” practice, especially when the departed is well known to have been a bad person, but they are immediately and passionately dismissed as insensitive and lacking in wisdom. One pastor who described a dead person, in a burial service, as a sinner, a thief, a rascal, and a person who did every evil thing a man can do on earth, is no longer serving with A.I.C. He was criticized, condemned, insulted, and even threatened in everyway and from every corner to a point that he could take in no more. A respondent described the said pastor as “insensitive and sincerely stupid.”

#### **2.1.4.2.3 AT THE ANCESTRAL LAND**

The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying insists on burial at the ancestral land and particularly for all men. Burying someone outside his ancestral land is tantamount to throwing him away and erasing his memory among his own people. This offense is not taken kindly in the spirit world and the living will have to pay the full price for it.



There was no much debate on the necessity for this practice among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. One pastor was clearly comfortable with this reality and he enthusiastically made the following observations:

Even the biblical Joseph, who died in Egypt, had given clear orders that he should be buried at his ancestral land and this is exactly what happened. Land is the umbilical cord that connects us with the ancestors and disconnecting a person from his ancestors makes him feel disoriented and an outcast. When someone is buried at his ancestral land he becomes part of the living and is honored and remembered every time his grave is seen. This means that he is not completely gone and the living must have good relationship with him. His graveyard is a constant reminder of his presence and a silent testimony and continuation of his life in the lives of his family members. Burying him outside his home can subject the entire community to endless torment and haunting by the spirit world even if we have become Christians. <sup>18</sup>

### **2.1.5 GRAVES AND GRAVEYARDS**

Graves and graveyards are very important in the Akamba Traditional Religion. It is a common practice for someone to direct where one would be buried after death. Nevertheless, it is unwise to either dig a grave prior to somebody's death. People who dig themselves a grave while still living, are strongly condemned as unwise, absent minded, and a dangerous source of trouble among the Akamba people. It is believed that such an awkward practice is like wishing oneself and other community members death.

Graves and graveyards are respectfully protected and guarded among the Akamba people. This is because: they remind the living of the departed; they guarantee land security; they maintain the family bond; and above all they are a source of blessings for the living.

In some Christian homes, graves and graveyards are still guarded (*Kukomw'a*) against defilements especially when it is suspected that someone evil could come to perform a bad ritual at the grave that would bring more death to that family. However, the general understanding of the significance of graves and graveyards among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district correspond to that of the Akamba Traditional Religion. Several Christians agreed that, graves and graveyards are very important in the sense that:

- a) They can secure ones land from potential grabbers;
- b) They can restrain the woman from roaming about with other men in the village;
- c) They can be used to answer questions asked by the children about their relatives and clan ancestors, and
- d) They are symbols of soul immortality

### **2.1.6 LIFE AFTER DEATH**

In the Akamba Traditional Religion, life after death is a basic belief in the face of death and dying. The Akamba people view death paradoxically: as a separation but not annihilation. Survival after death is not a matter of argument or speculation. It is an axiom of life. At the time of physical death, the person becomes a "living dead": he is neither alive physically nor spiritually dead. He departs from this physical body to spiritual body. In this new status he continues to live as one of the guardians for the living mortals.

This conception of life after death is almost the same with that of the Christian teaching on life after death among the A.I.C. members in the

Machakos district except for the notion that, among the Akamba, the departed become the guardian of the living mortals. Though, one A.I.C. Christian told this study that, “A Mukamba Christian goes to heaven through the ancestral world.”<sup>19</sup>

### **2.1.6.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE “LIVING DEAD”**

Among the Akamba Traditional communities, the living and the “living dead” live in intimate association. They are interdependent. They maintain mutual communication. Some A.I.C. members in Machakos district agreed that this harmonious link is very necessary because those who die continue living since death is not the end of life. In relation to this, one interviewed A.I.C. pastor had this to say:

As soon as a person dies, he becomes a “living-dead”, he is a ‘spirit’ in the sense that he is no longer in the body, and yet he retains features which describe him in physical terms. He still retains his personal name, so that if he appears mysteriously to family members, they are able to recognize him.<sup>20</sup>

### **2.1.6.2 CHILD NAMING**

Among the Akamba, child naming, especially after the departed parents or relatives is one of the sure way of continuing a family name and possibly the character traits that followed such a name.

Several A.I.C. members in Machakos were of the view that, naming children after parents or relatives who are long dead is biblical. It is a positive way to honor and recognize the bond of fellowship that one had with them. One A.I.C. pastor remarked:

*It is a privilege to maintain the names of our parents. It is also a sure way of keeping our relation with them, though departed. It is a continuation of their lives within us. Otherwise, if we do not name our children after them, their spirits will haunt us, and our children will fail in life. It is tantamount to a social crime*<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, naming children after those who are dead is also a demonstration of love and respect to those people the children are called after. It is a sign of continuity of both their life and profession, be it leadership or craftsmanship.

## 2.2 CONCLUSION

The investigations in this chapter reveals that some of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conceptions of death and dying have continued to affect the Christian perception of death and dying among the members of the A.I.C. in the Machakos district of Kenya. The chapter also shows that some of the above are valuable and, if properly understood and critically elaborated with Christianity as the point of reference, they would make the Christian doctrine of death and dying more meaningful and more fruitful to the A.I.C. members in the Machakos district of Kenya.

From this account, it has been made clear that in spite of many years of Christian evangelisation in Ukambani the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conceptions of death and dying have impoverished the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in particular and other Africans in general. The observations made by J.S. Mbiti are pertinent:

African philosophy is basically anthropocentric: Man is at the very center of existence, and African peoples see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. God is the explanation of man's origin and sustenance; it is as if God exists for the sake of man.<sup>22</sup>

With the above in mind, the study now moves to chapter three that tackles the Christian teaching on death and dying. This is in view of the study's effort into inculturational approach in chapter four

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> **R. J. Gehman.** *African Traditional Religion: In a Biblical Perspective.* Kenya: Kesho Publication, (1989:19).

<sup>2</sup> **Daily Nation,** Nairobi, Wednesday, (August 10, 2005:11).

<sup>3</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>4</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>5</sup> **Gehman,** (op.cit:20).

<sup>6</sup> **J. M. Mulei,** Interview. (March 2, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> **J. S. Mbiti.** *African Religions and Philosophy.* Kenya: Heinemann, (1969:156).

<sup>8</sup> **Ibid,** (p. 155).

<sup>9</sup> **J. M. Mulei,** (op.cit.).

<sup>10</sup> **S. W.Mukuta,** *not real name,* Interview. (March 2, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> **E. E. Muvilo,** *not real name,* Interview. (March 23, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> **P. N. Mukoma,** *not real name,* Interview. (March 10, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> **Gehman,** (loc.cit.).

<sup>14</sup> **R. K. Vingisi,** *not real name,* Interview. (March 23, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> **Z. M. Kalovwe,** *not real name,* Interview. (March 2, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> **B. K. Katungate**, *not real name*, Interview. (March 2, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> **J. J. Musambi**, *not real name*, Interview. (March 9, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> **M. M. Kivulai**, *not real name*, Interview. (March 9, 2006)

<sup>19</sup> **O. W. Mwaniki**, *not real name*, Interview. (March 23, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> **E. N. Kavilo**, *not real name*, Interview. (March 2, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> **E. W.Njenga**, Interview. (March 2, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> **J. S. Mbiti**, (loc.cit.).

## CHAPTER THREE

### CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON DEATH AND DYING AND THE AKAMBA NOTION OF DEATH AND DYING

This chapter presents the Christian teaching on death and dying looking into the way in which the A.I.M. missionaries presented the Christian teaching on death and dying making a great number of the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district, still be influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in these beliefs.

The A.I.M missionaries had a very noble purpose among the Akamba people of Machakos. They wanted to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ through their perceived knowledge, interpretation, and application of the bible. They preached and presented the bible, among the Akamba people, as the only holy book given to all through divine inspiration, the respected written Word of God, the absolute source of authority, and the basis for all Christian theology, religious practices, and spiritual expression on all matters of faith and conduct among the Christian believers.

This biblical significance was over and above the Akamba Traditional Religion but was never to be questioned or conflicted at any level of Christian practice. Accordingly, the Akamba converts who were dying, mourning, or bereaved were expected to find comfort in the Christian teachings on death and dying. Biblical references like in Job 1:21, made it clear that God is the Lord of all life and spirit. He gives and takes and no



human effort can thwart or frustrate this design. Therefore it was utterly sinful for the Akamba converts to seek other explanations, apart from the biblical teachings on death and dying because the bible had absolutely put it that, those who die, die as intended and appointed by God.

However, this interpretation, presentation, and application of the Christian teaching on death and dying, condemned, rejected, dismissed, and 'demonised' the Akamba Traditional Religion and way of life as primitive, pagan, and incompatible with the gospel. The missionaries demanded that, any Mukamba who confessed to be a Christian, had to denounce all the traditional ways, religious beliefs, and cultural values s/he had been socialized into otherwise s/he would not be allowed to benefit from the favours the Christian converts were being given by the missionaries like formal schooling, medical care, food stuffs, and other handouts. Many people thus became Christian converts for the purpose of improving their living conditions and benefiting from the missionaries while the Christianity they embraced and confessed remained superficial.

### **3.1 THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY IN UKAMBANI**

The coming of Christianity in Ukambani cannot be reviewed without referring to J. L. Krapf, the man recognized for bringing it to Ukambani, where he visited in 1849 and 1851. According to J. S. Mbiti's account,

Krapf arrived in Mombasa in 1844, met the Akamba people, learnt some Kikamba, and translated the first two gospels, publishing St Mark's in 1850... He would have founded a station in Ukambani but abandoned the idea because of the insecurity levels. However, apart from showing interest in the Gospel, there were no Akamba converts, from this early phase of evangelisation.<sup>1</sup>

Other missionaries came and succeeded Krapf on the coast but for forty years, none of them went to Ukambani to carry on from where Krapf had stopped in 1851. Leipzig, Evangelical Lutheran Society opened mission stations at Ikutha in 1892 and at Mulango in 1895. The latter date also shows the founding of the Africa Inland Mission (A.I.M.), by an American Christian, Peter Cameroon Scott. Its first station at Kalaamba in Makueni was opened in 1895 but had to be abandoned after the founder's death. It opened other stations at Kangundo, Sakai and Kilungu in 1896, then at Machakos and Mukaa in 1902. Other stations were opened at Mbooni in 1908, at Mulango in 1915, at Kyome in 1950 and at Sombe in 1976.

Following this second evangelisation, the Akamba people responded to Christian teaching and the A.I.M. reported its first baptismal service of three Akamba converts, in the Mission's official organ, "Hearing and Doing," October 1905.<sup>2</sup> However, in the annual report for 1919, Charles HurlBurt, the A.I.M. general director, reported the conditions in Ukambani as follows:

*The Akamba tribe, in which the mission first started its work in 1895, now has six stations: ... These report 107 communicants, 160 enquirers being taught, and 23 native helpers in teaching and evangelism. This tribe, which has been considered the most difficult one in British East Africa for missionary work, is showing some results of the long years of sowing in a marked spiritual interest at nearly every station. Practically the whole of the New Testament has been translated in the last few years, but the translations are necessarily imperfect and changes are constantly being made... The tribe is one of the brightest and the keenest in which we work... and we should have the very best schools and the most aggressive evangelism. By 1934, the A.I.M. had a following of 3,675 Church members and adherents in Ukambani, with 5 stations but only 10 missionaries.*<sup>3</sup>

The Africa Inland Church is a result of this preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which was started in Ukambani by the Africa Inland Mission under the leadership of its founder Rev. P. C. Scott. However, it is now just over hundred years since, Africa Inland Mission, missionaries evangelised Ukambani. The missionaries were dedicated to convert and catechise the Akamba into Christianity. Unfortunately, their method and attitude of evangelisation impoverished the Christian understanding of death and dying among the members of Africa Inland Church in Machakos district thus making a great number of the A.I.C. Christians still be influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in these beliefs.

### **3.2 CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON DEATH AND DYING**

The Christian teaching on death and dying, by the A.I.M. missionaries, was very special and life changing despite the fact that it has continued to face resistance from the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district.

For Christians, whose lives are guided and inspired by the bible, there is "a time to be born and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:2). This reality of death and dying is acknowledged as part of the current human condition, affected by sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12ff; Hebrews 9:27) but God is the absolute Lord over life and death as it is noted in Job 14:5: "Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed."

However, in the O.T. time death and dying was the natural end of man (2 Samuel 14:14) but the ideal death was attained in the fullness of old age with undiminished powers (Gen. 25:8; Job 21:23f; 29:18-20).<sup>4</sup> By the time of the N.T., at least four conflicting attitudes towards death and dying were discerned in Jewish thought:<sup>5</sup>

- a. The Sadducees continued to equate death and dying with personal extinction
- b. The Pharisees looked for the literal bodily resurrection at the last day
- c. The Essenes taught about the immortality of the soul, while
- d. The covenanters of Qumran appeared to have embraced a doctrine of resurrection which did not entail the resurrection of the corpse, but looked instead for a mode of existence in which people would be 'like angels in heaven'

### 3.2.1 THE CHRISTIAN DEFINITION OF DEATH

In the Christian teaching on death and dying, attempts to understand death have become part of life. The term 'death' is ambiguous but if it is the 'ending of life', then it can refer to the loss of the very last trace of life. Thus death can be a state, the process of extinction, or the *denouement* (final completion) of that process.

Death marks the physical separation of the individual from other human beings. The soul is believed to join the spiritual world where it originated. It is also believed, by the Christians, that one who has died is not dead but "asleep." But what is death?

Death is something, which each person must envisage for oneself since s/he also will see and, will, taste death.<sup>6</sup> Death is human's destiny. It is a common lot of humankind, 'the way of all the earth'. What after all, is life if not human's anguished struggle against death?<sup>7</sup>

However, for the Christian teaching on death and dying, a theological definition of death is necessary. Thus, death is the suspension of the personal union between the body and the soul.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.2.2 THE NATURE OF DEATH AND DYING**

It is of great necessity for every Christian to understand the true disposition of death and dying in order to 'cleave' to the purpose of life with assurance and perseverance.

#### **3.2.2.1 DEATH IS A MYSTERY**

From the Christian teaching on death and dying, no one knows the hour of his or her death. It is always a challenge when a Christian looks for the specific time during which s/he undergoes the harm that death supposedly brings upon self and the community. However, the imminent advent of death or uncertainty about the time of death and dying ought to prompt repentance and preparation to meet God (2 Kings 20:1; Luke 12:16ff), for death terminates all opportunity to repent (Hebrews 9:27) since "Christian faith affirms death but at the same time looks beyond it".<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2.2.2 DEATH IS TEMPORAL

The Christian teaching on death and dying maintains that, death is a suspension of the activities of the body but this does not mean that the spirit of the man is asleep. The body is but the tabernacle or dwelling place of that spirit part of a person. Upon the death of our bodies, we leave the flesh, “to depart, and to be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23), “waiting for the adoption and the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).

Here is a simple illustration. Recently the researcher noticed that a shop within some estate was no longer open for business. However, there was a sign in the window, which read: “Closed for Renovations.” The owner had suspended his business relations with the public long enough to renovate the store. After about two months, the store was reopened with many changes. This is a picture of the death of the Christian believer. S/he moves out of the body until it has been *repaired and renovated* when, at the resurrection the inward person shall move into ones renewed body.

### 3.2.2.3 DEATH IS A MISFORTUNE

In the Christian teaching on death and dying, death is in some sense a misfortune since continued life always makes good things accessible. Thus Christians are harmed by what thwarts their salient desires. Probably, there are no better words than those of Latourelle, which can express this misfortune of death and dying;

Death, like birth, is unexpected and absurd. We are born in a motiveless way and we die accidentally. Death deprives human beings of their freedom and puts an end to all possibilities of life fulfilment. The thousands and thousands of people who commit suicide each

year draw that same conclusion: Life is meaningless, absurd, better to put an end to it. <sup>100</sup>

Faced with this nightmarish stumbling block of death, many Christians take refuge in forgetfulness; they seek diversion, they deaden their feelings, they take drugs, and eventually die of them.

#### 3.2.2.4 DEATH IS CERTAIN FOR ALL

The Christian teaching on death and dying recognize that death is certain for all people. Even our redeemer and saviour had first to die then resurrect. Every step that one takes brings him or her nearer to the grave, and it is but a matter of time until s/he must bid farewell to earthly tie. With all of the wisdom of the medical profession and the use of scientific discoveries we cannot dispute with the wise preacher of old who said; "For the living know that they will die" (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Furthermore, the bible contains much warning about death, speaking as frequently on this subject as it does about any other. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were instructed by God to refrain from the forbidden fruit with the accompanying warning: "For when you eat of it you will surely die," (Genesis 2:17). We know that they did eat; and at the very moment the judgment of God passed upon them, their bodies commenced the process of death and decay. "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: *and he died*" (Genesis 5:5).

On one page of the bible, there is the genealogy from Adam to Noah and with only one exception, Enoch, the man who walked with God and was translated, the refrain is repeated-- "*and then he died.*" See the list below:

- a. Altogether, Seth lived 912 years, *and then he died* (Genesis 5:8).
- b. Altogether, Enosh lived 905 years, *and then he died* (Genesis 5:11).
- c. Altogether, Kenan lived 910 years, *and then he died* (Genesis 5:14).
- d. Altogether, Mahalalel lived 895 year, *and then he died* (Genesis 5:17).
- e. Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, *and then he died.* (Genesis 5:20).
- f. Altogether, Methuselah lived 969 years, *and then he died.* (Genesis 5:27).
- g. Altogether, Lamech lived 777 years, *and then he died.* (Genesis 5:31).

The bible is clear that the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles did not hesitate to declare that death is certain. The biblical Noah preached righteousness and the judgment of God. He warned people that if they would not repent, the Lord would wipe them from the face of the earth (Genesis 6:7). People mocked the old preacher and then God struck the whole earth with death and destruction. The divine record has it that the waters prevailed for forty days on the earth until every hill was covered just as we read in Genesis 7:21-22

Every living thing that moved on the earth perished – birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all humankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died.

Much more biblical outline on this grim reality of death can be listed as shown below:

- a. About Sarah, “She *died* at Kiriath Arba” (Genesis 23:2).
- b. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Now the day of your *death* is near.’ (Deuteronomy 31:14).
- c. Isaiah said to Hezekiah: “Put your house in order, because you are going to die.” (2 Kings 20:1).



- d. Jeremiah warned Hananiah: “This very year you are going to die.” (Jeremiah 28:16).
- e. Ezekiel preached the Word of the Lord: “The soul who sins is the one who will die.” (Ezekiel 18:4) and “O wicked man, you will surely die.”(Ezekiel 33:8).
- f. “So we must die.” 2 Samuel 14:14)
- g. When Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus, He said: “The beggar died. . . The rich man also died” (Luke 16:22).
- h. When Christ was brought before the multitude, the Jews said: “We have a law, and according to that law he must die” (John 19:7).
- i. Of Dorcas, Luke writes: “She became sick, and died” (Acts 9:37).

One cannot study the life of any bible character, save Enoch, Elijah and Mary of Nazareth, without being reminded that they all died. People admit that death is an unpleasant subject. Yet no one can escape it. Refusing to talk or to think about death does not alter the fact of death. There is no escaping death for “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”(Hebrews 9:27).

### **3.2.3 THE CAUSE OF DEATH AND DYING**

The first time that the subject of death and dying is mentioned in the bible, according to the Christian teaching, is given as a warning to our first parents. There, the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Adam knew that he was alive, but he was a stranger to the subject of death and dying until he heard this word from the Lord. Now he is on his own. He has knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. He knows that to obey God will mean continuous and unending life and to disobey will bring the sentence of death. The power of choice and the right to decide is now left with man. However, both Adam and Eve partook of it by their own choice, and in so doing, they incurred the displeasure of the Lord. Being holy and righteous in all of his judgments, God could do nothing other than pass the sentence of death.

Therefore, death is a consequence and a punishment of sin. When God pronounced death upon the human race, it was because Adam and Eve had disobeyed him and turned from the truth. Thus, man is appointed to die because he has transgressed the Law of God, and the Lord's justice in the sentence of death is so undeniable. No one can offer any legitimate reason why the death sentence should not have been passed, for:

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The soul who sins will die (Ezekiel 18:4). Sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:15). And in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12). So then, death is at work in us (2 Corinthians 4:12). All have sinned (Romans 3:23). What man can live and not see death? (Psalm 89:48).

Therefore, the influence which death exercises over us possesses the value of a sign: it manifests the presence of sin in this world and in ourselves. Not only the sin is an evil that is contrary to our nature and to the divine will; but also it is also concretely for us the way to death. <sup>11</sup>

### 3.2.4 THE COURSE OF DEATH AND DYING

In the Christian teaching on death and dying, the course of death is of special importance to all Christians. It is underlined by the fact that death does not affect all people in the same way simply because it does not lead all in the same direction. In one hospital ward, two patients may die at exactly the same moment. While the root cause of these deaths may be the same in each case, the dying of one can be something altogether different from the dying of the other.

However, Christians can understand this only as they know something of the true purpose of the death of Jesus Christ. Since sin must be punished by death, Jesus went to the cross and died as the punishment for sin and thus at the same time offered Himself as the satisfaction for sin though He was without sin. Peter declares: "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit," (1 Peter 3:18). Here we are told that Christ was put to death for our sins that He might bring people to God. Those who fall asleep in the Lord take the upward course to heaven and to God. Having accepted Jesus Christ as their Sin-Bearer and Saviour from sin, they are brought to God by virtue of His sacrificial and vicarious death. Christian believers are able to say: "The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," (Isaiah 53:6). As Jesus hung dying upon the cross, He was the true sin offering for us. We were, by our sinfulness, on the downward course, doomed to be separated from God; but Jesus, by virtue of His death and resurrection, provided a new destiny. Whenever a Christian believer dies, s/he is said to have fallen "asleep"<sup>12</sup> and immediately his or her soul takes the upward course to be with the Lord if one lived a godly life.

But what course does death pursue in the case of a non-believer? Since the death of Christ paid for the believer the punishment of sin, and death to him is a pleasant ascension into the Father's presence, it follows that the death of the unbeliever is an unpleasant descent away from the presence of God. When the unbeliever dies, s/he passes from this world into a spiritual and eternal death and hell. Both the rich man and Lazarus died in the story told by our Jesus. Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom while the rich man was sent to hell (Luke 16:19-24).

### **3.2.5 KINDS OF DEATH**

The Christian teaching on death and dying teaches that there are several kinds of death and it distinguishes clearly between each of them. These are physical death, spiritual death, eternal death, ideal death, pre-mature death, and death to sin.

#### **3.2.5.1 PHYSICAL DEATH**

Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. It is the irreversible cessation of all bodily functions. This is the death of the body, to which reference is made in Hebrews 9:27, "Man is destined to die once" and this concept is well expressed by Richardson when he says, "Man is not an incarnate soul but an animated body, an irreducible physical being whose only possible life is on this earth."<sup>13</sup>

#### **3.2.5.2 SPIRITUAL DEATH**

The Christian bible teaches that there is a spiritual death. This is the separator of the soul from God, the condition of all non repentant sinners of whom Paul says they are "dead in their transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), and "separated from the life of God." (Ephesians

4:18). It is the man's natural alienation from God and his lack of responsiveness to God, (Gen. 2:17; Matthew 8:22; John 5:24-25).

### **3.2.5.3 ETERNAL DEATH**

Eternal death or banishment from God is a Christian conception of death budding from the Christian teaching on death and dying. All who suffer eternal death are conscious, but "they will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut from the presence of the Lord." (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is the permanent separation from God that is the destiny of the grave unrepentant sinners, (Matthew 10:28; Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14 -15). As such, "their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death." (Revelation 21:8).

### **3.2.5.4 DEATH TO SIN**

In the Christian teaching on death and dying, death to sin is the complete suspension of all relations with sin that results from being alive to God through dying and rising with Christ (Romans 6:4; 6:11). It is a conscious shift or conversion from evil satanic life to Godly life thanks to the gift of grace.

### **3.2.5.5 IDEAL AND PRE-MATURE DEATHS**

Finally, there are other kinds of death which the Christian teaching on death and dying does not openly mention although are fully implied thereof. These are the ideal and pre-mature deaths.

Based on the O.T. teachings, death is terminal and is accepted as a natural end of man but the ideal death is attained in the fullness of old

age. Examples include Abraham who, “breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years.” (Genesis 25:8) and according to Job 21:23, “One man dies in full vigour, completely secure and at ease.”

However, a sudden or a premature death is the result of a divine anger for, “we are consumed by your anger,” Psalms 90:7. Death is premature in the sense that it comes when one still has interests and desires that propel him or her forward in life, and only if meeting these interests is a real prospect. Psalms 55:23 says “deceitful men will not live out half their days,” and Ecclesiastes 7:17 sounds a similar warning, “Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool – why die before your time?”

### **3.2.6 VICTORY OVER DEATH AND DYING**

Another element in the Christian conception and teaching on death and dying is that, Jesus has overcome death by his own death and resurrection and this is the sure basis for Christians’ victory over death and dying. The bible teaches that death is the last adversary, which Jesus overcomes, (1 Corinthians 15:25ff):

He has deprived death of its power, (2 Timothy 1:10); He has rendered powerless the devil, the Lord of death, (Hebrews 2:14); Jesus frees us from the law of sin and death, (Romans 8:2); Christ has died and come to life to rule over the living and the dead, (Romans 14:9); If we die with Christ we shall live with Him, (Romans 6:8) for through Christ Jesus, God has destroyed death, (Hebrews 2:14).

Thus, Jesus’ death is the model for Christians’ dying <sup>14</sup> and His victory over death and dying is the great news of hope, which the gospel brings. All Christian are definitely assured that God will save them from death

and dying and that they will live forever with him after their lives on earth are ended so long as they remain faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

### 3.2.6.1 GOD SAVES PEOPLE FROM DEATH AND DYING

Another principle in the Christian teaching on death and dying implies that there is no one who has the power to save oneself from death and dying. This requires God's grace since He alone is, by nature, life itself. Thus, when the influence of death and dying over a Christian manifests itself, in whatever way it happens s/he can hopefully, appeal to God. (Ps. 6:5; 13:4; 116:3). This conviction is augmented by Leon-Dufour where he notes that, "God alone delivers man from death but not without man's cooperation."<sup>15</sup> He goes further and says,

*In the N.T., the dominant lines of prior revelation converge toward the mystery of Christ's death. There all of human history appears like some gigantic drama of life and death; until the coming of Christ, and without Him, there is only one kingdom of death. Christ comes and by his death triumphs over death itself; from that instant, death takes on a new meaning for the new humanity, which dies with Christ in order to live with him eternally.<sup>16</sup>*

In the face of bodily death, bodily death takes on a new meaning for the Christian believers. Furthermore, Leon-Dufour tells us:

*It is no longer an inevitable destiny to which man resigns himself, a divine decree one accepts, a condemnation incurred because of man's sins. The Christian dies for the Lord just as he lived for him<sup>17</sup>*

This is why death and dying for the Christian is, in the last analysis, a gain since Christ is his or her life, (Philippians 1:21).

### **3.2.6.2 LIFE AFTER DEATH AND DYING**

Life after death is the basic concept in many religions, and particularly in the Christian teaching, on death and dying. It is a founded faith that Christians will live forever and ever with God after their physical death thus, for them, the grave is not the end.

There is no doubt that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central theme of the N.T. and that it transformed the first disciples' attitude toward death and dying. It generated a sense of certainty about life after death, which transcended any earlier expressions of hope for a future life. This idea is also observed by Richardson.

During the inter-testamental period, resurrection faith became more common, while simultaneously (possibly under Greek influence) some abandoned the old Hebrew anthropology in favour of body-soul dualism, and belief in the soul's immortality.<sup>18</sup>

## **3.3 THE AKAMBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY ON DEATH AND DYING**

At this point, the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying needs a mention in order to be able to see what the A.I.M. missionaries, knowingly or unknowingly, missed out in their Christian evangelisation among the Akamba people.

### **3.3.1 THE AKAMBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

The Akamba Traditional Religion yields a spirituality, which was disregarded and discarded by the A.I.M. missionaries in their presentation of the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.



In the Akamba Traditional Religion, the Akamba welcomes death and dying as a fact, something that happens to all, and they would only engage themselves into these activities in proportion with the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical attitudes toward them. These attitudes which, definitely, contained feelings about dependency, pain, indignity, isolation, separation, possible rejection, leaving loved ones, afterlife, finality of death, and the facing of the unknown, are deeply imparted into them through the socialisation into the Akamba Traditional Religion. This provides all men and women with the right effort to reach, please, earn, and deserve God through rites, rituals, rules, and some regulations and for sure, they find self worth, dignity, and value in their religious quest.

Thus, a Mukamba may be very open about death and dying on a verbal level but quite anxious below the level of consciousness. This is the spirituality, which the missionaries needed not to ignore but to incorporate in their interpretation, presentation, and application of the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

### **3.3.2 THE AKAMBA PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH AND DYING**

The Akamba people have some possible philosophies of death and dying which governs their day-to-day lives and guides their living. Some of these philosophies include the following:

1. **Death and dying is considered as an interruption to life:** The only difference death and dying has, from sleep and sicknesses, is in its permanence. It is the end of ones projects and interference with them, and this is the case for both a Mukamba and those s/he loved. Nevertheless, life is to be lived in spite of it.
2. **Death and dying is considered as the culminating act of life:** Here, a Mukamba expresses who s/he is, what one stands for, and what his/her life means. This happens either through the circumstances of the death or by the manner of dying or both. A good example from the Christian perspective is that of Jesus Himself and the Christian martyrs. Through the circumstances of their deaths or by the manner in which they died, the world was made aware of who they were and what they stood for. Thus a Mukamba, who dies for his or her family or society, is adored and remembered as an exemplary person.
3. **Death and dying is considered as part of life:** This is a fact that every Mukamba has to come to terms with in order to live well. It is part of what is involved in accepting human finitude.
4. **Death and Dying is considered as a transition:** It is actually through death and dying that a Mukamba moves from this life to the life that really counts, i.e. eternal life in the ancestral yonder life.

These Akamba philosophies of death and dying have what the missionaries needed for their Christian evangelisation among the Akamba but unfortunately, the missionaries gave them no chance.

### **3.3.3 THE AKAMBA REACTIONS TO DEATH AND DYING**

In the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying, the Akamba reaction to death and dying is that of fear. Even so, it is natural for people everywhere to fear what they do not understand and cannot control. A limited mortal human being can never know exactly, and fully understand what death is, and therefore one can never annihilate fully its phobia. However, in general the Akamba's response to death and dying is that of avoidance. It is not socially likeable to freely talk about death and dying because this creates lots of discomfort and distressing anxiety among the Akamba people. The topic is altogether, avoided in any relaxed and open discourse. As Wachege puts it, "it is a taboo subject."

Additionally, each individual death, among the Akamba, is unique in its own way, experience, and impact and this is possibly, what made the Christian evangelisation by the missionaries less meaningful to a Mukamba experiencing a loss through death. Indeed their Christian teachings on death and dying are rather irrelevant simply because the Akamba are socialised to understand and deal with their own grief in their own way.

However, the Akamba will accept the Christian teaching on death and dying as an honest attempt at caring, but would immediately dismiss them as misguided expressions of sympathy and go ahead to do what they feel is culturally right for them. This is because:

1. The Christian teaching on death and dying is not clearly explained. There is a lack of effort to truly understand what death and dying means to the Akamba and how a mourning Mukamba really feels.
2. The Christian teaching on death and dying, by the missionaries, is insensitive to how a Mukamba responds to death and dying and the accompanying rituals.
3. The Christian teaching on death and dying as presented, dismisses the Akamba expression of emotions, thus dismissing them as superstitious.
4. The Christian teaching on death and dying as often propagated, hardly provides stable support for those suffering a loss through death and dying, such as the loss of a child, a friend, parent, spouse, and death by suicide.

### **3.3.4 EFFECTS OF DEATH AND DYING**

The effects of death and dying among the Akamba people has many positive implications in the lives of the bereaved. For example;

1. The death of a loved one gives the bereaved an opportunity for growth. A young man whose father dies is expected to take full responsibility for the family life as if he is the new head of the family to ensure family solidarity.
2. The fact of death and dying impacts upon the bereaved the sense of purpose in their own lives and the urgency to take life seriously.

3. Without death and dying, the tradition of inheritance, inherited wealth and ancestral life would be superfluous.

These are some of the crucial positive aspects of the effects of death and dying among the Akamba which are, when properly inculturated, compatible with Christian teaching on death and dying. A challenge this study endeavours to grapple with.

### 3.4 A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A critical analysis of the A.I.M. missionary implantation method of Christian enterprise and evangelisation is certainly needed because, with General Revelation, the Akamba never needed the missionaries except for Special Revelation.

However, in this Special Revelation, they generally applied “implantation” method of Christian evangelisation, which had serious shortcomings:<sup>19</sup>

- a. This method brought Christianity imbued with western thoughts, traditions, characteristics, civilisation, and mentality. It had high levels of paternalism.
- b. The missionaries used this method of evangelisation mainly because of their contempt for anything African: They thought the African culture, mentality, and traditions were primitive, magic, and superstitious. They had convictions that their western articulations were a universal means of evangelisation and their ways were the favourable, and the only, norm of explaining Christianity.

- c. The missionaries ignored the fact that Christianity, by its very essence, is inculturational: Jesus was a Jew; God came to people's history, as Jesus of Nazareth, in the Jewish tribe and culture to which Jesus respected.
- d. They applied double standards especially in equating Christianity with westernism. Where as in Germany, Christianity is Germanic; in Italy, Italian; in America, American; in Britain, British; in Africa, Christianity is hardly made African.

### **3.5 THE AKAMBA REACTIONS**

Following this implantation method of the Christian enterprise and evangelisation, the Akamba nurtured intrinsic or deep-seated reactions against the cause of Christianity and its faith more on the issue of death and dying. They peacefully hated and dismissed Christianity as a white man's doctrine, which came to undermine the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical values of life and living. However, they publicly upheld the Christian teachings, and easily converted to Christianity, for formal education, medical attention and material gain from the missionaries while they privately and actively, continued their Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophies of life and living. Christianity shaped the Akamba on the outward but on the inside they remained typical Akamba. Technically stated, the Akamba were 'white washed' but not 'washed white'.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have seen the Christian teaching on death and dying and how it was presented by the missionaries among the Africans in general and to the Akamba people in particular. It has also been noted that the A.I.M. missionaries applied implantation method of Christian evangelisation, thus making a considerable number of A.I.C. members in Machakos district still be influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in their Christian beliefs and perspectives. The chapter also comes up with some vital religious and philosophical elements among the Akamba which when thoroughly understood and elaborated can help to make the Christian doctrine of death and dying more meaningful and fruitful among the A.I.C. members of Machakos district in particular and the other Africans in general.

The chapter, moreover, highlighted that, it is important to note that the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy of life is not void, useless, pagan, primitive, and “demonic” as the western missionaries would have it. In fact, it made an indispensable contribution to the cause of Christianity in Ukambani much more than the missionaries have ever realised. It is so much of use in a better understanding of the Christian conception of death and dying.

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> **John S. Mbiti.** *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background.* Britain: Oxford University Press. (1971:10-11).

<sup>2</sup> **Ibid,** (p.13).

<sup>3</sup> **Ibid,** (p.14).

<sup>4</sup> **John L. McKenzie.** *Dictionary of the Bible.* Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, (1965:183-185).

<sup>5</sup> **Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Ed).** *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology.* London: SCM press Ltd, (1983:145).

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 39, 49; Luke 2:26; John 8:5; Matthew 16:28; John 8:52; Hebrews 2:9

<sup>7</sup> **Xavier Leon-Dufour (Ed).** *Dictionary of Biblical Theology.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, (1973:115).

<sup>8</sup> This definition comes from the author's reflections.

<sup>9</sup> **Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (Eds).** *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology.* New York: St. Pauls, (1990:212).

<sup>10</sup> **Ibid,** (p. 212).

<sup>11</sup> **Leon-Dufour,** (loc.cit.).

<sup>12</sup> Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 15 and 1 Corinthians 15:6



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<sup>13</sup> **Alan Richardson and John Bowden** (Ed). *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*. London: SCM press Ltd, (1983:145).

<sup>14</sup> Read John 21:19; Acts 21:13; Philippians 1:20; 3:10

<sup>15</sup> **Leon-Dufour**, (op.cit.:116).

<sup>16</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 117).

<sup>17</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 119).

<sup>18</sup> **Richardson**, (loc.cit.).

<sup>19</sup> **Wachege**, Lecture Notes on African Christian Theology

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **INCULTURATION: A BETTER WAY TO MAKE THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON DEATH AND DYING MORE MEANINGFUL AND FRUITFUL AMONG THE A.I.C. MEMBERS IN MACHAKOS DISTRICT**

This chapter presents and recommends the Inculturation approach with the aim of understanding, interpreting, and presenting in a better meaningful way the Christian teaching on death and dying that is more relevant, meaningful, and significant to the Machakos district members of the Africa Inland Church in particular and the other Africans in general.

#### **4.1 DEFINITION OF “INCULTURATION”**

Owing to the fact that different Christian theologians have defined, interpreted, expressed, and applied the word “Inculturation,” in a diverse manner, the study found out that they have one essential common denominator namely, that inculturation has to do with confronting the Christian doctrine with the African cultures and religiosity – in our case, that of the Akamba.

Akamba Culture is taken as a way in which the Akamba people do things together in a patterned method; sharing beliefs and customs with a worldview at the centre, together with values and standards of judgment and conduct, common institutions, a common language, with shared proverbs, myths, folktales and arts, a common history, and a common

land territory. It reveals and gives meaning in reality and, yet in another sense; it is the software of the mind: The shared mental package that helps to program the Akamba perceptions and behaviour. It is the ensemble of meanings and significations, values and models, underlying into the activity and communication of the Akamba people and regarded by them as proper and distinctive expressions of their human reality. Irarrazaval Diego's perception of 'culture' is understood in terms of the "everyday:" the meaning of the 'everyday' things and happenings. <sup>1</sup>

With this in mind we can now explore several descriptions of 'Inculturation' as given by some writers and Christian theologians. The first one comes from M. Dhavomony:

*Inculturation means the process of infusing the gospel message into the soul of a culture.... Christian life is expressed with the elements proper to this culture.* <sup>2</sup>

Another one comes from Jyoti Sahi who said:

*Inculturation is not primarily a matter of converting others... Inculturation is a process of creative expression that enables Christians to be faithful to their particular history and culture within the local Church.* <sup>3</sup>

Then from the International Theological Commission which said:

*The Inculturation process can be defined as the effort of the Church to make Christ's message penetrate into a specific socio-cultural setting by inviting it to grow according to all its own values insofar, as they can be reconciled with the gospel.* <sup>4</sup>

P.N. Wachege observes that;

*According to us, the term 'Inculturation' contains and expresses best and most coherently our contemporary trend of understanding, presenting and concretely interpreting Christianity in accordance with our African people's aspirations, needs, thought forms, and mentality. It expresses best the effort of confronting the gospel message with our African Cultures, Philosophy and Religiosity.... Before the*

propagation of salvation, it should be acknowledged and appreciated that the loving God is already in the targeted people. God is there via general revelation preparing them to have a proper and sympathetic disposition.<sup>5</sup>

Irarrazaval Diego insists on the components of Inculturation<sup>6</sup> namely:

- a) Ecclesial work from the grassroots in which the message is a dialogue with every culture
- b) The Christian truth assumes and questions every culture, and each people creatively comprehend the message of salvation and put it into practice.

At this stage now we have an idea of what 'Inculturation' means and what it stands for. In each of the first three definitions, there is the word "process" while in the last two observations, words like "work ... dialogue" and "confronting the gospel", are worth noting. These words can help us understand the true essence and meaning of the word "Inculturation" which the researcher defines as, "The process of linking the gospel message, in its biblical witness and in consonance, with the everyday happenings of man's culture and history."<sup>7</sup>

Inculturation is therefore an inseparable aspect of Christian evangelisation. It means the presentation and re-expression of the gospel message in forms and terms proper to every particular culture. This leads us to ask some important questions: Did the A.I.M. missionaries truly understand the value of 'Inculturation' in their Christian evangelisation and teaching on death and dying among the Akamba people in Machakos district? If they did, why is it that a considerable number of the A.I.C. members in Machakos district are still influenced by the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy in these beliefs? And what went wrong?

Nevertheless, in true Inculturation there are no winners or losers. The process results in the reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either. Anything less than this, then it is not Inculturation.

## **4.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF “INCULTURATION”**

This Inculturation has its historical background which will definitely enhance and deepen our insight into its importance in Christian evangelisation and teaching on death and dying.

### **4.2.1 A NEW START FOR THE AFRICAN CULTURE**

A new beginning for the African culture was triggered off by some African writers who, in their scholarly writings, opposed both the colonial system and the Christian missionaries. This took place from 1945 – 1955, and John Baur is careful to note that:

The most influential contribution came from the Francophone movement of ‘La Negritude’ initiated by Leopold Senghor with his friends Aime Cesaire and Leon Coutran Damas who were studying in Paris in 1930s. They proudly stood by their ‘Negritude’, the ‘African-ness’ and convinced the world of African cultural values and instilled into their brothers and sisters a new faith in Africa, its past and its future destiny.<sup>8</sup>

### **4.2.2 THE GROUNDWORK**

The activities which led to the setting up of an African theology started in Accra in 1955 and this was recognized as the first meeting ever to be held on ‘Christianity and African Culture’. Here, two African Religious apologists, Busia and Baeta defended the continuity between African religions and Christianity and called on the Churches to use African culture as the only language to proclaim the Gospel in Africa.<sup>9</sup>

### 4.2.3 POSSIBILITY OF THE AFRICAN THEOLOGY

In 1960 a debate on the possibility of an African theology took place at the theological faculty of 'Lovanium University' Kinshasa, between the student Tharcisse Tshibangu and Anneste Vanneste, the dean of the faculty. Tshibangu's opinion was that;

An African vision using its symbolism and intuition, its concepts of life-force and human fulfilment, and the latent theological seeds in its traditional religion as 'religious analogues,' could eventually lead to an African Theology in the same sense as one speaks of Judaeo-Christian, Eastern or Western Theology.<sup>10</sup>

Vanneste, in response, could not see how from *primitive* and *magical* African concepts a theology could be built up. However, the discussion found a large echo in favour of Tshibangu.<sup>11</sup>

In the year 1974 the work of African Theology was fostered. From the Protestants side, was the Moratorium issue at the Lusaka assembly of AACC which proposed for the realisation of African identity and formulation of its own theology. And on the Catholic side was the African Bishops declaration at the Episcopal synod in Rome where they rejected the 'so called' theology of adaptation (of missionaries) as being completely out-of-date and 'In its stead adopting the (genuinely African) theology of Incarnation,' that should 'help Christianity to become incarnate in the life of the people.'<sup>12</sup>

### 4.2.4 FROM ADAPTATION TO INCULTURATION

Alteration started with African hymns and melodies and musical instruments. Vatican II gave the Catholics permission to translate all Latin texts into the vernacular. Then there followed a search for beliefs, rites, symbols, gestures, and institutions of African culture and traditional

religion that corresponded to the Christian faith and could, to the African mind, be stepping-stones in the understanding of this faith or the expression of it. <sup>13</sup> According to Ngindu Mushete, the African community who accepted the Christian word of God had to live it in their own cultural milieu, and their life of faith would eventually lead to a new incarnation of the gospel message. <sup>14</sup> At the end of the process African religiosity was not just providing 'building stones' but becoming a structural principle leading to a proper African Theology. <sup>15</sup>

With the above understanding in mind, the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district need to ignore the colonialistic – missionary attitudes, that unnecessarily condemn the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying, and defend the aspects of continuity between the two perspectives. The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying should be understood, transformed, and utilised in proclaiming the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district to make it more significant among those people. Thus rejecting the missionaries' theology of adaptation and adopting the genuinely African theology of incarnation.

### 4.3 SEMANTICS OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation is not a theological, missiological, or pastoral fad; it is an essential quality of evangelisation, and theological reflection. <sup>16</sup> *Revelation* takes place within the context of a people, within the evolutionary framework of the socio-cultural formation of that people while *Evangelisation* must take account to the extremely diversified socio-cultural reality of its audience. *Theological reflection* has always developed within,

and in forms of, an identifiable socio-cultural universe, so that the universe in question becomes important for an understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of any product of the theological process.<sup>17</sup>

Latourelle further stresses that:

Inculturation is to be distinguished purely from anthropological notions of Acculturation: Process of transformations occurring in a person or a human group upon contact with a different culture. Enculturation: The process of initiation of a person or a human group into ones own culture or society. Trans-Culturation: Ethnocentric, unidirectional transfer of cultural elements from one culture to another, generally subordinate culture.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, in this given context, Inculturation denotes the active process emerging from within the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying that receives revelation through Christian evangelisation and that understands and translates it according to its own way of being, acting, and communicating. In this way, the Christian teaching on death and dying is assimilated by the Akamba culture in such a way that not only are these teachings expressed through the elements proper to this culture, but they come to, “constitute a principle of inspiration as well and eventually a norm and power of unification that transforms, re-creates, and revitalizes this culture.”<sup>19</sup>

Inculturation, therefore, is an active process requiring mutual acceptance and dialogue, critical awareness and discernment, transformation and growth, renovation and innovation. Inculturation supposes an interaction between a living faith and a living culture, and thus it is not cultural archaeology.<sup>20</sup> Methodologically, then, there can be no single, uniform



'way to evangelise' the Akamba people because, in the words of Latourelle,

Both the evangeliser and evangelised are each subject, the agent, of the process, and each must be attentive to the framework of his or her respective cultural history and the particular activity of the Holy Spirit in that history.<sup>21</sup>

#### **4.4 INCULTURATION IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

God's relationship with humanity and His self communication to the people arrives by way of persons, situations, and events. However this reality is not without a caution from Latourelle:

No culture, not even Israel, can be absolutised as the one fixed form of expressing God's revelation, although Israel remains an indispensable decisive point of reference – precisely because it was among this people that the very Inculturation of God occurred in Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

This inspiration warns us against exalting one culture above the Akamba culture in the Christian evangelisation and teaching on death and dying.

##### **4.4.1 THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR INCULTURATION**

The word of God is bound to no single culture. It is open to all cultures, made accessible to every human person, and must always acquire a native face. R. J. Raja observes that, "Incarnation, the most human mode of God's presence in the world, is the primary motivation as well as a radical paradigm for Inculturation."<sup>23</sup> He continues in his assertions and correctly puts it that:

This open-ended and universalistic outreach of the world is already affirmed in the very first pages of the bible in the creation of humanity in God's own image and likeness (Gen. 1:27-28) continued in the blessings extended to 'all the nations of the earth' through Abraham and his offspring (Gen. 12:3; 18:18) and confirmed in its

extension to “all nations” through proclamation of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 4:16-17) making the cultures together with the people “co-heirs”, “co-members”, - “co-sharers,” of the promises of God in Christ (Ephesians 3:6).<sup>24</sup>

The Christian teaching on death and dying, among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district, must acquire a native face. God’s word is open to all cultures, including the Akamba culture, and no single cultural perspectives deserve supremacy in Christian evangelisation.

#### 4.4.2 JESUS CHRIST AND INCULTURATION

By incarnation, Jesus Christ emptied himself of the divine mode of operating. He did this in order to create space in Himself for the humanity, which He was to assume, own and live as a full human being. This Christological mode of Inculturation is endorsed in the following statement by Okure:

Christ’s assumption of humanity was a manifestation of deep love, and of feeling of deep esteem for what is human. This assumed humanity did not happen however, in a cosmic vacuum, but within a specific historical culture. Jesus was a Jew (John 4:9) and a Galilean and a Nazarene (John 1:45-46; 7:52). This means among other things, that he assumed and lived the Jewish cultural life of his day, identifying himself concretely with his people. He spoke their language, ate their food, wore their clothes, and submitted himself to the worthy ideals and practices of their culture and religion (Luke 2:22-24, 41-42). He mixed freely with everybody even with sinners, visiting their homes and bringing salvation to these homes (Luke 19:1-10).<sup>25</sup>

In addition, Jesus Christ used the Jewish people’s life, experiences, their concepts and their ordinary activities (like, fishing, sowing, and baking bread – Matthew 13:3-51), as the medium of revealing and teaching about the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Okure continues to say,

In all these and similar instances, Jesus Christ manifested a deep and profound respect for the values and way of life of the Jewish people. He tried to sanctify them there, where they were and taught them to seek God in their normal everyday activities and living.<sup>26</sup>

From other general biblical citations we see pretty well that Jesus taught and lived in an Inculturated way. He taught through parables and proverbs which were poetic and prophetic. He ate with the excluded, questioning cultural and religious prejudices, and by the virtue of the impulse of Pentecost the Spirit was manifested in the Jewish setting (Acts 2:1-24, 2:4,38); in the Gentile setting (Acts 10:44-47, 11:15, 15:8-9); and in the Jewish – Hellenistic setting of the lay Church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21, 13:1-3). Christ was, remarkably, identified as “Word,” “Bread,” “Light,” “Door,” “Shepherd,” “Resurrection,” “Life,” and “Vine.”

Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district require a theology of incarnation, not just that of adaptation. Christianity must, as it were, be born into the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of life and living.

#### **4.4.3 EVANGELISATION AS INCULTURATION**

Evangelisation never exists except as adapted and integrated by a local culture and therefore can be best understood as Inculturation. Therefore, evangelisation as Inculturation involves more than a mere translation of the faith to a local Church. It involves a ‘double movement’ between the faith and culture where both Christianity and the local culture are changed or altered in order to become a new reality. There is at once the Inculturation

of Christianity and the Christianisation of culture. In the words of J. M. Walligo:

Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought – patterns of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and his good news are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity truly ‘feel at home’ in the culture of each people.<sup>27</sup>

This inspiration is also highlighted by Cecil McGarry, in a letter written to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State, on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1982, which affirmed that:

Pope John Paul insists that, ‘there is an organic and constitutive link existing between Christianity and culture’ and that ‘the synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith.’ ‘A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not fully lived out.’<sup>28</sup>

Whatever, therefore, J. M. Walligo continues:

can really make Christianity be truly universal, that is, beyond culture but in cultures, beyond time but in time, beyond individuals but within each of them, beyond total apprehension but understood, must be advocated and carried out.<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, inculturation is the task of every Christian. This is to say, the Christian teaching on death and dying must involve a double movement between the Christian faith and the Akamba culture where both the Christian teaching and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical insights on death and dying are altered in order to become a new reality but with Christianity as the point of reference. This approach will certainly make the Christian teaching on death and dying,

*truly 'feel at home' among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. Otherwise, the Christian teaching on death and dying will not be fully received and fully lived among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district if it ignores the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical insights on death and dying. This is what P.N. Wachege carefully observes:*

*The success of the Churches in incarnating the gospel of Jesus Christ in the rich soil of our African cultures will depend on the extent to which our evangelisation and catechetical labours are solidly grounded in the theological patrimony of the universal Church.<sup>30</sup>*

#### **4.5 PROCESS OF INCULTURATION**

The first step in the process of Inculturation of the Christian message is the Inculturation of the scripture into a home language that closely touches the life of the hearer. In Raja's words:

*In O.T. times the Law of God written originally in Hebrew was translated by Nehemiah into Aramaic, the language of the people "so that the people understood the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8-12). At a later time when Greek became the lingua franca of the people not only were the Hebrew Scriptures translated to Greek but even the new ones (Including some of the deuterion-canonical books) were written in Greek. Similarly, the oral preaching of Jesus in his native Aramaic was written in Greek idiom for the sake of the people of the Diaspora.<sup>31</sup>*

Raja also cautions that:

*Whoever is to go among another people must hold their inheritance, language, and way of life in high esteem.<sup>32</sup> Between the then and now, between what it meant and what it means, between the ancient culture in which it was written and the strange culture in which it is read there is always a deep chasm and a tension. The question, "do you understand what you are reading?" and the reply "how can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:30-31) are ever old and ever new. "The interpreter must be a dialogue partner, and the interpretation itself a dialogue in which there is a legitimate inquiry, relentless search, mutual sharing, critical collaboration, and creative communion between culture, religions, and peoples irrespective of their diversity."<sup>33</sup>*

For that reason, since people devise culture and culture make people, any effort at inculturation must always take into account the complete human person “with values that promote communion, human dignity, freedom, justice and community. It must work for a transformation of the society to give it a human face that is also the face of God.”<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, a living dialogue and a committed encounter between Christianity and the Akamba culture can make the good news, “a liberative force – both liberated and liberating.”<sup>35</sup> As such, the Christian teaching should be interpreted, presented, and applied in Kikamba language and cultural terms for better understanding and absorption, among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district, where the Christian interpreter is a dialogue partner who can sustain a creative communion between the Christian teaching and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical perceptions of death and dying. As, Fr. Nundwe emphasizes:

*Agents of inculturation should be trained in theology and be familiar with the particular cultures they work in... In the actual process of inculturation, however, cultural perspectives from one ethnic group should not be imposed on another.*<sup>36</sup>

#### **4.6 OBSTACLES TO INCULTURATION**

Generally, Inculturation has been interrupted by many challenges among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. Some of these challenges include:

#### **4.6.1 FAITHFULNESS**

The basic challenge of Inculturation is to be faithful to the command to evangelise that Christ and His Spirit have imparted to the people of God, the Christian Church. Some of the A.I.C. pastors and Church leaders in Machakos district do not care to sensitise the Church members to the inculturated Christian teaching on death and dying. A good number of them are either rigid in their ways, do not know or ignore the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying.

#### **4.6.2 MODERNITY**

In every corner of today's world, society and culture are marked by globalised modernity. The great challenge today is to continue to build a Christian teaching on death and dying that is modern and Inculturated and still genuinely Christian. The more we get in touch with modernity, the more we change our Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical practices toward death and dying. Hence the demand for a strong rooting in both Christianity and Akamba culture and philosophy of life.

#### **4.6.3 POST MODERNITY**

Post modern condition remains a mixed bag of both the perils and promises of an extremely complex social environment. Sorting out the weeds from the wheat in this contemporary situation is as problematic as the biblical proverb warns. Nonetheless, the difficult work of the contemporary Christian Church, demands resistance to these perils and integration of the promises of the world before it in order to effectively Inculturate the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

#### **4.6.4 URBANIZATION**

Cultural change in Ukambani is largely connected with its urbanization, for towns are the major channels of change. This is the challenging pastoral task of our times, among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district, to Inculturate the Christian teaching on death and dying.

#### **4.7 SUMMARY: AREAS THAT NEED INCULTURATION**

In summary, there are several areas that need Inculturation in order to make the Christian teaching on death and dying more relevant and meaningful among the, Machakos district, A.I.C. members in particular and the other Africans in general.

##### **4.7.1 THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE**

Since Christianity has the bible as the major guide book which members of the Africa Inland Church strongly believes, in its “divine, verbal and plenary inspiration,” and in its “absolute and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct,”<sup>37</sup> then it must be possible for the A.I.C. members in Machakos district to read, interpret, and apply it in their way of life, concentrating on the Akamba language, culture, customs, and traditional perspectives on death and dying. This will be the most honest attempt to make the Christian bible and its teaching more relevant and significant among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.



#### 4.7.2 AKAMBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Before Christianity was introduced in Ukambani the Akamba, through their Traditional Religion, used to live in harmony with their God because their traditions had a lot of guidance concerning life and living. Thus, there is no need to abandon their useful Traditional and Philosophical insights just because Christianity has come. Moreover, there are many elements in the Christian bible that are similar to the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical attitudes toward death and dying. After all, Christianity came to challenge and fulfil people's way of life.

Among the Akamba people, death does not occur unless it has been purposefully caused though it is not considered to mark the end of life. Indeed, it might be said that, in the Akamba Traditional Religion death leads to life. That is why they give the dead a proper burial so that they can arrive safely in the land of the dead.

Therefore, the Akamba Traditional Religion is a major source for the experience of God and a valuable means for Christian teaching on death and dying, among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district. It brings about a type of worship, and continuity in life, rooted in the Akamba culture and touching the daily life of the Akamba people. Its Inculturation will produce a Christian teaching which understands the aspirations and mentality of the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

### 4.7.3 INCULTURATION BY THE MISSIONARIES

The Christian missionaries among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district need to present the gospel as a dialogue between Christianity and the Akamba Traditional Religion where each participant comes with complete honesty and sincerity. Here, each partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy but also attempt to agree with the dialogue partner as is possible while still maintaining integrity with ones own tradition. This is because Christ sent His Church to bring good news of salvation to every man and woman until the end of the world and the Church was not to reject any of them. Therefore, just as Okure declares:

Unless the missionary shed his/*her* own cultural tenets thoroughly and as thoroughly assumes, as his/*her* own, the *African/Akamba* world-view, and as thoroughly ceases to compare *African/Akamba* values to his/*her* motherland's cultural values in assessing the former, then there is great danger that his/*her* judgment of the same would be erroneous. *S/he* must be able to understand as an *African/Akamba* understands, so to evaluate *African/Akamba* Culture with due measure of truth. This is a necessary pre-requisite.<sup>38</sup>

### 4.7.4 INCULTURATION BY THE A.I.C. PASTORS

The most important part of Inculturation is that of the pastoral responsibility among the A.I.C. indigenous pastors in Machakos district. The pastors have work to carry on, duties to perform, and influences to exert which are particularly Inculturational. In other words, their feeling of their direct responsibility to Inculturation itself is the capacity and power needed in Christian evangelisation and teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district.

However, this study gathered that some of the A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district are notoriously insensitive to the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical attitudes toward death and dying. A good number of them are reportedly very arrogant, irresponsible, and filthy in their Christian teaching on death and dying and especially during burial services. Some of the statements popularly, made by some of these pastors were sampled as follows:

- 1) *Ikia king'ei kii vaa iimani, nikana nimanye undu nguneena.* (Put this thief in this pit so that I can know how to talk)
- 2) *Mwana-asa, ndukamake nundu muka waku ni mukw'u. Ukatwaa kiveti kingi.* (Brother, worry not that your wife is dead. You'll marry another one)
- 3) *Kiveti, eka kuia. No kana (kaukenge) kakw'a na ukasyaa kangi.* (Woman, stop crying. It is just a little child who has died, and you'll give-birth to another one)
- 4) *Eka kuia mbee wa syana. Niwaile usyony'a ukumbau.* (Stop crying before your children. You should show them courage)
- 5) *Andu ala makuia ni ma kwiviv'a tei muno. Nundu vati vata wa kuia mundu mukuu akw'a nikwithiwa nunaminite myaka yake vaa nthi.* (Those who are crying are to be pitied most. Because there is no reason to mourn an old person who has ended his or her years on earth).

Pastors who use such kind of language, among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district, have been known and dismissed as extremely insensitive, anti-social, and culturally illiterate. However, Inculturation will change and challenge them to take death and dying more seriously among their Church members and truly represent the biblical mandate of

‘mourning with those who mourn’ despite the status of those who have died. The loss is much deeper for mourners.

#### **4.8 RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

Thus far, it is clear that Inculturation involves understanding Christian teaching within the context of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying. The bible must be interpreted according to the Akamba people’s cultural experience. Given below are some recommendations and observations which will make the Christian teaching on death and dying more applicable among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

##### **4.8.1 A.I.C. THEOLOGIANS IN UKAMBANI**

There is need for the A.I.C. theologians in Ukambani to be more publicly visible and their work on death and dying more widely disseminated and known both from the Christian perspective and Akamba context. It is high time they started to go to the people, holding meetings with them, through which their ideas on the necessity for Inculturation of the Christian teaching on death and dying can reach down to the ordinary A.I.C. Christians.

##### **4.8.2 A.I.C. LEADERS IN MACHAKOS DISTRICT**

The A.I.C. leaders in Machakos district need to be re-trained on the necessity, purpose, and integrity of making the Christian teaching on death and dying more relevant and fruitful among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

There should be a body or commission that would occasionally evaluate the A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district on their progress and effectiveness in their Christian evangelisation and teaching among the A.I.C. Christians. Based on this evaluation, much more can be done to correct and monitor the pastors' effort in making the Christian teaching on death and dying more relevant and significant among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

#### **4.8.3 A.I.C. THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES' CURRICULUM**

A.I.C. theological institutions need to adopt a curriculum that is Inculturational in its approach to Christian teachings on death and dying. Currently, the curriculum in almost all the A.I.C. theological institutions, surprisingly, lacks familiarity with Inculturated African Christian theology. The students spend a considerable number of years in the academic study of philosophy, theology, and Church history. One would have expected they would keep up with developments in these fields after graduation. They do not seem to recognize that faith is lived and expressed among people rooted in both Christianity and indigenous cultures.

## 4.9 CONCLUSION

This study has addressed the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the members of Africa Inland Church in the Machakos district of Kenya. It has also noted that the missionary implantation method of evangelisation that ignores the Akamba Philosophy of life and living has impoverished the Christian doctrine of death and dying. The study has given insights into confronting the Christian doctrine of death and dying with the Akamba religio-philosophical worldview to make it more relevant and fruitful.

The Africa Inland Church in Machakos district is, therefore, called upon to seriously embrace Inculturation approach in theologising as a most beneficial mode of Christian ministry especially in the doctrine of death and dying. At the same time, the Church must resist the unwelcome transference of foreign cultural traits, symbols, meanings, values, and other behaviour, simply because one culture overwhelms the Akamba culture. This will however require of all the A.I.C. leaders and theologians to quit aping and following the West and be willing to compromise their comfort for the sake of their people. Do so, while they remain genuinely African and authentically Christian.

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> **Diego Irarrazaval.** *Inculturation: New Dawn of the Church in Latin America.* New York: Orbis Books, (2000:37).

<sup>2</sup> **Irarrazaval,** (op.cit.:42).

<sup>3</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>4</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>5</sup>**P.N. Wachege,** *Salvation & Being Saved: An African Socio-Religio-Philosophical Touch.* Kenya: Nairobi - Signal Press Ltd, (2000:116).

<sup>6</sup> **Irarrazaval,** (loc.cit.).

<sup>7</sup> This definition comes from the researcher's reflections.

<sup>8</sup> **John Baur.** *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa.* Kenya: Daughters of St. Paul, (1994:431).

<sup>9</sup> **Baur,** (op.cit.).

<sup>10</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>11</sup> **Ibid,** (p.432).

<sup>12</sup> **Ibid,** (p.433).

<sup>13</sup> **Ibid,** (p.436).

<sup>14</sup> **Ibid**

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<sup>15</sup> **Ibid**, (p.437).

<sup>16</sup> **Rene Latourelle** and Rino Fisichella (Eds). *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*. New York: St. Pauls, (1990:501).

<sup>17</sup> **Latourelle**, (op.cit.).

<sup>18</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>19</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>20</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>21</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 502).

<sup>22</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 503).

<sup>23</sup> **William R. Farmer** (Ed). *The International Bible Commentary*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, (1998:309).

<sup>24</sup> **Farmer**, (op.cit.:310).

<sup>25</sup> **Teresa Paul Van Thiel Okure et Alii. (Eds.)**. *Inculturation of Christianity in Africa*. Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, (1990:62).

<sup>26</sup> **Okure**, (op.cit.:63).

<sup>27</sup> **J. M. Walligo** and et el. *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*. Uganda: St. Pauls Publication – Africa, (1986:12).

<sup>28</sup> **Walligo**, (op.cit.:7).



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<sup>29</sup> **Ibid**, (p.19).

<sup>30</sup> **P.N. Wachege**. *Jesus Christ our Muthamaki (Ideal Elder)*. Kenya: Phoenix Publishers, (1992:159).

<sup>31</sup> **Farmer**, (op.cit.:311).

<sup>32</sup> **Ibid**

<sup>33</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 312).

<sup>34</sup> **Ibid**, (p. 313).

<sup>35</sup> **Ibid**.

<sup>36</sup> **Laurenti Magesa**. *Anatomy of Inculturation*. Kenya: Paulines Publications – Africa, (2004:29).

<sup>37</sup> **Africa Inland Church**. *Constitution*. Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, (1981:4).

<sup>38</sup> **Okure**, (op.cit.113).

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## APPENDICES

### 1) Appendix 1 – List of Informants

#### a) Interview and Questionnaire respondents

1. Agnes Kasema - Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Bomani
2. Agnes Munyae – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Kisesini
3. Alexander Makau – Ass. Mortuary attendant, Machakos Gen. Hosp.
4. Alice Kaanda Nduto – The researcher’s maternal grandmother
5. Benjamin M. Silu - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
6. Charles Kimanzi - S.T.C., 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student
7. Daniel Charo Kassiwa - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
8. David Mbugua - S.T.C., 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student
9. David Mutiso - S.T.C., 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student
10. Dorothy Nzwili, Mrs. – Office of Admin. Sec. of A.I.C. Kenya
11. Elizabeth Duncan Kituku – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Kyamuluu
12. Eunice Njenga, BTh., M.A., PhD (cont.) – Bible Lecturer
13. Faith Mumbi Musau - S.T.C., 4<sup>th</sup> Year Student
14. Faith Mwendu Maweu – Member, A.I.C. Mwanyani
15. Gabriel Mutuku - Member, A.I.C. Bomani
16. Geoffrey Ndivo, BTh., M.A. – Lecturer, S.T.C. – Nakuru Campus
17. Haron Njuguna, BTh. – Lecturer, S.T.C. – Nakuru Campus
18. Jackson Mutuku Kimuyu – Member, A.I.C. Bomani
19. James Ngumbi - S.T.C., 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student
20. Jeannette Munyae - S.T.C., 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student
21. Jemima Mwendu – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Kivandini
22. Jeremy Muoki, BTh, M.A. – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Bomani
23. Joel Kavala - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student

24. Joshua Kimuyu – S.T.C., Students' Chairman
25. Joyce Mulinge – Lady Pastor, FTC
26. Julius Musyimi, BTh., M.A. – Ass. Pastor, A.I.C. Jericho
27. Julius Mutuku Kioko – Member, A.I.C. Bomani
28. Kitong'o – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Mukalala
29. Kiundu – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Kisesini
30. Maingi – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Machakos General Hospital
31. Malinda – Snr Pastor, FTC
32. Martha Thusi - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
33. Martin Munyao - S.T.C., 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student
34. Mary Muema – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Mwanyani
35. Mbaatu – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Kivandini
36. Mike Mutua, BTh, M.A. – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Ongata Rongai
37. Moses Njenga, BTh – Principal, S.T.C. – Nakuru Campus
38. Mrs. Njeri Lumasia – Daughter to Wambari, the First A.I.C. African president
39. Muinde – Snr. Pastor, A.I.C. Kyeni
40. Nicodemus Masaka - S.T.C., 4<sup>th</sup> Year Student
41. Pastor Kivale – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Manza
42. Patricia Philip – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Mukalala
43. Penina Kanini – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Machakos General Hospital
44. Philip Esinye - S.T.C., 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student
45. Phoebe Geoffrey – S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
46. Priscilla Mueni - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
47. Rev. B. Nguyo – The Chairman, A.I.C. Machakos Region
48. Rev. Joseph Mavulu, BTh., M.A. – A.I.C. National B.E.E. Coordinator
49. Rev. Joseph Mbunga, Dip. Th., BTh., M.A., - Daystar University, Senior Chaplain
50. Rev. Munyae – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Kyamuluu
51. Richard Gehman – Retired S.T.C. Professor

52. Rev. Musyoka – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Kitituni
53. Rev. Mutiso – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Mwanyani
54. Rev. Nashon Vundi, BTh, M.A. – Lecturer, S.T.C. – Machakos Campus
55. Rev. Nthenge – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Kenya Israel
56. Rev. Peter Mutisya, Dip. Th., Dip. Com., BTh., MDiv. – Lecturer
57. Rose Maundu – Lady Pastor, A.I.C. Bomani
58. S. Kaula – Member, A.I.C. Bomani
59. Sammy Nduume – Snr. Mortuary attendant, Machakos Gen. Hosp.
60. Shadrack Keitany - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
61. Shadrack Wambua – Snr Pastor, A.I.C. Katoloni
62. Sky - S.T.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Student
63. Solomon Moto - S.T.C., 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student
64. Stephen Mutie – Member, A.I.C. Kyeni
65. Zechariahs Mutuku - S.T.C., 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student
66. Zipporah Kimuyu – S.T.C., 4<sup>th</sup> Year Student

**b) F. G. D. Respondents (Scott Students in Machakos Campus)**

67. David Kiswii
68. Dorcas Musyimi
69. Ezekiel Mbao
70. Faith Musau
71. Irene Kyai
72. Joel Kavala
73. Joshua Kimuyu
74. Martin Mukusa
75. Martin Munyao
76. Mary Kioko

- 77. Rose Abiero
- 78. Samuel Ndebe
- 79. Sky Zakayo Mutinda
- 80. Solomon Moto
- 81. Titus Musya
- 82. Zipporah Kimuyu
- 83. Zipporah Mueni
- 84. Zipporah Nzau

**c) F. G. D. Respondents (Scott Students in Nakuru Campus)**

- 85. Abraham Kiprono
- 86. Agnes Kimani
- 87. Dorcas Mwangi
- 88. Jane Cheboi
- 89. Josephat Misik
- 90. Lazarus Wambua
- 91. Paul Kahika
- 92. Paul Waiya
- 93. Peter Macharia

## 2) Appendix 2 – Interviews and Questionnaires

### a) Interviews

#### i) Standardized Interview for Church Members and leaders

##### (1) About your Church membership

- (a) What is the name of your Local Church?
- (b) Do you hold any leadership position in this Church?
- (c) How long have you been a member in this Church?

##### (2) From your personal experience on death and dying

- (a) Do you have any loved one who died?
- (b) What caused his or her death?
- (c) How could this death be prevented?

##### (3) Among the A.I.C. Members in Machakos district

- (a) What is the main cause of death and dying?
- (b) How do Christians break the sad news on death?
- (c) Is there any significance in burying or not burying someone in ones ancestral land?
- (d) What happens in the case where someone has died inside the house?
- (e) What is the importance in naming children after people who are long dead?
- (f) What is the meaning of the following activities during a funeral service: Grieving, Small or Big crowds in attendance, and Testimonies

##### (4) In your own evaluation

- (a) How do you understand the deaths of the A.I.C. founding fathers: Cameroon Scott, Andrew Gichuha,

Wellington Mulwa, and Ezekiel Birech. Were they normal or abnormal?

- (b) Are the A.I.C. pastors well prepared to satisfactorily handle death and dying among the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district?
- (5) From your general knowledge and understanding of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district
- (a) Is there a continued influence of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district? If yes, what are the reasons that have caused this continuing effect?
- (b) Should the A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district respect the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations on death and dying? Explain your answer.
- (c) What is right or wrong with the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district?
- (d) How can the Christian teaching on death and dying become more relevant and more significant among the Machakos district members of A.I.C. in particular and the other Africans in general?

## **ii) In-Depth Interview for the bereaved Church members**

### **(1) Concerning the deceased person:**

- (a) What caused this death?
- (b) Is there any way this death could have been prevented?
- (c) How do you remember this person who died? Any last words s/he said that is still binding in your current life?

### **(2) From your own assessment**

- (a) Did the Christian teaching on death and dying give you reliable comfort during your grieving period?
- (b) What about the A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district. Do you think they handled your situation well? If no, what do they need to know or to do in order to be of any help to the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district?

## **iii) Focused interview for A.I.C. Pastors and Theologians**

### **(1) About the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying**

- (a) What is your take on the on-going impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district?
- (b) Why has the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in spite of the many years of Christian evangelisation in Ukambani?



- (c) What contribution has the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy made to Christian teaching on death and dying?
- (2) About the A.I.M. missionaries approach to Christian evangelisation in Ukambani.
- (a) What was right or wrong with the missionaries approach to Christian evangelisation among the Akamba people of Machakos district?
- (b) How has this methodology impoverished the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district?
- (3) The necessity for Inculturation:
- (a) What is your basic understanding of Inculturation?
- (b) How is this approach necessary for making the Christian teaching on death and dying more relevant to the A.I.C. members in Machakos district?
- (4) From your general knowledge and understanding:
- (a) How often do you preach on death and dying in you Church? Explain your answer
- (b) What is the importance of death and dying among the A.I.C members in Machakos district?
- (c) To what extent has modernity affected the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying?
- (d) How can we believe in immortality in both Christian teaching and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical perspectives on death and dying?

- (e) Are the A.I.C. pastors well prepared to handle the challenge of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district? What more is needed to be done?

#### iv) Guide for Focused Group Discussions

- (1) Explain why you agree or disagree with the following statements:
  - (a) “We cannot understand the meaning of death.”
  - (b) “Death is not a foe. It is a friend.”
  - (c) “The Concept of Death is both Relative and dynamic.”
  - (d) “God is the chief author of Death.”
- (2) Explain your theological position on the following terms: “Pre-Mature Death,” “Accidental Death,” “Unfortunate Death,” “Early Death,” and “Un-expected death.”
- (3) Defending the Akamba Traditional Religion: Should the A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district defend the cause of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying? If yes, for what reason? To what extend? And in which way?
- (4) Deaths of the A.I.C. founding fathers: What do you know about the deaths of the A.I.C. founding fathers namely, Cameroon Scott, Andrew Gichuha, Wellington Mulwa, and Ezekiel Birech? And whom would you mourn for and why?
- (5) About the Akamba Traditional Religion: How and why has the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy continued to affect the Christian perceptions of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district?

- (6) The Missionary factor: What role did the missionary approach to Christian evangelisation play into this continuing effect of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district?
- (7) From your general theological knowledge:
- (a) How can the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical inspirations be harmonized with the Christian teaching on death and dying?
  - (b) Comment on whether the A.I.C. theological institutions have a curriculum which is relevant to the practical needs of Church members on this subject of death and dying.
  - (c) Are the A.I.C. pastors well prepared to handle the challenge of death among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district? And what do you think should be done?

**b) Questionnaires**

**i) Letter of Introduction to questionnaire respondents**

**University of Nairobi**

College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Main Campus

Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

P.O. Box 30197

**NAIROBI**

**February 2006**

**Dear respondent,**

**RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

My name is **Steven Nduto**, a student at the University of Nairobi. I am currently undertaking a Master of Arts Degree in Religious Studies and the award of this degree requires that I carry out a research project and submit the paper to the university. My study is on:

**The On-going Impact of the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the Christian Conception of Death and Dying among the members of Africa Inland Church, Machakos District – Kenya**

I am kindly requesting you to accept assisting me in providing all and any information to this study.

**Note:** Information collected from this questionnaire will be used for academic purposes only and will be appreciated with utmost confidence. Welcome and thanks in advance.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nduto', is written over a long horizontal line that spans across the page.

**Steven Nduto.**

C/50/8066/2004

**Cell Phone: 07 22 619 529**

ii) Standardized questionnaire for Church members

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Local Church: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions**

Please State [tick] if you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Unsure/Neutral (N), Agree (A), or Strongly Agree (SA), with the following statements:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Death is a very important rite of passage among the Akamba					
2.	Death is preventable					
3.	The topic of death should not be discussed openly					
4.	Christianity is very much western and has very little influence on the Akamba Traditional Religion					
5.	The Christian teaching on death and dying is irrelevant among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.					
6.	The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on the concept of death must be harmonized with the Christian teaching on death and dying for relevance.					
7.	The A.I.C. pastors are well prepared to handle the challenge of death and dying among the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district.					

**iii) Open – Ended questionnaire for A.I.C. Pastors**

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Local Church:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Kindly comment on the following issues

1. God introduced death and dying to man.
2. Death and dying is purely the will of, and caused by, God.
3. Man cannot understand death and dying. Only God who does!
4. Death and dying does not affect all men in the same way, simply because it does not lead all men in the same direction.
5. Physical Death is not the end of life
6. Although it is not known when death will come, someone can prolong ones life on earth.
7. Death and dying is for ones advantage.
8. Pastors do not fear death and dying
9. Sermons on Death and dying are preached in the Church at least once every month

10. The A.I.C. pastors are well prepared to handle and face the challenge of death and dying among the Church members

11. Christianity is very much western and with very little appeal to the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying

12. The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy must be harmonized with the Christian teaching on death and dying for relevance among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.

**iv) Open-Ended questionnaire for Scott Students**

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year in College:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Kindly comment on the following issues

1. Fear of death and dying is the major factor in the origin of religion
2. Every death is contingent; a matter of chance, and that, in principle, there is no reason why any particular injury or disease cannot be overcome.
3. Death and dying escapes all definitions; it is the great unknown, the ultimate truth.

4. There is evident rivalry between the Christian teaching and the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.
5. The fear of death and dying is irrational
6. Mourning the dead is very significant among the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district.
7. The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy on death and dying is a total shame to the Christian teaching on death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.
8. The A.I.C. pastors are well prepared to handle the challenge of death and dying among the A.I.C. Christians in Machakos district.
9. The A.I.C. pastors in Machakos district must respect the Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophical conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district.
10. The Akamba Traditional Religion and Philosophy will continue to affect the Christian conception of death and dying among the A.I.C. members in Machakos district as long as both exist. .
11. Death is an interruption to life and always a misfortune
12. Death was the only real satisfaction for sin.



### **3) Appendix 3 – List of Information Centres visited**

Most secondary information was got from the following Information centres:

1. A.I.C. Central Church Council Headquarters
2. Daystar University Library
3. Hekima College Library
4. Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library
5. Kenya Bureau of Statistics
6. Nation Centre Library
7. Scott Theological College Library
8. The Kenya National Library
9. The Macmillan Memorial Library

### **4) Appendix 4 - Research Schedule**

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Instruments try out                       | - February 01, 2006 |
| 2. Revision                                  | - February 22, 2006 |
| 3. Data collection and Reconnaissance visits | - March 01, 2006    |
| 4. Admin. the questionnaire & Interviews     | - March 22, 2006    |
| 5. Data analysis                             | - April 05, 2006    |
| 6. Writing the report                        | - May 05, 2006      |
| 7. Typing and binding                        | - June 05, 2006     |
| 8. Submitting the report                     | - July 05, 2006     |

## 5) Appendix 5 – Photographs



*The researcher with Rev. B. Ngyo after interviewing him in his office at Machakos town. Rev. Ngyo is the Chairman of the A.I.C. Machakos Region.*



*A.I.C. Bomani. The largest Church in Machakos Region, the headquarter and mother of Bomani Branch. Most of the research was conducted in this Church.*



*The researcher with Pastor Jeremy Mulei Muoki during an Interview session at his Church office. Pastor Muoki is the pastor in charge of A.I.C. Bomani.*



*A.I.C. Katoloni. The second largest Church in Bomani D.C.C. the headquarter and mother of Katoloni Branch. This was the second main centre of information for this research.*



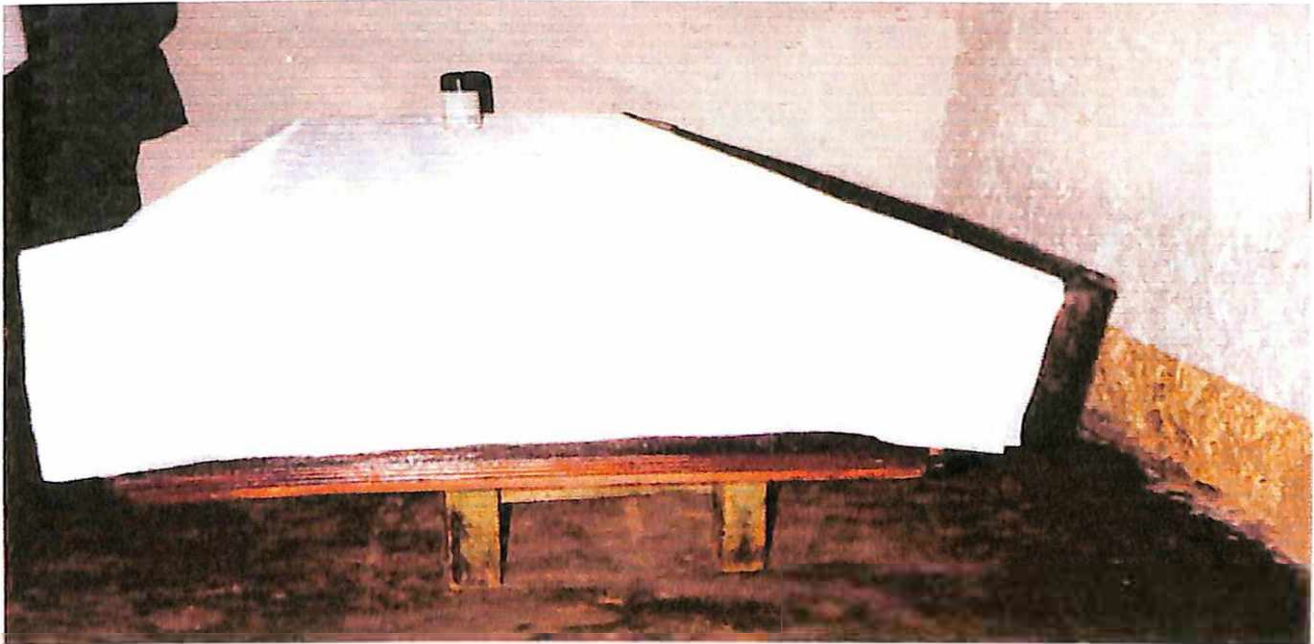
*The researcher with Pastor Shadrack Wambua during an Interview session at his Church office. Pastor Wambua is the pastor in charge of A.I.C. Katoloni.*



*The researcher with Mrs. Agnes Kasema during an Interview session at her Church office. Mrs. Kasema is a lady pastor in A.I.C. Bomani*



*Two men leading the researcher to a funeral service in Bomani area.*



*A coffin carrying the remains of Mrs. Nduku Kivale who died on Tuesday, March 7, 2006 and was buried on Saturday, March 11, 2006 at Machakos.*



*Laying the body of the Late Pastor Joshua Kongo into the grave.*



*The wife of the late Pr. Joshua Kongo, Ruth Wanzuu, is being aided to lay a wreath by her son Pastor Mike Mutua(right behind), and son in-law Pastor John Masumba (on the right).*



*Machakos General Hospital mortuary (the opened gate and door).*



*Funerary workers walking into the Machakos General Hospital mortuary to collect bodies for burial.*



*The researcher with Mr. Alexander Makau after an interview session inside the Machakos General Hospital Mortuary*

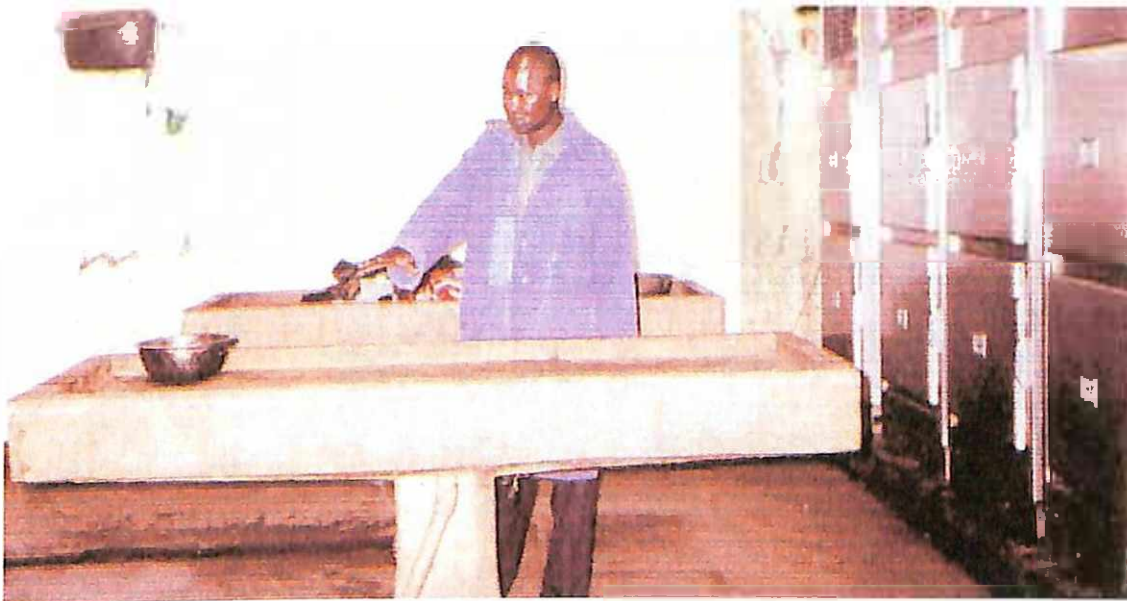


*Mr. Sammy Nduume explaining to the researcher on the preservation of dead bodies inside the Machakos General Hospital mortuary. These cabinet he's showing is the VIP section in the mortuary*





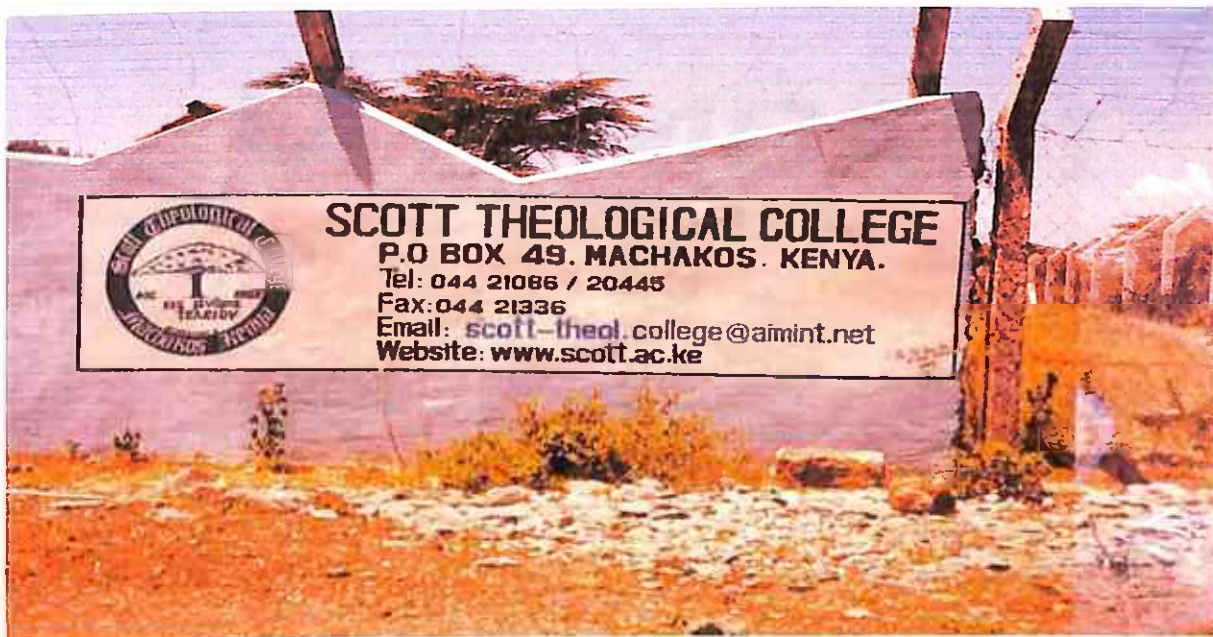
*Mr. Sammy Nduume displaying the ordinary preservation refrigerators for the commons inside the Machakos General hospital Mortuary.*



*Mr. Sammy Nduume displaying and explaining to the researcher on where and how the dead bodies are washed in the mortuary just before dressing and encasing them in the coffin.*



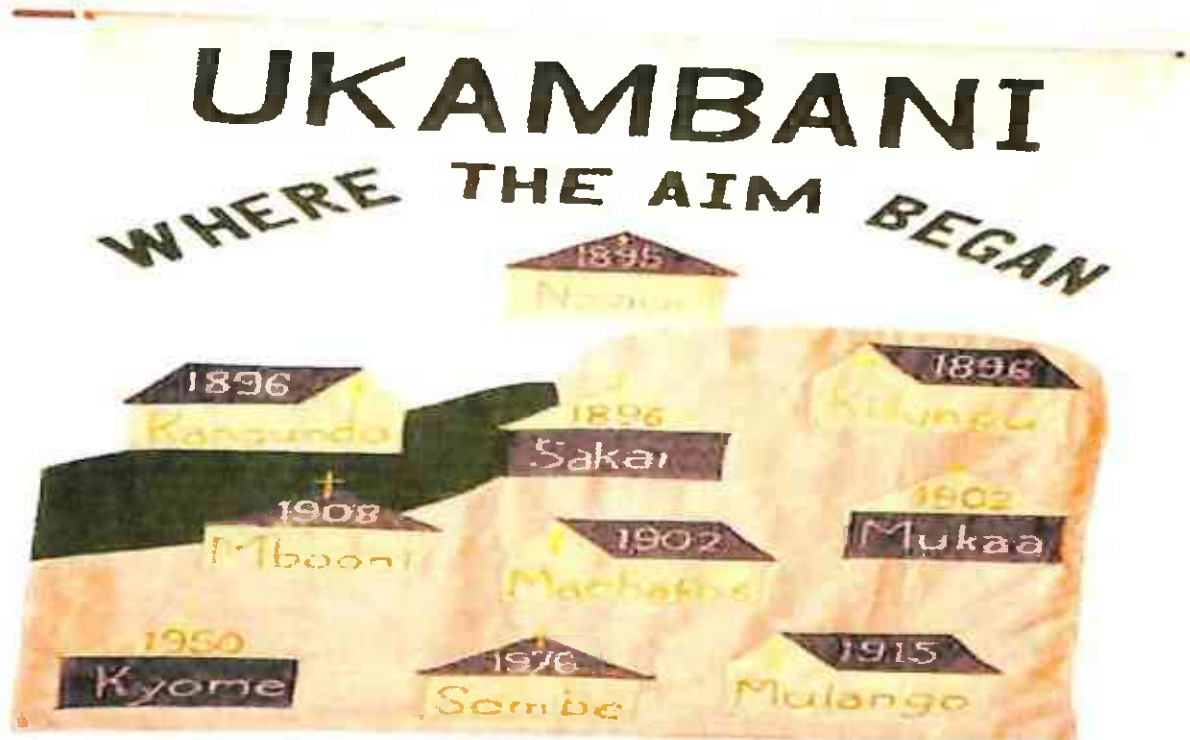
*The researcher used these vehicles popularly known as TukTuk especially for late night transport.*



*Scott theological College main gate. This is the highest A.I.C. Theological institution which was the 'bird main source of information for this study and also the place in which the researcher resided during his stay in Machakos.*



*Mr. Martin Mati Munyao posing for this photograph. Martin is a Second year student pastor at Scott Theological College and he was the researcher's assistant in Machakos.*



*A wall hanging inside the S.T.C. chapel hall which shows the spread of A.I.M. in Ukambani.*



*The researcher with Dr. Richard Gehman after interviewing him during his recent February 2006 visit to Scott Theological College. Dr. Gehman is a retired A.I.M. missionary and professor of Scott Theological College. He has also written widely on African Traditional Religion.*



*Mrs. Zipporah Kimuyu responding to some interview questions to the researcher inside her house at Scott Theological College. Mrs. Kimuyu is a married fourth year student in S.T.C. who, together with her husband, hosted the researcher during the time of this study in Machukos district.*



*The researcher in a Focused Group Discussion with some S.T.C. male students*



*Some of the Scott Theological College male students after a Focused Group Discussion.*



*The researcher with some of the S.T.C. female students during a Focused Group discussion inside the colleges' Dining Hall.*



*The researcher with some of the S.T.C. fourth year female students during a Focused Group Discussion, outside the Dining Hall area.*



*Some of the S.T.C., Nakuru Campus students, just after a Focused Group Discussion with the researcher. These students had visited S.T.C. in Machakos during the time when the researcher was in Machakos.*



*The researcher compiling data shortly after late night Focused Group Discussions.*



*The researcher interviewing Pastor Moses Njenga at Scott Theological College. Pastor Njenga is the Principal of the S.T.C., in Nakuru Campus.*



*The researcher interviewing Mrs. Eunice Wambui Njenga at S.T.C.. Mrs. Njenga is a lecturer at the S.T.C., Nakuru campus and a PhD candidate at Egerton University*





*The researcher interviewing Pr. Geoffrey Ndivo at S.T.C.. Pr. Ndivo is the former Ass. Chaplain of Egerton University, and currently a lecturer at the S.T.C., Nakuru Campus.*