

# **THE CHALLENGE TO PASTORAL CAREGIVERS IN THE EVENT OF SUDDEN DEATH**

BY

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original, and that all sources used I have indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

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## **DEDICATION**

**To: my wife Kentsheng 'Keshebile' Margaret Gabobonwe nee' Mosimanegape  
and all my children and**

**my mother Nelly Sephiri nee' Gabobonwe**

**all without whom my being is meaningless.**

## GLOSSARY

**AIDS** : Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

**Abaluyia**: One of the Black African clans found in Central Africa.

**ACTH**: Adrenocorticotrophic Hormone

**Adrenal Cortex**: the outside layer of glands found on or near the kidneys.

**ANS**: Autonomic Nervours System

**Barolong** of Ganyesa: Barolong is one of the Ethnic clans of the Batswana tribe. The Barolong referred to in the work are those who are indigenous of Ganyesa.

**Biopsychic**: something having to do with or involving both the biological and psychological phenomena.

**Death**: that power that destroys life, sometimes used as the result of that power that destroys life.

**Depression**: a mental disorder characterized by prolonged of dejection and despair, often accompanied by fatigue, headaches, and other numerous physical symptoms.

**Distress**: a kind of enthusiastic stress that attacks a person and pressures him/her to do well positively.

**Ganyesa**: one place (Village) 70km North of Vryburg town, in the Northwest Province of South Africa.

**Eustress**: a kind of destructive stress that attacks a person in very negative ways.

**GCT**: Gate Control Theory, one of the Psychological Theories.

**Grief**: great sadness caused by trouble of any kind, in this case, caused by loss through death of a loved one.

**Mourning**: the act of a person who mourns, who expresses his/her grief.

**Muti**: traditional medicines used in many or all Afriican rituals, sometimes it is used as those medicines used to bewitch others.

**Minister**: a clergyman/woman serving the church as a leader and spiritual guide, especially in Protestant Churches.

**Ndebele:** one of the Black African ethnic group found mainly in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa. There are some also found scattered in other areas.

**PSTD:** Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

**Pastor:** a minister in charge of a church or congregation

**Sefifi:** (literally) meaning the blackness casted by a shadow, but understood as every act of bad-luck that befalls a person.

**Stress:** a kind of unbearable pressure that strains a person in almost every way.

**Stressor:** any kind of stimulus that yields stress

**Sudden Death:** a kind of death that happens unexpectedly through any form of accident

**Trauma:** a kind of psychic wound caused by emotional shock that has lasting effects in the mind of a person.

**UCCSA:** United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, one of the denominations of a Protestant Church that has her roots in LONDON and there known as London Missionary Society.

**Vasopressin:** a pituitary hormone that contract **small** blood vessels, sometimes raises blood pressure and reduces the excretion of urine by the kidneys.



## ABSTRACT

Death, and in special ways, sudden death has struck the church and various families at different times in our lives. The grief in the bereaved has challenged the church, in numerous ways including having to deal with people who are out of possibility with regard to the competencies of the church due stress disorders. This has asked serious theological questions about the pastoral care of the church who is expected to be the custodian of healing through faith. Sudden death as a stressor, has grown to be more common in recent years, and having checked a number of church registers and finding out that there are more funerals than baptisms the church has to conduct, one looks and evaluate the effectiveness of the counseling done through funerals that the church has had to handle---whether there is still meaning accorded to such services or not---whether there is any attempt to engage the bereaved during their mourning in the sound theological reflection on to the questions:

“Where, o death, is your victory?

“Where, o death, is your sting? (1 Cor. 15: 55).

Paul puts it in his address to the Corinthians “the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. This understanding, and several others usually cited has needed theological reflection in helping the people in grief for their loved ones snatched from them by sudden death, especially when it is through no fault of their own.

Quiet practically, many people have befallen prey to stresses of different kinds trying to cope with big losses through sudden death, and this has manifested itself differently. In the event of lack of knowledge of what to do to help such people, the church and pastoral care givers have either conducted many ordinary services (common to those done usually) or have coincidentally engaged one or more of the other fields namely:

- ✓ The medical sciences
- ✓ Psychological sciences and/or
- ✓ Psychiatric sciences.

The work enquires into the improvements that have happened in the course of time in the theological sciences in dealing with people stricken by sudden death through pastoral care, and attempts to allow theology to claim her responsibility in the midst of all mentioned sciences. The work attempts to empower the church and guide all pastoral care givers to skillfully deal with such circumstances as sudden death, invoking the methodology of shepherding to alley the sting of death that has found the church to be lacking, and questioned her credibility on the subject. Effort is put into comparing sudden death with the common 'bad luck' perception brought about by cultural traditions. It will attempt to craft the common ground from which the church and all the sciences mentioned can cooperate fruitfully for common goals and better assistance to the people we all serve today.

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# **TOPIC: The Challenge to Pastoral Caregivers in the event of Sudden, Accidental Death.**

## **1.1 Background to the Study**

I was born and raised in a Christian family. As a matter of fact, the Christian practices have accompanied my life through and through hither to. I have seen and, to a large extent, participated in endeavours of pastoral care in different contexts people find themselves often. For example, people losing their livestock through disasters like floods and lightning, people grieving for loss of their family members through illnesses, or any kind of bad luck which our black people of this village refer to as 'sefifi' (the Batswana traditional way of referring to bad/hard luck or omen to such).

One of the very good examples is the incident of my own sister who lost her husband and her two children in a road accident, at a very tender age, which keeps coming to me as a challenge, not because it happened, but because of the serious trouble of depression, which affected a number of people, resulting from the said incident. She was depressed and we all were. She went through this depression and the family could only come close to her by way of trying to comfort her with their presence around her. We were all clearly both affected and infected by the same sadness because we had lost people, two children and a brother-in-law, who meant a lot in our lives as a family.

Depression, as it is seen and known in the medical world, is a disease (this will make part of the discussion in the research) This disease has the potential of being passed on to someone next to the one having it, especially when there is a passionate relationship

of love of any kind between them. Thus, the situation in question was infectious to all of us in the family.

We had to face this situation in many ways and from different angles. The road accident claimed the life of the three people who meant a lot to the whole family in a sudden manner that evades perfect description. This happened without considering what they meant to the life of those who are living, or how they meant whatever they did mean to them.

Several questions emerge when dealing with such circumstances. For instance the following one:-Can this life be viewed fair under the above circumstances and experiences in the world?

This became a question that haunted firstly my sister and secondly all of us. The question is asked every time when people are struck by death, more especially when it is sudden, in the quest of understanding the meaning of life or finding answers to their questions about the sudden loss of loved ones and grief. This question accompanied all of us during the burial of our family members; and it keeps coming back every time we face death.

We had to do everything with my sister during and after the funeral. In our understanding, we thought that a decent funeral would be the best comfort to her as it would be to ourselves. However, this never came to be. She had almost lost herself and probably the meaning of life. To some extent, we could understand why she was so helpless and downtrodden because we were also very sad and asking the same questions and we were not having answers. (Those questions will be dealt with in the research as we attempt to find answers.) I am here using the term downtrodden because she personally used the same term when she was trying to explain her feelings of emotional drainage that she experienced at that time as a result of her sadness and grief.

The experience led me to question the Church. Many times I tried to locate the pastoral element of the Church in such problems, but I only saw this pastoral activity during the preparations of the funeral and during the funeral. I could affirm that the Church was not wrong in anyway, because they did what is always done by Churches, and this include preparing for the funeral service program and assembling for evening prayers, what, in their knowledge, is right.

The fact that this family was so young, and with so promising a future left us asking, amongst others, the question why? However much we tried comforting our sister, in our eyes she was kind of resisting to be comforted, like Jacob mourning for Joseph in Genesis 37: 35. He cried and appeared to refuse the comfort that was given to him. Frustration was tearing her apart in a way that we could not describe. She had completely lost her reasoning and, I can safely say she had lost her meaning of life. This is the time which depression became part of her life.

As the journey continued, we sat seeking for alternative ways of dealing with and healing my sister. We decided out of responsibility, to take her (my sister) to a medical doctor, who was a general practitioner. We explained everything to him and he then referred her to a psychologist for counselling. In all reality, the family diagnosed her and only gave her to someone who had the capability to refer. In other words, it is true to say, we needed someone to work with her on our behalf. With the help of God, and as time went on, we won our sister back to meaningful life which; to date I can pronounce, she has resurfaced with dignity.

It happened that I started studying in the area of practical theology after all this had happened. I am not in anyway suggesting that this incident forced or caused me in anyway to study, but I naturally

yielded and positively responded to my call to do so after all that had happened in my life at that point. This was a long and completely different path which culminated into the realization of my call. The above story is not relevant to this study at this point. But one of the issues that I have faced as a Minister in these days is burying many people who died in both common and mysterious ways. Each time I bury someone who died through an accident, the case of my sister comes to my mind. As I prepare for the funeral, I keep asking myself, whether I really do address the plight of those who are mourning. The trauma and stress lead me to deeper theological questions about the pastoral care I have to practice when comforting the bereaved.

On the other hand, is the fact that as a Minister one practises under particular Church doctrines, which should not be transgressed, and this also sometimes becomes a barrier. The kind of pastoral care I give, or at least want to give, troubles me in a serious way as I want to find out whether it is appropriate, and that I do not leave people like my sister abandoned once again. Resultantly, I ask myself these questions about the best and appropriate pastoral care under the circumstances of depression. What is the best way of caring for those who are left behind?

Having been under pastoral charge for some time now, I can boldly say that the depressing circumstances are brought about not only by death, but by many other factors with which we are confronted in our daily lives. These include loss of employment, especially by bread winners, divorce, HIV/AIDS whether by infection or affection, suicide, the list goes much longer. The above challenges are facing pastoral care practitioners and in themselves demand a lot of energy and wisdom that no one can really claim expertise over.

I would like to focus on the kind of service we give to those people who experience this kind of depression resulting from sudden death, like the one my sister faced. It pains my heart when at times our brothers and sisters in Christ claim expertise over one another, and to witness the unhealthy relationships among, firstly, our fellow congregants, secondly, among Christian Church denominations and, thirdly, among different faiths whose numbers keep increasing constantly.

## **1.2 IS ALL KINDS OF DEATH THE WILL OF GOD?**

Death is the ultimate mystery of all things in life. With all our philosophies, our talents or gifts and our religions, no one has a clear witness or understanding of what lies beyond it. We all can affirm with absolute certainty that it is a journey that we all must take as part of our life. The most preached Gospel by all our Churches in the event of death is 'it is the will of God' especially in those times when preaching is in the hands of those of our brothers and sisters who do not regard theological training as an integral part of and the need for one to offer sound pastoral intervention during traumatic times. Many times God does allow death to come in and, in fact, God has measured life and even define death. But is death always the Will of God? At the times when death comes, stricken minds are sent in voyages of thought. Engagement of logic tells one that even negligence does result in death sometimes. Human recklessness and malice can also result in death. It stands to reason then that such deaths are unfairly attributed to God's will. This attribute raise serious challenges as to the knowledge of the personality of God. Well, this phrase about 'God's will' is said or preached every time in order to comfort the mourners, but are we being fair to our calling by simply saying these things and leaving those we serve there? Are we teaching anything relevant to the founder of this

teaching, Jesus Christ? There are several authors who deal with the issue of death; Kubler Ross is the best one who helped me to research this topic.

She states:

“Dying is a human process in the same way as being born is a normal and all-human process” (Kubler-Ross 1991: 10).

No matter how much money, power, or prestige one has acquired during his or her life in this earth he or she cannot avoid it, and in the end one must give up everything he or she has spent his or her life working for, be it materialistic or otherwise. Unfortunately for the most part we live our lives in a desperate attempt to ‘make life better’ without putting any thought into the inevitability of death or the meaning of the life or why we are here. Yet, to live well means to learn to love.

In many ways, death challenges the attempt of making life better that is talked about. The loss of people we love and sometimes those people we depend on for our better lives, makes life very painful. This pain is made more severe by the fact that as much as we know that we too shall die, we never really think of it. We do not get any slot of time in the congested programmes of our different ministries in our churches to teach our brothers and sisters about death and love relatively. When one loves or is being loved, there is an evident risk of pain, disappointment, heartache or grief, because we are neither givers nor directors of the life we live. Hence, as we mourn sometimes, we should not mourn death as what God willed for us, but at least as what God allowed to happen. It should always be remembered that God allows natural laws to run their course, and so human beings can only grieve at that moment. Our different experiences teach us that death to us means loss, and in loss we grieve, and to grieve loss of a loved one, is

perhaps the most intensely painful experience any human being can suffer. Not only is it painful to experience but also painful to witness.

When we grieve, we 'walk in the valley of the shadow of death' (Ps 23:3). To the best of my knowledge no one has the right formula on how to grieve, whether right or wrong is another discussion. There is also no schedule prescribed by any constitution for the same purpose. We express different emotions differently, and it is natural to do so, in order to allow healing to our beings. A mixture of sorrow, anger, regret, emptiness, longing, sometimes even guilt, and sometimes more to the mixture is our common experiences. The above affect us and we respond to and carry them differently. To some, all these feelings completely consume us and forcefully, irresistibly push us into different kinds of self-destructions. One of those kinds of destruction manifests itself as depression. It is here that we need proper guidance and care.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The author raised several questions that arise as the result of an accident that occurred in the family. The following will help as the problem is explored:

- What is the best way of giving Pastoral Care in the Context of Stress and Depression caused by accidental Death?
- Does it still make any sense today to entrust people who are stricken by sudden death to the church and its pastoral care?
- Is the Church today capable of handling trauma pastorally in the case of accidental death?
- Is it by anyway possible for the depressed Care giver, to care for a member of the family, or to give help to a depressed person?

- How can the Caregiver who is not stressed/depressed enter the world of the depressed person and bring healing and meaning to life?
- Is depression something that is completely out of touch relative to the competencies of pastoral care, the church, and Theology, especially in the African community?

Whilst the above questions will help the author explore stress due to accidental death, that often leads to depression, pastoral care shall also guide the development of a model of working out a way in which the Church, with its competencies, can follow in order to be of help and care for the affected persons in the event of death, especially when it is sudden.

## **1.4 The Aim, Objectives and Relevance of the Study**

The aim of this study was to help our generation of Pastoral Caregivers and those still to come, to deal more effectively and honestly with the affected people in the event of depression, especially the type resulting from sudden death. The study is intended to empower pastoral care practitioners to be more reliable in the context of depression given their social status which many still regard as that of someone above human frailties and weaknesses.

It was aimed at equipping young and contemporary ministers in the UCCSA with the knowledge of differentiating between and what they can do as leaders of the Church, and guiding the Congregational Church as to how they assist the people who are affected by depression during their vulnerable times through pastoral care. This has related at least three fields of practice, because it explored how theologically one has to interpret the circumstances of stress and depression in the event of sudden death, and seriously explore the medical and psychological fields with the hope to shed some light into



the subject. The relation has stretched in line with treating the human being in totality, which is the human being consisting of four quadrants, the physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being which is what the human being is meant to be. A qualitative method was conducted in the current context using shepherding methods of study. This accentuates the value-ladenness of knowledge, the 'multiperspectiveness' of reality, the 'social-subjectiveness' of truth, and the role of social context and relationships in the social construction of reality and knowledge. The study facilitated and assisted the people to be free to own up to their feelings of pain without running the risk of violating particular laws given to them by those who are socially connected to them by various ties. I believe that will be a long way towards people's ability to complete healing of others and themselves. The study is aimed at affirming and stressing the following points:-

- Death can infect people with illness called depression
- Depression is a treatable illness
- Pastoral care practitioners and givers are 'frontline mental health practitioners' and
- Pastor's way of dealing with the problem of depression is unique and important.

It is after this exploration that Ministers in the UCCSA and pastoral care practitioners will be helped to heal those who are stricken by sudden death incidents, and also to heal themselves. It will be many steps in the line of re-calling the church back to what it is very often called to do.

## 1.5 Research gap

Having gone through a number of books which deal with the problem of facing the realities of sudden death, it is notable that there are acceptable volumes of bibliography regarding pastoral care in many instances. Research also covers the work done with grief and mourning through counselling. Considerable work is also done on depression and is evidenced by comprehensive books. The dying persons going through all stages of depression, as outlined well by Freud and later by many who used him as reference, are dealt with in a commendable way. It is however noticeable that there is a gap where the processes and procedures of dealing and taking care of the grieving and mourning through pastoral care in the congregational context is on the very thin side.

The work done at present and the placement of the subject of stress and depression only in the medical, psychiatric and psychological world is very conspicuous. It is resultant from this fact that, all challenges to the church about the subject are simply referral cases to the said practices. This has robbed Theological ministry and pastoral care of a conviction of potential over this problem. Further, it has resulted and given rise to a kind of syndrome ---'beyond my scope'--- on the side of the Church and its ministry so much so that many of the Pastoral Care Practitioners neglect the people who are suffering from this kind of stress that very often leads to depression. Kubler-Ross, as one of the out-standing writers on the subject, did a very good job in her work with the dying people, but Kubler-Ross has only dealt with the dying people. Although she has gained cardinal experience that cannot be overlooked, she has almost forgotten the grieving and bereaved in almost all her work. This includes people who are squarely struck by the death and loss of beloved ones.

The Church, on the other hand as well, has very often limited her focus to the preaching and actually the funeral service. In many instances, unfortunately, we see the Church making use of these circumstances to articulate its doctrines, showing what a particular Church denomination it is and what makes it different from the other. Crucial theological praxis is critically overlooked, and sometimes even remote to the current church leaders. The current bibliography is rich in dealing with the subject of stress in the work place. Different work environments and careers are covered including nursing, teaching, mines, sports and various others. The work of counselling the bereaved and/or the grieving is well documented by the afore-mentioned sciences except theology. The study is intended to revise the minister's responsibility of counselling the bereaved through sudden death utilizing the wisdom from the medical, psychiatric and psychological sciences. The author shall also come up with a possible enrichment from the journey. The said fields are hereby chosen as disciplines to interact with and borrow from where necessary and possible. This is motivated by the intra-disciplinary empirical theological approach, which promotes theology's openness to dialogue with other sciences with regard to tools and methodologies.

Thus, the study intends to fill this gap and to maximize the church's responsibility by contextually re-claiming its competence and potential over the subject of depression, through pastoral care.

## **1.6 The Research Design and Methodology**

This is a study that is intended to help pastors revise the effectiveness of their pastoral interventions, some of which have become predefined and the same in all situations. Thus, the study evaluated what already exists in our pastoral care practice relative to its current

meaningfulness, effect and appropriateness. Apostle Paul, standing as one of the outstanding apostles who proclaimed the gospel of Christ to this world, whilst he was talking to the Corinthian congregation about God said:

“who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor. 1: 4).

The apostle was certain with this comfort to comfort all in any sort of trouble, and this has in no way excluded troubles of been hurt through sudden death. It might be questionable today whilst pastors and ministers are confident with the word of God and what it all means to people, whether we are able to share this comfort appropriately and adequately. Put simply, whether we can share the experience.

The study should unfold the two spheres of empowerment by God as proclaimed by Paul namely:

- The reception of comfort from God.
- The experience of being in trouble, in this instance, grief inflicted by sudden death.

The investigation will be complemented by providing guidelines to the Pastoral care givers especially the young ministers. Participant observation approach will be the basis of the entire study. This model will be further used within the framework of qualitative strategy of information gathering and interpretation. I shall explore different dimensions of the phenomenon that the study is faced with, and give interpretations of different experiences.

Thus, the research will follow a qualitative approach using shepherding method of pastoral care as laid down by Gerkin, and will involve Campbell, as he also used the approach in his ‘Rediscovering Pastoral Care’ in the event any shortfall.

Gerkin assert that: 'More than any image, we need to have written on our hearts the image most clearly and powerfully given by Jesus, of the pastor as the shepherd of the flock of Christ. Admittedly, this image originated in a time and place in which the shepherd was a commonplace figure, and we live in a social situation in which shepherding is scarcely known, even marginalized vocation. Nevertheless, the New Testament depiction of Jesus as the good shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by his sheep (John 10: 14) has painted a meaningful, normative portrait of the pastor of God's people. Reflection on the actions and words of Jesus as he related to people at all levels of social life gives us the model sine qua non for pastoral relationships with those within our care and those strangers we meet along the way.

We need also to take with us our memory of those pastors of the past eras who distorted the image of the pastor as Christ's shepherd by assuming the authority to judge and direct God's people ---- an authority that rightfully belongs to Christ himself. Particularly in the time of the church's rise to power during the Middle Ages, but also in the time of Richard Baxter and his rationalist cohorts, the pastor tended to take on authoritarian power over the people in ways that corrupted the consciousness of the people---- and all in the name of Christ! The better, livelier exemplars of the pastor as the shepherd of Christ's flock have been those of our ancestors who exercised their shepherding authority to empower the people and offer care for those who were being neglected by the powerful of their communities. In important respects the monks of the good shepherd than were the Gregory the Greats, who used their pastoral authority to control and direct. Here, Sewald Hiltner's definition of proper shepherding as "care and solicitous concern" becomes an apt guideline for our efforts to embody the model of the shepherd in our pastoral work". (Gerkin 1997: 80-81).

It is resultant from the above that the guideline shall be followed as propounded by Gerkin but stemming from Hiltner's pastoral view.

In such situations as the need of care for the people in need of comfort in their hurt, it is inevitable that we as the Church are doing all that is in our powers to become Christ-like. But we find ourselves a number of times failing to be equal to the task as, one way or another, we fail in our attempt to answer the question “what would Christ do in the this situation?” with clear and positive conviction.

This is the very point that happens to be locatable at the roots of pastoral care as initiated by Christ, and seen through the ages by many practitioners of different classes.

Mouton, as in Manxaile, has summarized the principles that guide qualitative methodology as listed hereunder to indicate their relevance for the purposes of this study.

Firstly, qualitative analysis focuses on understanding social action and events within their particular settings and contexts. Of very importance to this study will be understanding stress and depression; dealing with grief, deconstructing practices and experiences in dealing with mourners especially those stricken by sudden death. This will be done with the intention of finding workable strategies within the present and maybe the primitive way of addressing issues around sudden death in families in their contextual situations.

Secondly, qualitative analysis attempts to focus on the natural setting of actors and the concepts they use to describe and understand themselves and their environment. The question to answer will be whether pastoral care has a meaningful place in the event of depression, or is it simply a referral case to other competencies like psychologists? That is, is there any reason today to entrust the people who happen to be bereaved through sudden death to ministers and pastors for shepherding? If it is, is the pastoral

caregiver doing what, in simple terms, would be done by Christ Himself in the same situation.

Thirdly, qualitative analysis attempts to reconstruct affected people's stories, accounts and 'theories' that help to mould and remain the integral meaning and coherence of the social phenomenon. It is here that interaction with the people who experienced this is necessitated. This will bring out the kind of pastoral care that was offered, how that care either helped or did not help them, and what in their view would be of help to them in the event of their grief.

Lastly, qualitative analysis focuses on the people's contextually valid accounts of their social life rather than formally generalization and simple explanations. In this regard, the field work of the study looks at assessing information that reveals something about people's lives towards an evaluation of what it could be. This is important because at death, whatever kind of death it might be, it is the beginning of new life to all who are affected life without the deceased. When grieving turns to depression, is the Church, as an institution, able to help people? (Manxaile 2000: 10).

It is a crucial question that accompanies the aims and objectives of this study, and challenges the contemporary relevance of the church, which this study shall attempt to answer as well.

Whilst Campbell applies this qualitative approach in his book 'Rediscovering Pastoral Care' as alluded to the above, he departs from a point of view and information by the conviction that first and foremost, 'Pastoral care is about human interrelationships and as such touches on individual experiences and personal values. Pastoral care, therefore, according to him has, unavoidably and fundamentally, 'mysterious

quality' to the extent that it escapes logical analysis. We therefore, need to devise an appropriate method for discussing the nature of pastoral care---one that appeals to the imagination as well as to the intellect'. (Campbell 1986: 18).

Campbell goes on to suggest that pastoral care is about shepherding. He actually stresses on what was said by many, yet learning it from Jesus Christ as the one who founded pastoral leadership. Shepherding in its nature mediates a sense of integrity, wholeness and steadfastness to those in need. The imagery of a 'shepherd' according to Campbell embraces all that is involved in providing care as illustrated in the biblical usages of the pastors that is used. He stresses that:

“Pastoral care is a relationship founded upon the integrity of the individual. Such a relationship does not depend primarily upon a caring attitude towards others which comes from our own experience of pain, fear and loss and our own release from their deadening grip” (Campbell 1986:37).

I think he had it right from the context of pastoral care practice. The congregational origins of pastoral care are rooted on shepherding, which is better understood by communities and congregants of the rural churches including the one I grew up in.

Campbell argues that the 'Wounded Healer' gains power by acknowledging weakness and by finding God's healing force at the moment of deepest despair. There is no short cut to such healing, no hope without fear, and no resurrection without the tomb's deepest darkness (1986: 41-2). He (Campbell) concludes his thoughts by pointing out that, it is only by acknowledging our wounds and confronting our own finitude that 'we too, in a small way, can be healers of others'. I reiterate the same by stating that, 'the Church in a smaller or bigger way, is a community of sufferers, and in the different



contexts the Church finds herself today, it is through free and spontaneous acknowledgement of pain that the power of God's love can be ushered into any grieving family through the loving pastoral intervention of the Church. Through this study, the Church might stand to re-claim her identity, and what rightfully belongs to the Church as per responsibility.

It coincides therefore that Campbell, as also Gerkin is, is an exponent of the wonderful works of Sewald Hiltner as he was viewed and recorded by Oates and Oates as 'someone who have marked the beginning of a new academic rigour in pastoral theology, one which takes theory in the 'secular' sciences of man seriously'. This is noted as consideration is done on Hiltner's stance and view of the shepherding as an image and model which can be used to better pastoral care practice.

Hiltner contributed a lot on freeing the term 'pastoral' from its association with the title 'pastor', which itself has become simply a synonym for 'minister' or 'leader of a congregation'. It is evident from the nineteenth-century textbooks on pastoral theology that, because of this association, 'pastoral' had come to mean little more than 'what the minister does' whether this was teaching, preaching, visiting the sick or even comforting the bereaved.

The challenges posed by stress and depression to pastoral care practitioners should be faced with appropriate courage of a Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. The courage of integrity alluded to the above, of an inner wholeness of oneness with God and with man and of a constant, invincible love.

Hiltner himself faced significant negative criticism after he came with this metaphor of shepherding, but he was never willing to withdraw it as a principal tool for the understanding of ministry, especially in such difficult contexts. The objections were many, but came because the metaphor/model was a relic of rural, agricultural times and thus was deemed to be unfit for use on modern urban societies. Besides, sheep were known to be notoriously unintelligent, stubborn animals and their comparison to intelligent human beings was judged and seen to be insulting and inaccurate.

The criticisms were seriously strong then, but looked at and analysed against current times of human intelligence and technology. It brings an effect which, kind of, burns out pastoral care practitioners until the entire product results in churches consciously or otherwise neglecting congregants suffering in their stresses and ultimately, they are led to all stages of depression.

It is true that the metaphor involves the assumption that there is a person who knows what is good for the sheep far better than the sheep themselves. This is true with sheep, but it is dangerous and ill-founded assumption to make about the relationship between pastors and congregants. The author knows all this because he comes from that background where he was himself a shepherd and has seen all that it takes to be one. What the critics are missing is the knowledge of the inner relationship and inter-connectedness of the shepherd and his flock.

But Hiltner as well knew and lived what he suggested. He pointed out that a metaphor is designed to be suggestive rather than literal. The entire concept of shepherding helps to draw a significant boundary between Hiltner's educative approach to pastoral counselling and

Rodger's client-centred approach to counselling. Hiltner was convinced that a responsible and dedicated pastoral shepherd can see dangers which the congregant cannot see, within the perspectives in which *he* works, which include healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling. (The--- he--- referring to the shepherd, does not intent to be sexist but is only to paint the original picture of what a shepherd was in normal agricultural patriarchal terms)

The people who are in pain, grieving and mourning for their lost love one through sudden death are in a period when their faith is tested, sometimes seriously tested. They need sound pastoral counselling which will always include the possibility of guiding. There come a time in this period of counselling relationship, when the pastoral guidance is not what it is called to be:

“Pain in the biblical perspective is real; it can be destructive and redemptive, debilitating and creative. Pain may produce a feeling of the absence of God or an invitation of the presence of God.” (Oates and Oates 1985: 13).

A skilful shepherd knows the pain of his flock and situations that either lead or have the potential of leading to pain of any kind. It is for this reason that a shepherd in the practical and literal sense will have in his possession, for example, oil, ‘band-aid’, and anything that a painful need might call for during his time of watching over his flock in the grazing fields. John Chrysostom concurs with this as he speaks of the qualities required of the pastoral care practitioner:

“so the shepherd needs great wisdom and a thousand eyes to examine the soul's condition from every angle... The priest, therefore, must not overlook any of these considerations, but examine them all with care and apply all his remedies appropriately for fear his care should be in vain... If a (person)

wanders away from the right faith, the shepherd needs a lot of concentration, perseverance and patience. He cannot drag by force or constrain by fear, but must by persuasion lead (the person) back to the true beginning from which he (or she) has fallen away” (Gerkin 1997: 31).

The shepherding model proves to be an original line and method of care as was practiced by Jesus Christ, who is the founder of this faith. Now that all believers are following him up in his mission and it is evident that the road often lead us to situations of doubt, or are simply are lost along the way, we are fortunate to be still remembering Jesus as was seen by David, a Shepherd, a Good Shepherd that goes to an extent of giving his life away for the sake of the flock. Let us learn more about the shepherd not only for the sake of this study, but also for the improvement of our own faith and skill in exercising our mutual responsibility in Churches and societies. In that way, we shall craft an understanding of what Paul meant when he talked to the Philippians saying:

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is a gain” (Phil. 1: 21).

This is what through pastoral care we shall always do our best to convey to those who are mourning their loved ones through sudden death, and death through all sorts.

#### 1.6.1 A Closer study at the Shepherd Perspective

It is not usually very simple to define or categorise operation-centred forms of theology with enough clarity and specificity, and enough profundity, to enable theological disciplines to be formed around them. But the suggestion of Rodney J Hunter still appeals to the author’s

audience. He holds that the heart of Hiltner's proposals under this topic can be best illustrated by three headings:

1.6.1.1 The concept of perspective

1.6.1.2 The threefold structure of pastoral perspective and

1.6.1.3 The specific concept of shepherding perspective

#### 1.6.1.1 The Concept of Perspective

Hiltner is convinced that the true practice of ministry or the Christian life can never be adequately grasped or described, for theological or practical purposes, solely by enumerating the outward, public and often social conventional social roles of the profession, for example preaching, leading of worship, counselling and administration. He, therefore, proposed that ministry should not be conceptualised fundamentally in those terms. Instead, through an insight derived from process philosophy, he proposed that the acts or operations of ministry be grasped by a concept combining the pastor's subjective orientation with a corresponding objective claim on the pastor from external reality. In other words, ministry is partly a matter of the pastor's aim, goal, intentionality, and faith; but it also entails a realistic response to the world's need, or more accurately, to God's call to serve the needs of the world realistically and in accord with the divine will which may not coincide with our own.

The term by which Hiltner proposed to designate this fundamental structure of ministerial action was 'perspective', a term perhaps unfortunately chosen in view of its strongly subjective connotations. 'Dimension' would probably have been a better choice. It is by implication that Hiltner was inexplicit about his process of presupposition here---true ministry occurs when our subjective aim or goal, which is elicited or influenced by God, matches what God is objectively calling us to do in the world; and subjective and objective

poles of perspective correspond. Conversely, when subjective intent and objective call are not in correspondence, when the pastor fails to discern or properly respond to the true or authentic ministry, false ministry is the result. Presumably, it is possible that God's will may be done despite contrary intentions by the pastor but such occurrences would not properly be called ministry.

When we look at the whole concept of this perspective by Hiltner and relate it to pastors, we find them being challenged by high frequency of having to discern God's will in the event of illness and death. Because of such it is one of the very high obligations in every pastor's schedule of work in our congregations today. But whatever the presentational deficiencies, Hiltner's attempt to define ministry, for theological purposes, at a level deeper than social role, by means of the concept of perspective was striking, significant and a significant innovation. He hoped to define pastoral practice through this conceptual device in a more profound and coherent fashion than had previously been achieved, and in a way that would be significantly true to the depth and richness of actual practice to enable significant theologizing to occur from within the pastoral context.

#### 1.6.1.2. The threefold structure of pastoral perspective

This is the second point in Hiltner's description of ministerial practice which distinguishes three, and only three fundamental perspectives. It claims that all ministerial actions can be described and guided in terms of these three orientations and their continuing interplay and that a distinctive branch of operation-centred theology can be constructed from each of them. They are shepherding, in which the pastor's aim or goal is described with 'tender solicitous concern' toward the welfare of particular individuals or small groups of persons in their individuality,

organising, in which pastoral concern is directed toward the corporate social and institutional needs and welfare of the church and their wider community. Helping it become the true organism, the body of Christ; and communicating, in which the pastoral aim is focussed on what might be called the cultural or symbolic level of need of church and world for meaning, truth, and moral vision through the articulation of the gospel.

In reality, these three forms of need cannot be separated in any categorical sense; they are mutually interdependent. But in practice, that is, from the perspective of one who must act concretely in response to the world, some differentiating and focusing become necessary. Practitioners must prioritise and concentrate their effort in one of these directions at any given time, while much they must also keeping the whole in view and be prepared to alter their dominant perspective.

One needs not elaborate further on the exact meaning Hiltner assigned to the organising and communicating perspectives, but do want to stress the ambiguous relationship of all three perspective to pastoral role functions and especially the interrelationship and fundamental inseparability that Hiltner ascribed to them. A proper understanding of these relationships is crucial for appreciating the depth, subtlety, and descriptive power of Hiltner theory as a whole.

Typically, activities of personal care and counselling express the shepherding orientation insofar as individual need and welfare are at the centre of attention. Leadership functions are normally conducted in the organizing perspective because institutionally need is foremost, while preaching, leadership of worship and teaching ordinarily express

the communicating perspective's aim towards noumenal, spiritual, or symbolic need. However, always apply and can be highly misleading.

Perspectives cannot be equated with social or functional roles. In reality, the richness of this theory lies precisely in its distance from simple functional role definitions, and the flexibility and subtlety of analysis and guidance that such distance provides. This complexity, however, is also the source of frequent misunderstanding.

Hiltner vigorously insisted that all three perspectives are needed for understanding or guiding any particular act of ministry, but that in every concrete situation one or the other will upon, a discerning analysis of the situation, be found to provide the primary structuring for the ministerial event, thus a personal conversation with a congregant may indicate that an emotional or psychological need should be the dominant focus rather than some programmatic, administrative, or disciplinary concern of the church or some specifically spiritual need at the level of meaning, truth or moral direction.

Yet in true ministry all three kinds of concerns are present with the pastor even if one perspective, for the time being, is dominant. Thus, there is no situation such as counselling that can be adequately defined by only one perspective approach such as shepherding. Attention must be given to all three even if priority is given to one, and the pastor must be ready to change the orientation focused on emotional or family problems, a solution or insight may emerge which brings forth another dimension, such as the need for an explicit hearing of the gospel or the need for deepening one's relationship to the community of faith, or to society, or the need to be disciplined, or guided by the larger body. By the same token, pastoral leadership in an institutional context may bring forth special needs for prophetic



utterance communicating or for 'tender solicitous care' of individuals, which is shepherding. The three perspectives thus function with continuous relevance to every situation in variously ordered priorities and with the possibility of situationally-indicated changes in priority. This calls for true spiritual discernment on the part of the pastor and the responsible exercise of judgement in ambiguous situations. It obviously eliminates rigid interpretations of what ministry should be in 'typical situations' as dictated by role definitions. And it allows for a rich diversity of practical emphases and orientations in response to the specifics of given circumstances, viewed within a fundamental unity of purpose. This is true that even though Hiltner failed to specify in precise theological terms what that unity of purpose is.

Theologically, then, pastoral theology is not simply the theology of pastoral care and counselling defined as a theory of fundamental roles, but is that theology emerging from the theological examination of any and all acts of ministry where the shepherding perspective is dominant. More precisely, pastoral theology is:-

'that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations'

Pastoral theology in this sense is distinguished from those operation-centred disciplines arising from the other 'cognate' perspectives of organizing, ecclesiastical theology, and communicating, homiletical and educational theology.

### 1.6.1.3 The Concept of Shepherding and its 'aspects'

“Hiltner chose the ancient image of the shepherd for his perspective related to individual care despite its anachronistic ring in the modern setting, despite its inconsistency with the less metaphorical terms given the other two perspectives and despite certain inadequacies inherent in the image itself.” (Campbell 1981: 41-45).

In taking these risks, he was obviously more concerned to emphasize the biblical and historical continuity of contemporary pastoral care and counselling which has been much influenced by secular psychologies and is often unconscious of its history. He was not, however, unconscious about the limitations of this metaphor and later sought to correct and supplement them.

Perhaps the simple term 'caring' would have been better. In any case, the basic idea remained unchanged. Central to the content of shepherding is the shepherd's solicitous concern for the welfare of the sheep. To this attitudinal orientation: the necessary presence of some degree of receptivity to help. The latter point is especially significant. A distinctive feature of Hiltner's shepherding theory in pastoral theology and its practical implementation in care and counselling is the responsibility he assigns to the congregants.

In his view, which Hiltner borrowed in large part from Carl R Rodgers but which he regarded as quintessentially Christian, the pastor facilitates the caring process in various ways but does not control or coerce it. At least insofar as pastoral care expresses shepherding and not, say, organizing, its cardinal feature is the priority it gives to the immediate needs and resources of the individual. What he did not say but clearly implied was that these needs and resources are in some sense bearers

of divine grace, and not exclusively human properties or attributes; they lead one into a deeper life in the spirit. Thus, for instance, the mobilisation of internal healing powers eventually moves the process beyond immediate biological and psychological healing to a deeper life in the spirit just as a deepening or awakening of spirituality will have ramifications for biopsychic wholeness within the shepherding perspective.

Hiltner argued, it is possible to distinguish three specific forms or 'aspects':- i.e. healing which aims to restore functional wholeness that has been impaired as to direction and/or schedule; sustaining, in his revision of the traditional concept of comforting which is defined as the 'ministry of support and encouragement through standing by when what had been broken or impaired and is incapable of total situational restoration, and guiding, which he initially defines as helping persons 'find the paths when that help has been sought.

Later, following a lengthy and intricate discussion, he describes guiding as an 'educative' process in which resources and directions are 'educated' or drawn forth from the individual to aid in finding his or her own paths.

Hiltner's argument about guiding requires an additional clarification. Guiding is defined as educative since it is an aspect of shepherding. Other forms of guiding, such as moral persuasion and reasoning, classification of alternatives, or providing information, through appropriate and necessary as pastoral care, in many situations would belong to another perspective. Moral guidance is not limited in principle to its educative form through the shepherding perspective, though Hiltner did emphasize its importance polemically against the dominant historical tendency to impose corporate values on individuals without honouring and developing their 'internal' capacity

to participate creatively in the search for, and implementation of, moral responsibility.

Hiltner regarded the three shepherding 'aspects' as perspective in nature no less than the shepherding perspective as a whole. This point has been widely misunderstood. The confusion is perhaps best exemplified in a proposal by William A Clebsh and Charles R Jackle that the rubric of 'reconciling' be added to the Hiltnerian trilogy of healing, sustaining and guiding. The above share a revision that has since become standard in the pastoral literature. Clebsh and Jaekle mistakenly equate Hiltner's shepherding perspective with the functional role of pastoral care and view its three 'aspects' as the more particular roles, as evidenced in the history of pastoral care. Since this role typology does not encompass everything in pastoral history, especially its predominantly emphasis on the restitution of persons from sin through confession, forgiveness, and penance and many other forms of interpersonal and family reconciliation, it seemed necessary to add a fourth category of 'reconciliation' to Hiltner's three.

However, reconciling, though arguably necessary for their historical typology, is inconsistent with the individual focus of Hiltner's shepherding concept. It belongs more appropriately, in the social perspective of organizing, which includes the relationship with God, though Hiltner was not clear enough about this. A similar confusion of perspectives with the roles categories lies behind the recent suggestion to add 'nurturing' to Clebsh's and Jaekle's list. Nevertheless, the Clebsh and Jaekle's proposal, though leading, points to a serious issue in Hiltner's theory. It understands the relation between individual, society, and culture, which has led some to criticize it for individualism and moral relativism.

In the light of the afore-going discussion, the Church in her locality and probably throughout Africa is highly challenged and such circumstances touch and question her relevance in the community and lives of her members. In the attempt to answer the evident questions, it is also clear that leadership is essential to an effective Church. This leadership, in need here, is exemplified by what Gerkin called interpretive leadership. (Gerkin 1997: 117-135).

Earlier in this chapter, the author alluded to depression as a disease. The Church and her members, in the event of any stress that leads to depression, remain an unhealthy entity. The word health connotes the idea of being 'hale' which means possessing soundness or wholeness in its general usage. This means the absence of disease. This stance has been disputed by several scholars to date.

Philomena Njeri Mwaura quotes Maddock saying 'health can never be equated with human wellness and an absence of disease, health is to do with the totality of creation, with the creator himself'. He further regards it as the divine gift and grace to creation by God who saw everything He created as 'good' and motivated towards wholeness. Mwaura goes on to refer to other un-specified writers who define health as a 'dynamic state of well-being of the individual and the society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being; being in harmony with each other with the natural environment and with God'. (Waruta 2000: 72-96).

The Church in the event of sudden death, striking any member by any means becomes therefore unhealthy, and in dire need for health. This is more relevant when it is said relative to the definition of the Church by Paul as 'the body of Christ... and if one part of this body is in pain so is the whole body affected'. For the reason that one or few individual

members of the community are in grief and some in various stages of depression, so is the entire church in the struggle to regain health. Depression at this point looks just like the jealousies and hatreds which are as harmful as germs and poisons to allow the people of God to get on in and with life.

Campbell continue to argue with confidence that the 'Wounded Healer' gains power by acknowledging weakness and by finding God's healing force at the moment of deepest despair. There is no short cut to such healing, no hope without fear, and no resurrection without the tomb's deepest darkness (Campbell 1986: 41-2). He concludes his thoughts by pointing out that it is only by acknowledging our wounds and confronting our own finitude that 'we too, in a small way, can be healers of others'. One feels at this point that there is a compulsion to reiterate the same by stating that, 'the Church in a smaller or bigger way, is a community of sufferers' in the different contexts the Church finds itself today, and it is through free and spontaneous acknowledgement of pain that the power of God's love can be ushered into any grieving family through the loving pastoral intervention of the Church.

## 1.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the author has briefly introduced his point of departure with regard to this particular research. This point of departure is grounded on his faith and the development through which he was brought up. This is also accompanied by the congregational backgrounds of the author's worship. The chapter has clarified the pastoral care view and model of shepherding as founded by Hiltner and was both quoted and used by Gerkin and Campbell.

It also has gone to relate the pastoral care and the healing ministry regarding the complementary nature of the role of the pastor and the doctor. Depression through sudden death emerged the evident element of the disturbances and the cause of disharmony within and outside many church members and communities. It has also surfaced that depression may have its root personal faith-crisis, marriage conflicts, deep sense of loss through death, loss of property, poverty, financial crisis, failure to achieve one's goals, and other factors, but the depression that results from the loss through sudden death has the potential of combining all the above and/or animating the problems until all stresses yield further and on-going depression changing stages.

The church is responding to these challenges in various ways and guided by different factors. These include educational and development of projects to uplift the standards of living and thereby reduce the stress induced. Challenging questions still remains such as whether the comfort given by the Church does effect the traditional tasks of the Church and how? For example:

- ✓ Does it effect kerygma,(preaching the Gospel)
- ✓ Does it effect koinonia,(creating a fellowship with the divine)
- ✓ Does it effect diakonia, (the ministry of loving service and faith)

The shepherding model is presented in this chapter as a tool to enable the church to provide to those mourning and grieving a testimony like Paul's saying:

“we do not lose heart. Though our nature is wasting away, our inner nature being renewed everyday. For this slight momentary afflictions is preparing for us an integral weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen

**but the things are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2Cor 4: 16-18).**

**Pastoral care through shepherding is therefore guiding all practitioners not to limit their scope to only the events of crisis such as death, but should see its task in terms of growth, and enabling individuals to have confidence in God. The model stresses that the pastoral care practitioner is the shepherd, and the leader and servant of the Christian community. His/her role entails deep and sensitive personal involvement in the community with obvious compassion for the human condition. This human condition manifests itself through various crises which were mentioned quite frequently. All these have a capability of inflicting stress that may lead to depression. It is this depression that makes people suffer and heightens the need for skilful pastoral care. The comprehensive view of pastoral care, relative to depression, flashes the practitioner with questions of relationships at the moment. Having heard the views of Gerkin and Campbell on what shepherding model of pastoral care is, there is an emergent obligation of investigating what depression is.**

**In the following chapter, we shall confer with the scholars to find out about stress and depression, and why sometimes stress leads to depression. We shall go on to learn more about the manifestations of this depression to help the church and pastoral care practitioners act timeously on the subject to increase their chances of success.**



## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 Trauma and its effects

Thloki, one of my friends' spouses had complaint of a serious headache for a long time. This problem has deterred her to do any formal work over a long period and productively. This resulted from the fact that at every time she concentrates for a long period of time, she suffers from the problem so much so that she is booked off-sick by medical doctors. Sadly, this same problem was the reason for her (Thloki's) dropping-out of tertiary education in the year 1998. After a number of follow-up consultations with empty test results one doctor suspected something unknown to himself (doctor), he referred her to a psychologist. Coming from a consultation with the said psychologist, Thloki reported that there was a query, by the psychologist, of some kind that her problem emanates from the trauma that resulted from Thloki's loss of her brother who was ruthlessly murdered on New Year's Eve some sixteen years before the time this problem became evident. We can all remember how sad the whole incidence was to the family and community, but also thought that it must have gone and completely been healed. Nevertheless, Thloki's feed-back to us concerning the diagnosis of her long standing problem, was one word which we had heard about but never knew its effects to have the potential of being so long-lasting---Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The bad effects of stress inflicted by such sudden death came alive.

One of the mostly sounded terms regarding handling problems surrounding people struck by sudden death, is trauma. To be more specific, the psychiatric and the psychological worlds qualify what they talk about as post-traumatic stress. The victims of the said outcome and/or result of stress are said to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Given the practicality of the life that we live in, it is safe to say traumatic events are a

compliment of real life, and hence it sounds like there is no problem without trauma. The effects of traumatic events have remained a challenge to people from time immemorial. Thus, it is named posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), thereby inferring from the name itself that the problem is known to be post or after the incident or incidence.

Psychologically, the people who are struck by sudden death are emotionally wounded, and this wound is painful to their whole being. This wound is called trauma, and hence it is said that they are traumatized. They become stressed, and because the cause of this stress is the death of the loved one. It (death) becomes then the stressor. With the complications of their responses when viewed against social normality and abnormality, they are judged as having either order or disorder resulting from their trauma. For purposes of progress in the subject, the author shall follow the terminological relationships of the terms by Briere and Scott as they locate problems as stated in the responses of PTSD. They list types of Posttraumatic responses as:

- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Stress disorders
- ✓ Dissociation
- ✓ Somatoform responses
- ✓ Brief Psychotic Disorder with Marked Stressor
- ✓ Drug and Alcohol Abuse. (Briere and Scott 2006: 17- 30).

Following the line of posttraumatic responses as listed above one finds out that Stress and depression result in people's lives as they are consciously or unconsciously responding to their life conditions. The big difficulty about the said subjects is the fact that no one chooses to respond in a particular way. They are rather spontaneous responses that a person finds him/herself in after being traumatized by a life reality which in this case is sudden death. Given our current stages of pastoral care and conditions in which many of us work, and the complexity of

psychiatric/psychological terms and developments, there is a high need of seeking more understanding on the said subjects.

## 2.2 UNDERSTANDING STRESS

It is a struggle to try to explain the concept of stress without considering what the body feels like or the human being appears like when under attack. From what is shared above and various known conditions that have passed our eyes over time, we can attempt to grasp the problem and share.

Stress is a body condition that occurs in response to actual or anticipated difficulties in life. It may occur in response to daily problems, such as driving in heavy traffic or being hurried by someone etc. It may also occur as a result of people perceiving threat to them (themselves).

“Selye makes the point that stress is a normal part of everyday life and affects all living creatures. He differentiates between two types of stress namely: Eustress and Distress. Eustress refers to the level of stress which motivates us to perform well, solve problems, be creative, and grow in confidence. Distress is where our performance deteriorates, our adaptive bodily functioning becomes disrupted, and our response, whether physiological, cognitive, emotional, or behavioural, becomes maladaptive”. (Powell & Enright 1991:19).

In the light of what Selye points out in the above statements one can say that there is both positive and negative stress in our lives; and we react and respond to these differently but holistically. One can also draw from Selye's argument that 'stress becomes dangerous when it is unusually prolonged, which comes too often or concentrates on one particular organ of the body'. The same might also re-iterate the English expression that says 'too much of a good thing is dangerous'. It is from the same saying that

affirmation comes to say that even the so-called positive stress can turn to be negative and dangerous in instances that are cited by Selye above. There are many common signs of stress and these include, but are not limited to, increased heart rate, raised blood pressure, muscle tension, mental depression, inability to concentrate etc. Stress may be caused by anything to any body. The factors and circumstances causing stress are called stressors. Stressors differ from person to person and one factor that is a stressor to one person may not necessarily be a stressor to another.

Barnhart distinguishes five major types of stressors as:

- biological variables
- environmental circumstances
- life situations
- behaviours and
- Cognitive activities.

He continues to warn that:

“Biological variables affect a person’s physical state. These include illness and physical exertion. Environmental circumstances are forces in the person’s surroundings such as noise, overcrowding, poverty, and natural disasters. Life situations include stressful incidents such as death of a close friend or being in a group of strangers. Behaviours that may act as stressors include smoking cigarettes and poor eating habits. Cognitive, or thinking activities include taking a test or concentrating on getting a high score in a video game” (Barnhart Vol. 18, 354).

It is true that not all stressors affect everyone the same way. But the particular stress that is under investigation here is the one that results in the event of sudden death, an example of the stress resulting from the life situation. Sometimes and varying from person to person, this stress leaves unpleasant emotional experiences that have a lasting impression on the persons concerned. When this happens, the mind is injured and sometimes wounded to warrant therapeutic attention and healing. Any incident that a

person experiences that is sudden and unexpected can result in emotional as well as physical trauma and shock. Parkinson has the following to say about this emotional shock:

“emotional shock can cause stress reactions, which are called post-trauma stress or critical incident stress. This kind of stress therefore results from experiencing a traumatic incident and can be the result of anything from slight accident to involvement in major disaster” (Parkinson 2000: 18).

The reading of the practical circumstance in any event of sudden death against what Barnhart and Parkinson say about stress and trauma guides pastoral care practitioners and givers on the exclusiveness of the stress they handle when they are in the midst of mourners through sudden death. The author is reminded here, as it is happening time and again in his life, about his own sister's situation cited in chapter one above, and affirms that during sudden death instances of numerous kinds, including murder, accidents, suicides etc. there may be different stresses in concurrent play with the after effects of trauma. The skilful pastoral caregivers therefore know, or at least must know, the paramount importance of their interventions, and that they should be particularly focusing on post-traumatic stress for it to be equal to the therapeutic challenge it faces.

In his illustration of what he means about such incidents that results in stress that is challenging people, he cites a simple story that;

“Billy, age 4, has fallen off his bicycle and runs to his mother, crying. He has bruised both knees as well as his pride. His mother puts her arms around him, comforts him and asks what happened. He sobs out his story. He was riding down the path on his new bike when suddenly the front wheel slipped and he crashed onto the ground. He has hurt his knee and the bike is still

lying where it fell. He is sobbing gently in his mother's arms, breathing in short gasps.

He tells her that it's a rotten bike anyway, and it was the bike's fault, and he's never going to ride it again, ever! His mother holds him and tells that he'll be all right. She will go with him to get his bike and bring it home, and then he can ride it again when he feels better. She puts ointment on his knee and some tender loving care on his pride and gradually he stops crying. She takes his hand and they both go outside and get the bike. He is frightened at first, but with her beside him holding the seat, he climbs it again and slowly pedals down the pathway, wobbling from side to side."

It is a simple story that can be viewed childish by anyone reading it, but a story that marked one step in Billy's life that may almost define him in the way he perceives matters. He runs to his mother for help and comfort, tells his story and the mother first listens and then helps him regain his confidence to try riding the bicycle and his dented pride. He is suffering from physical pain and from mental and emotional shock and stress caused by the unexpected fall. If his mother had told him not to be stupid and had not offered him comfort, maybe having told him 'get out there and be a man', either he would have been afraid of bikes for the rest of his life or gritted his teeth and climbed back on again.

There are, however, more than just one way of approaching this incident by any mother. For example:

"just don't worry about that nasty little bike. Leave it there in the road, and when Daddy comes home, he'll get rid of it. Daddy will then get you a nice football, which will never hurt you".

This might have been another response possible by this mother, or any other mother. But clearly, Billy would have responded differently to both. He might have buried his fears, had dreams or nightmares about the fall, kept away from bicycles forever and cried or screamed with fear whenever one came near. Equally likely, he would cope by forcing himself to conquer his fear, but this fear could have emerged in some other way, either at the time or later.

The reader will agree that this is an exaggerated example. But it is very important to note that even a relatively simple incident can cause reactions of stress and trauma, and at varying degrees in different people. In the story, Billy has experienced some of the typical symptoms of post-trauma stress--- shock, pain, fear, crying, blaming, avoidance and the need for help and comfort. Death causes some of the above symptoms every time it strikes; it is even capable of containing all of the symptoms and sometimes even more of the responses which happens not to be captured here at a time, especially when it is sudden. It is far more serious an incident than falling off a bicycle.

Pastoral care during the times of bereavement where stress and depression are challenges has many parallels with riding a bicycle. For instance, much as there are natural laws that have to be balanced to maintain the bicycle on the move and in safe directions, there are natural responses in the entire being of a person who is bereaved and such responses happens in the midst of saying that this is natural, and practically that life hat must go on. The author is reminded of the situations of his own learning to ride a bicycle, which comes very clear to mind every time. He was not so privileged to have the bicycle of his own size as many are. Resultantly, the challenges of inability to ride

were complemented by those of size over and above own short stature by birth.

“The fact that no single accepted definition of stress has emerged is not surprising, as stress is one of the most complicated phenomenon that can be imagined. It involves all the systems of the body--- cardiovascular, endocrinal, and unconscious; and occurs in all social systems--- interpersonal, intrapersonal, small group, large group, and societal. It is evoked by such varied stimuli as minor daily hassles, and the threat of star wars nuclear conflict. It involves our loves, hates, closest attachments, competitions, achievement---stress is a matter in which all humans are involved evenly and all the times.

In a sense, stress is the most narcissistic area of study that psychology has undertaken. It is a reflection of ourselves and the things that concern us. It involves our worries, fears, goals, hope, and faith. It might be worthy to ask the question, what more is human than all these things?

I am going to share two stories in the Bible as a way of illustrating the effects of stress and its impact on human beings. The story of Job in the Old Testament is the story of every man and woman. Despite faith, caring, family, holiness, and righteousness, Job was tested by the Lord. In this story we see our fear that despite all our good deeds and intentions, calamity may randomly or fatefully strike. For Job, everything was lost: his children, his land, his wealth, and his health. Though what is perhaps the greatest of all stress resistance resources--- faith---Job survived his ordeal. In this, we express our own hope that despite life’s many challenges and stressors, we will, or at least can endure.



Another telling Biblical example of stress as a test of people's mettle is found in the story of the 40-year wanderings of the Children of Israel following their liberation from slavery in Egypt. Actually, the Jews arrived in Canaan some weeks after their departure from Egypt. That is, their wandering in the desert was not because of the distance between the said locations, but was a result of their stressful minds when confronted with the information that Canaan was filled not only with milk and honey, but also with powerful nations. Resultantly, the slave-minded Hebrews grew fearful and doubted their ability to conquer the land. For this lack of faith they were sent back into the desert until those who doubted died out and, most importantly, until a new generation could be raised. This generation would not be weakened by the helplessness of slavery, but would be strengthened by repeated tests of their ability in battle and in surviving as free men and women. They would later enter Canaan not as meek doubting slaves but as a self-assured warrior nation. (Hobfoll 1988: 2-3).

The above idea happens to be picked out because Hobfoll in his book, 'The ecology of stress', regards them as reference to religious works where doubts in humankind concerning whether the stress of life can be overcome, is addressed. As one reads through the texts, one immediately remember the numerous times that the same was used by Church preachers and pastoral caregivers in any event of death in the near or far past. It becomes questionable very often to the bereaved through sudden death the use of the same texts, especially if used by unskilful pastoral care practitioners, who sometimes do it out of inappropriate contexts. Stress happens to be a term located in psychological cycles today. It is true that it is understood better by the same sciences and practices, but it is practically handled by pastoral caregivers in various corners of our lives. It is handled in the families, Churches and societies, the list continues.

The author feels strongly to base the understanding of this subject in the line of Hans Selye at this point. Though influenced by Cannon, who wrote much earlier on the subject, and who was concerned with the effects of cold, lack of oxygen, and other environmental stressors, he 'saw stress as an orchestrated set of bodily defences that reacted in the face of noxious stimuli'. He was interested in understanding the physiological set of reactions created by such demands that every human being meets in life. Death, is one of the examples of such demands, and when it is sudden, it can be very stressful that time becomes an inadequate tonic to heal the victim. This particular stress has challenged pastoral care over the years, yet in many instances the church and pastoral caregivers have refused to claim. The inflicted stress manifests itself with various ways some of which can deform people as diseases, Thloki's headache problem comes to the fore as related.

### **2.2.1 COMPLICATIONS AND COMPLEXITY OF STRESS**

An example is used here of Mr Star's story in his practical and daily life to exemplify the complicatedness of the subject under discussion.

"it was an important day. I (Mr Star) was about to start a series of lectures for a government agency which was due to close down. Even though, in the previous 12 months, the staff had received out-placement counselling and assistance to help them procure new jobs, this had been to no avail--- a result of the recession, no doubt. Anyway, I got up promptly as I had a number of things to do before the lecture. Apart from putting my lecture notes in order and sorting out accompanying handouts, I also had to check my tax return and ensure that it was posted that day to the Tax Office.

**You may be thinking that I lack time management skills. Unfortunately, due to an unforeseen event, I had to leave work early the previous day without completing all my tasks. However, I knew that if I arrived at work early the next morning then I would have no difficulties in achieving my goals.**

**Little did I realize that the universe was conspiring against me! Being a creature of habit, I started the day as usual with a relaxing bath and then a slice of toast with my favourite mug of tea. Yes, things were going well. I managed to avoid any conflict with the teenagers. My partners had already left for work and it was my turn to go.**

**‘where the hell are my keys?’ I exclaimed.**

**They were not in their usual place. I always put them on top of the bookcase in the hallway, by the front door. I knew if I did not leave promptly then I would be caught in all the traffic arriving at 8.45am bringing children to the school in my street.**

**‘Damn it! I’ll be late for work. Today of all days’, I cursed.**

**Everything had been going so well up to this point. Where were my keys? I had no idea. I always left them in the same place.**

**Perhaps my partner had tidied up the shelf.**

**‘Damn her obsessive-compulsive disorder’. I had to find someone else to blame and not take responsibility for the loss of the keys! However, my partner just liked a tidy house. She didn’t have a disorder. That was just ‘therapist-speak’. As I thought about this I became angry.**

**‘its those bloody kids. They’ve knocked the keys off the shelf and they’ve fallen behind the books’. I started taking the books off the shelf in great haste. Books landed everywhere. The keys were nowhere to be seen. Time was ticking by. The clock chimed. It was 8.45am.**

**'Damn it! I will be late now'. My level of frustration tolerance was gradually lowering.**

**However, I didn't want to come home to a row so I quickly tidied up the mess I had made all over the floor. Perhaps I had left my keys in my jacket. I furiously checked all the pockets. I couldn't find them. I could hear my partner's voice in my head telling me: 'You're incapable of looking properly for things. You couldn't even find socks if they were on your feet!' I had this clear image of my partner gesticulating at me too. By this time I noticed my stomach was feeling rather empty even though I had just eaten my breakfast. I decided to check slowly through my pockets again. Unfortunately, my luck had run out---no keys could be found.**

**I recalled having a spare set of keys somewhere. I had an image of them next to a box of pencils.**

**'they must be in my study', I thought. I almost fell down the stairs running to my bolt hole (the study). I found them.**

**'Thank God for that', I blasphemed. I dashed back upstairs, picked up my bag, and left the house.**

**I turned back in my confusion I couldn't remember if I had locked the front door. I put the keys into the lock and proceeded to unlock the lock. I had locked it when I left after all. I must have been on automatic pilot. I was wasting good time. I cursed myself.**

**I ran to where my car was parked. I noticed heavy traffic and that the weather was foggy and damp. I tried to open the car door. It wouldn't open.**

**'I don't believe this', I thought. The spare key doesn't fit properly. Why, oh why, hadn't I checked this out before? I collected myself and thought laterally. I was able to get entry through the passenger door. I put the key in the ignition and turned it.**

The car engine made a 'whirring' sound and then it died. Somehow, the damp atmosphere had flattened the car battery. The morning was ebbing away, I was still stuck outside my house, I had the tax return to complete, my lecture notes and handouts to put into order, and then attempt to travel into London by British Rail and London Underground to give a lecture on 'How to manage pressure and cope with redundancy'. It hadn't been a good start to the day. I wasn't feeling particularly calm either. (Palmer 1995: 1-3).

The above example has happened in real life, it about a simple little issue that does not directly relate to stress through sudden death but can be used in order to demonstrate the complicated nature of stress. It is a story that illustrates the development of stress in the psyche of a human being. Simply, it appears Mr Star became stressed because he could not find his car keys. They were not in the usual place as they 'should' have been.

But, there was nobody about to attack him anywhere, there was no knife on his throat threatening to cut it, there was no need for stress response to become activated. All that was happening was that he could not find his car keys. He started blaming others, such as his partner or his teenagers, for allegedly moving the keys even though there was little evidence of this. He thought they had obviously moved the keys, as they 'shouldn't' have done and he became angry about the situation. In fact, he was angry with himself as he anticipated that he would be arriving late for an important lecture.

The empty feeling in his stomach was part of the stress response or, more accurately, a physical component of becoming anxious about arriving late, which blatantly he felt that he 'must' not do. These internal dogmatic and absolutist beliefs such as his 'musts' and 'shoulds' put

more pressure on him and added to his emotional state. The feeling in his stomach could also have been triggered by the voice and image he had of his partner in his head chastising him as she has often done before when he had been unable to find his socks in the airing cupboard. His thought and exclamation, such as 'Damn it', did not help to lower his stress either as these phrases tend to be like a catalyst to the stress response and the anger they evoked stimulated the release of adrenaline and nor adrenaline from the adrenal glands.

It is important to realise that a whole series of events occurred externally and internally in a very brief period of time. It involved his behaviour, affect (emotions), sensations, imagery, cognitions, interpersonal relationships and his biological/physical response. There was an interaction between internal and external demands, real or perceived, and the situation. Although he may have been influenced by socio-cultural rules to do things on time, he did have a choice in the matter. He was his own worst enemy. As he became more distressed, he then blamed others as the major cause of his problem rather than taking a calm rational approach to the situation. Pragmatically, if he had stayed calm he would probably have saved more time in the long run and actually achieved his goals of the day.

The above example is picked up on every day issues, some of which might correctly be said to be simple and minor, especially when related to the sudden death which is under discussion. But the kind of stress that it causes can be very much out of control when handled by some people. One might speculate that Mr Star was a problematic person himself. But the definition of the 'problematicness' of this man might naturally pose serious challenges. Likewise, under situations of sudden death, people react in various ways. In the midst of their reactions they become their worst enemies. They blame themselves here and there, and blame others here and there. They want some

revenge for other incidents and even punish themselves for those situations where nothing can be done. Such a reaction is common for sudden death because someone has passed-on and this cannot be undone.

Girdano and Everly in their journey of further identifying the causes of stress in the life's of people have at the end of it all concluded their research by classifying the same as:

- **Psychosocial causes---** these have four processes that appear to connect more to stress namely: 1. adaptation, 2. frustration, 3. overload and 4. deprivation.
- **Bio-ecological causes ---** consisting of three classes of stimuli which play a role in distress namely: 1. biological rhythms, 2. nutritional habits, and 3. noise pollution, and
- **Personality causes---** such as 1. Self-concept, 2. Behavioural patterns, 3. Anxious reactivity called fear, and 4.the need for control.

They assert that adaptation is stressful because it requires 'adaptive energy' in order to allow the body to regain homeostasis. When this energy is depleted, the health of the person suffers. Frustration as an aspect of stress can be caused by numerous elements of modern life. Overcrowding, prejudice, socioeconomic elements, and organizational bureaucracies can all inhibit human behaviour and these are frustrating. Overload, that is, the state in which environmental input exceeds the ability to process and/or respond to that input, is another form of stress. Overload is common on the job, but can be found at home or at school. Finally, deprivation is another source of stress. In this instance, stress results from the inability to receive enough meaningful stimulation, thus, considering all of these stress origins, stimulation becomes a continuum and when it is extreme, it is capable of producing stress. In the event of the sudden death of anybody who

has been a 'right hand' to another, there can be excessive overload that is felt in consideration of the life that must go on, and this can be immeasurably stressful.

The study of biological rhythms points out that human behaviour should be synchronised, whenever possible, with the naturally occurring rhythms that surround us. There are various methods of determining possible innate rhythms to better synchronize one's behaviour with natural rhythms. Certain nutritional habits may also contribute a lot to stress. These include what they have called, vitamin-depleting foods, hypoglycaemic foods and habits, and the sympathomimetic and irritational factors of smoking. It has often happened to people who are stricken by sudden death that due to the stress they suffer, they change their habits especially nutrition. Sometimes it is because of lack of appetite that results with this particular stress. Smokers have a tendency of having increased smoking. For them, they are attempting to counter act the stimuli of death that has stricken. Simply, they unconsciously attack themselves. The noise pollution also may consist of biological and psychological components which are capable of causing stress. Clearly and maybe practically, noise in excessive quantity or quality is distressful.

The concept of self is one of the most important determinants of stress and psychosomatic disease yet uncovered. One can give an instance of poor self expectation, which will likely lead to failure at behavioural tasks. Hence, it is understandable that desire to 'psyche up' athletes before contests and the need for a student to face an exam with confidence. Self- devaluation in such situation usually results in the tendency to 'freeze in the clutch' more specifically; to play below one's potential in athletics, to suffer from stage fright, and to be incapacitated by 'test anxiety' during exam. Such poor self image has



been more tragically linked with serious mental and physical diseases as well. Anxiety reaction often become part of the feedback loop, and perpetuates and augments the stress response and lowering performance. (Girdano & Everly 1986:44- 105).

It stands to reason therefore that, although Mr Star above was so stressed up in his situation that morning, to such an extent that his stress could be located in one or more than one of the above classifications.

The challenge that has always faced pastoral care givers alike has been how to theologically and pastorally intervene in such circumstances. What cannot be refuted is the fact that stress involves the person's entire being, and whether it is Eustress or Distress, can form or destroy a person who happen to be either weak or wrong in response.

Palmer and Dryden in their study of the physiology of the stress response note that when a person is in a stressful situation his/her body responds in various ways. But the chemistry of it is that "messages are carried along neurones from the cerebral cortex (where the thought processes occur) and the limbic system to the hypothalamus. This has a number of discrete parts. The anterior hypothalamus produces sympathetic arousal of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS is an automatic system that controls the heart, lungs, stomach, blood vessels and glands. Due to its action, we do not need to make any conscious effort to regulate our breathing or heart beat. The ANS consists of two different systems: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. Essentially, the parasympathetic nervous conserves energy levels. It increases bodily secretions such as tears, gastric acids, mucus and saliva which help to defend the body and help digestion. Chemically, the parasympathetic system sends its

messages by a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine which is stored at nerve endings.

Unlike the parasympathetic nervous system which aids relaxation, the sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for action. (Palmer and Dryden 1995:9).

In line with the chemistry of stress development above, it is everything that happens in the body of a human being who is stricken by sudden death of a loved one, and suffering loss.

The fact that almost all of responses by the body happen automatically as is suggested by the automatic nervous system makes the concept, stress, a very complicated and complex subject to handle by both the one suffering, and the one giving pastoral care. By the time one gets the news of sudden death of a beloved person, there is shock on the body, through the nervous system responds. There is commencement of different secretions. The body becomes imbalanced and/or abnormal owing to the same secretions, and the health of the person becomes affected, and this effect might sometimes come as an attack to a persons or might build up slowly into some kind of disease that warrant medical attention to heal, or even some chronic disease that the person had not been suffering from, and must now learn to live with. Clearly, under the stress in question, the nervous system is under attack of a serious kind, and need boosted ability to cope in the situation.

It should be clearer to the reader now that by the time the author came into contact with the account above as regarding the reason pastors, ministers and many pastoral caregivers like to take the common short cut to refer sufferers to other sciences and practices like psychological counsellors without doing anything. It is because all terminology used in as far as stress is concerned are very medical and maybe psychological to the extent that they escape comprehension in the pastoral care circles. But a well grounded pastoral care practitioner

would know the parallels of practices, as well as where to go in times of need for the benefit of all who are struck by all kinds of stimuli which results in stress, especially when sometimes they leads to post traumatic stress disorders including depression.

### **2.2.2. THE BODY'S RESPONSE TO STRESS**

It is common now-a-days that many people speak of stress in many different circumstances that they find themselves in their lives. Whether they are aware of what they imply or not, is completely a different thing. It is also becoming more and more common that people present stress to different general practitioners. As a result, many workers are booked off-sick because of this stress that attacks human kind in various ways. It might be worthy to comment, though very reluctantly, that the even the economy of the country is in a way suffocating under the workers who suffer from stress, especially under current times when death and sudden death is so prevalent. There are various ways in which the body responds to stressors. In other words, different bodies respond differently to different stressors, and hence the reader must not misconstrue certain results that sequel stress in people and people's lives. This is a reason why various persons are regarded weaker or stronger than others under almost the same circumstances of sudden death. Therefore, the diagnoses of stress by many medical doctors cannot be challenged.

Wolff, one of the first proponents of psychosomatics in the United States, considered stress as an internal or resisting force which is usually stirred to action by external situations or pressures which appear as threats---not so much physical as symbolic (that is, involving values and goals). Girdano and Everly motivated that mobilizing one's physical defences (which were originally for the purpose of battling

physical threats) in response to symbolic sources of threat (social or psychological) produces a response which is inappropriate. The term inappropriate raises a quick question as to 'what is appropriate response in times of stress?' by all of us. But Pastoral caregivers can only answer the same question by saying that responses are judged by their outcomes or at least possible outcomes. The author is aware of many stressors that might either resist or even totally escape detection by fairly skilled pastoral interventions. But pastoral care practitioners who shepherd their flock, know their flock and how different they respond under given conditions in order to predict with success the possible responses for those who are afflicted in different ways, thereby guide them pastorally.

Whilst looking into appropriateness of the response, Girdano and Everly remembers what was said by Weiner that: "Physical arousal to physical threat is appropriate: it is usually short-lived and is usually dissipated with action. Physical arousal to symbolic threat is inappropriate: it tends to be of longer duration and is not easily dissipated. Such action is not warranted, is not performed, and the reaction is therefore physically detrimental to the system" (Girdano and Everly 1986: 30).

This becomes an issue to be considered in the case of sudden death because people at the reception of news of sudden death go fast into thoughts. They think of and about the recent past with the deceased, they formulate a lot of intangible possible 'realities'. This ends as symbolic and threatens reality. This can be detrimental and torturous to the one suffering.

It leaves an open vacuum when one considers the fact that the main stressor under discussion here, is sudden death and what the arousal become by the time of its strike. But the damaging effects of stress may be categorized as either changes in the physiological processes that

alter resistance to disease, or pathological changes, that are organ system fatigue or malfunction, that result directly from prolonged over-activity of specific organs. What makes stress very illusive is the spontaneity of the functions of the organs of our bodies. The body responds or reacts quiet often independently of the person him/herself in times of stress. Palmer and Dryden have noted the following examples of what the body does in these situations of stress. They say the body:

- ✓ Increases strength of skeletal muscles
- ✓ Decreases blood clotting time
- ✓ Increases heart rate
- ✓ Increases sugar and fat levels
- ✓ Reduces intestinal movement
- ✓ Inhibits tears, digestive secretions
- ✓ Relaxes the bladder
- ✓ Dilates the pupils
- ✓ Increases perspiration
- ✓ Increases mental activity
- ✓ Inhibits erection/vaginal lubrication
- ✓ Constricts most blood vessels but dilates those in the heart/leg/arm/muscles.(Palmer and Dryden 1995: 9-10).

The list of what the body respond like is not anything that is easily detectable by a pastoral caregiver. However, given the kind of complaints the sufferer pronounces, one can deduct possible bodily circumstances from the list. For example, my sister whom I have mentioned in chapter 1, during her time of suffering complained about pains in the chest and had a problem with her entire bowl movement. Like medical doctors would also guess, she might have had that reduced intestinal movement, a changed heart rate or maybe constrictions of blood vessels in the heart. Pastoral care used by

concentrating on the seat of all this, the conviction of the psyche that life must and will still go on without the deceased.

The scientific approach of studying this physiology of stress was continued by noting what was said about the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems of the body. For this science and her practitioners, “the main sympathetic neurotransmitter is called nor adrenaline, which is released at the nerve endings. The stress response also includes the activity of the adrenal, pituitary and thyroid glands. The two adrenal glands are located on top of each kidney. The middle part of the adrenal glands is called the adrenal medulla and is connected to the sympathetic nervous system by nerves. Once the latter system is in action, it instructs the adrenal medulla to produce adrenaline and nor adrenaline (catecholamine’s) which are released into the blood supply. The adrenaline prepares the body for flight and the nor adrenaline prepares the body for fight. They increase both the heart rate and the pressure at which the blood leaves the heart; they dilate bronchial passages and dilate coronary arteries; skin blood vessels constrict and there is an increase in metabolic rate. Also the gastrointestinal system activity reduces which leads to a sensation of butterflies in the stomach. Drawn from this science, in the event of shock by sudden death, there are possibilities which may lead to major health problems that sometimes might threaten life. When the adrenaline is secreted and the body is ready to fight, people become confused as to who to fight relative to how intangible death is. The same is also a possibility when the nor adrenaline is adequately secreted and the body is ready for flight. People become confused as to how to run away given the practical death circumstances. In many instances, this is a point and ground where many are found themselves being inadequate to handle the results of stress through sudden death. The vulnerability of humanity under grief and bereavement needs to be attended by skilful pastoral caregivers at this point. It is a time where

actually pastoral care is seen distinctly from medical or psychiatric care. This is said because at the same point the said sciences and practices are fast and maximum in their use of drugs, when pastoral care is carefully treating and handling the image of God.

Lying close to the hypothalamus in the brain is an endocrine gland called the pituitary. In a stressful situation, the anterior hypothalamus activates the pituitary. The pituitary releases the adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) into the blood which then activates the outer part of the adrenal gland, the adrenal cortex. This then synthesizes cortisol, which increases arterial blood pressure, mobilizes fats and glucose from the adipose tissues, reduces allergic reactions, reduces inflammations and can decrease lymphocytes that are involved in dealing with invading particles or bacteria. Consequently, increased cortisol levels over a prolonged period of time, lower the efficiency of the immune system. The adrenal cortex releases aldosterone which increases blood volume and subsequently blood pressure.

Unfortunately, prolonged arousal over a period of time due to stress can lead to essential hypertension. The pituitary also releases the thyroid-stimulating hormone which stimulates the thyroid gland, located in the neck, to secrete thyroxin. Thyroxin increases the metabolic rate, raises blood sugar levels, increases respiration/heart rate/blood pressure/ and intestinal motility. Increased intestinal motility can lead to diarrhoea. (It is worth noting that an overactive thyroid gland under normal circumstances can be a major contributory factor in anxiety attacks. This would normally require medication). The pituitary also releases oxytocins' and vasopressin which contract smooth muscles such as the blood vessels. Oxytocin causes contractions of the uterus.

All the scientific facts mentioned afore are accounts as to how stress is created. This affects human beings naturally, and at the strike of the

news of sudden death this natural phenomenon cannot be exceptional. It is also responsible to claim that there are times when the body happens to have given in to stress, not because the person wants it to be but because everything happens automatically. It is at this point that the afore-mentioned drugs can be used to boost all the systems and to allow pastoral care to liberate the person from this attack. Therefore, at this point medicine and pastoral care works very complementary with one another.

Vasopressin increases the permeability of the vessels to water, thereby increasing blood pressure. It can lead to contractions of the intestinal musculature. If the individual perceives that the threatening situation has passed, then the parasympathetic nervous system helps to restore the person to a state of equilibrium. However, for many clients whom we see for stress counselling every day of their lives, this is perceived as stressful. The prolonged effect of the stress response is that the body's immune system is lowered and blood pressure is raised which may lead to essential hypertension and headaches. The adrenal gland may malfunction which can result in tiredness with the muscles feeling weak; digestive difficulties with a craving for sweet, starchy food; dizziness; and sleep disturbance." (Palmer and Everly 1995: 10-11).

The account of stress mentioned above happens to be so outlined so much that, as one reads through it, one actually feels reading through what exactly happens or at least did happen to oneself once. It gives an opportunity to make some self assessments in some stressful situations we all go through in our lives, without really having to know their physical or biological specifics. It might also be pronounced that reading through what is said articulates the subject of stress as belonging to some practice other than Theology. But the reader will only affirm that stress is a subject that evades our control many times



because our bodies respond spontaneously to it. We respond through behaviour, emotions, sensations, imagery, and cognition and even through our interpersonal relationships.

For the sake of the objectives of the current study, the author would like to choose only to highlight, with particular focus, the responses humans engage through their emotions, because they form primary basis to positive and appropriate closure by the affected in times of death, however sudden it may appear to be. These are:

- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Hurt
- ✓ Morbid jealousy
- ✓ Shame/embarrassment
- ✓ Suicidal feelings

The above feelings will help us understand how people who are stricken by death become stressful and in need of therapy. They are captured in different ways by Kubler-Ross in her discussion about the dying, but are also identified by many scholars who deal with counselling of the grieving and the stressed persons in various angles of our lives. The emotions live for different periods of times in human beings, but the danger that can always be stressed is the situation where someone is localised in one emotion for a very long time. This is where pastoral care practitioners need to take-off with guidance and supervision. Of the list of emotions above, let us now explore the issue of depression for its commonality and frequency in pastoral care and counselling sessions.

### 2.3. DEPRESSION...WHAT IS IT? HOW DOES IT FEEL?

“It is a serious mental disorder in which a person suffers long periods of sadness and other negative feelings. The term depression also describes a normal mood involving sadness, grief, disappointment, or loneliness that everyone experiences at times.

Depressed people may feel fearful, guilty, or helpless. They often cry, and many lose interest in work and social life. Many cases of depression also involve aches, fatigue, loss of appetite, or other physical symptoms. Some depressed patients try to harm or kill themselves. The periods of depression may occur alone, or alternate with periods of mania in a disorder called manic depressive psychosis.

Psychiatrists do not fully understand the causes of depression, but they have several theories”. (World Book Encyclopaedia 1995: 125).

Psychiatrists come with all these theories in attempt to explain the origin of depression.

It stands to reason that depression is best known to and by the one who is depressed and feels everything about it. This is the reason why it poses such serious challenges to all the people who try to help. Opening the world of the depressed for the sake of bringing change to it has never been simple, but Jesus, knowing this fact, calls the church and all pastoral care practitioners and givers to do so. The social situations people live in are characterized by various stressors and depressors which affect human beings differently for different reasons. This has been like this from time immemorial. The following are stories from the Bible that happened as an example of many failures in our lives, including failure that we perceive in the times of sudden death.

**“unto the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.’**

**And unto Adam he said, “because you have listened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat plants of the field; In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread,  
till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return”.**

**And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.**

**Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man (sic) is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. Therefore, the LORD God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way of the tree of life. (Gen 3: 16-24).**

**The above accounts are common stories in the Bible, as alluded to, that are quoted and referred to by many people for different reasons. The author brings it here because in practical life, there comes numerous such instances where one looks at oneself or feel cursed as Adam and Eve once felt. Striking at the accounts, is the multiplication of sorrow that is talked about. The incident of sudden death happens to bring sorrow in multiple ways to all of us. It is a period and time where one feels some pressure in**

emotions owing to remorse of knowing how far out of step he/she has gone. As a result there is self blaming and punishment, where naturally people use defence mechanisms to work out of the situation. Sadness when sustained for a long time may yield depression. The Bible as a foundational basis of the Word of God that is proclaimed by the Church, the Word that is used often to accompany the sad and grieving people over different issues including death is full of instances of sad people. And pastoral care includes but is not limited to journeying with people in sadness. Another such incident of acute sadness, also from the New Testament is as follows:

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.

And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how

He said unto him, before the cock crows, you shall deny me

Three times. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (Luke 22: 61-62).

Viewed from the above, one is forced to enquire about the relationship between the depressor and the self. Many depressors have a way of being fought against, but death, especially when it is sudden strikes a chord in human beings that directs a crucial question to the person's self in almost conspicuous sorrow. Thus, depression viewed from any angle has a basis in the fibres that forms a person.

I looked on to the above quotations from the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) because I consider depression and see it in reality, as through Gilbert's perception, as rooted in narcissistic injuries of any type. These include events that threaten the individual's self-esteem or feelings of self worth. There are various examples of these factors, and these include:

- Criticism from valued or significant persons,
- a decline in salary or even complete job loss,
- rejection in love relationship,

- **Failure to measure up to some standard or poor performance in any conventional duty which are vested with importance.**

**These and many more can produce negative and painful responses in a vulnerable person who is stressed.**

**There is currently a common misconception in many people's ideas that suicide is mainly caused by depression. Whilst I agree that depressed people do sometimes commit suicide, I also state from the information I found from interacting with those people (the depressed) that, there are other clinical diagnoses more accurate for these unfortunate victims. For example, referring to the Bible quotations above one would simply say the pain that was in Adam, Eve, and Peter, the challenge that was intrinsic and squarely confronting their self-worth, and that everything that happened was a reason good enough for them to ultimately be depressed. Anybody may argue that we are not told anything about them thereafter, but at least relative to the situation we read in the Bible there is no indication of depression.**

**From all the above stories from the Bible, it is important to notice and to mark very crucially the indication that depression is a result of the decision to respond in a particular way. By this I mean, people become depressed because one way or another they happened to choose, consciously or unconsciously, to respond to their problems in a way that ultimately lead them to depression.**

**This is one of the reasons why some people can stand against their stressors and depressors, and many emerge victorious in the circumstances that others fall prey to.**

**Gilbert notes that:**

**“only about 15 percent of the depressed persons commit suicide; 85 percent do not. Besides depression, anxiety, neuroses, schizophrenias,**

**business problems, manipulation by others, extreme anger lead to suicide.**

**Many depressed people lack the emotional and intellectual strength and energy to carry out plans to take their own lives. It is when strength and energy begin to return that suicide becomes a severe threat. Therefore suicide is more likely to occur in the early stages of depression or in the later stages when personal energy becomes more mobilized. Other illnesses and problems, in addition to depression, contribute to the suicide rate.”(Gilbert 1998:10).**

**Gilbert has it right in locating where suicide comes in the process of depression. This gives guidance to competent and skilful pastors and pastoral caregivers to know where to concentrate their care activity in their interaction with patients and congregants during their loss of the beloved through sudden death. But the author would like to view depression as ‘death’ of its own kind.**

**He does so given the functional and practical life these people live in, and in their accompaniment with the said ailment. They are usually physically sluggish, and walk slowly as if weighted down with great burden on their shoulders. Their speech, in many instances, is laboured and slow as though they are searching for words. They begin to lose interest in events that were previously pleasant or appealing to them. They lose the joy of life and thus resist the desire to positively respond to invitations or participate in social events. We see some of them losing weight, and appetite. This is often confused with voluntary and intentional dieting especially by women. Most depressed persons develop sleep disorders of different kinds. All the above symptoms are some of what others can pick up on the depressed persons, but what one can affirm to be resulting from serious and negative feelings yielding sadness may be what Jesus said in Gethsemane:**

**‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death: tarry you here, and watch.’ (Matt.: 26; 38).**

Depressed persons have a sadness that leads to death, and for them at that moment, life is not worth living. They feel they are of no value to anyone else and that no one cares about them whether they live or die. Yet, most depressed people do not really want to die, but to be relieved, they feel death is the best relieve for them. These people need the strength and understanding of their pastoral caregivers in order to move in the direction of healing and wholeness. With compassionate and sensitive guidance, there is more hope than hopelessness that we can manage this illness. One encouraging fact about depression is the fact that it has a potential of producing insight and wisdom that ordinarily wouldn't be developed in anyway, if it is handled with care. We have to continue to teach our mourners to learn from their grief and all situations that appear impossible to them.

This comes as a responsibility to the Church, not because the church is not aware, but because the Church has dissolved the importance of skilfulness in the handling of depressed people. One reason might be as alluded to in the first chapter of this work, the congested programmes of ministers that result in delegation of some crucial responsibilities to laity. It is logical to find out whether the church has the ability of handling the subject in question. Or how best is the common and current practice by ministers, where any person presenting with symptoms of depression, is a simple referral issue to other sciences. In the event of any death, the church comes with its theological basis to the bereaved in an attempt to ease the pain. When depression results, some few skilful pastoral counsellors and pastoral care givers have been seen journeying with victims, while other depression cases are genuinely referral cases to the sciences of Psychiatry, Psychology or Medicine. It usually pains any person who cares about people and people's lives to see how some denominations of the church close the people up when they have to grief naturally, and that some churches despises other sciences aiming at priding themselves over unnecessary issues. This is

always done so that the entire public should see and regard such 'churches' as winners, not over depression, but over membership and perceptions of the world.

It surfaces here and now that the need to find out whether there is any relationship between and amongst the same sciences. This will guide pastoral caregivers on their appropriateness of their intervention, and how appropriate it is to refer people who are in need. We, therefore, have to develop a chord of relationship.

## 2.4. CAN THERE BE A CHORD OF RELATIONSHIP?

In order to ultimately answer the question of relationship, one must make sure to understand the subject under discussion clearly, and to ascertain common understanding of the same with the different sciences. The cardinal subject on this study is pursuing the need most ministers and pastoral care givers find themselves in every time they had to face people under stress that is inflicted by sudden death of their loved ones. There are common terms and concepts such as grief, mourning, bereaved etc, which are engaged by people who deal with this subject from any angle during such times. The same terms were mentioned numerous times already. It does not have to surprise the reader because sudden death practically encircle families with situations that inflict stresses that yield terms on the question. Lets us shed more light into these terms.

### 2.4.1. GRIEF

---This is an inevitable and universal experience, and it is mostly experienced than death itself. Wong notes that so much of life is about loss, and in the event of loss, we grief. Going through life is to endure a series of losses, which include the loss of health, roles, identity, homeland, and loved



ones through betrayal or death. Grief is the normal emotional response to loss, and a response all too familiar to us. He (Wong) continues to say: “As we grow and age, we grieve the yesterdays and all that it entails---the lost loves and missed opportunities, the good friends and broken relationships, the gains and the losses, the good times and the bad. We remember, therefore, we grieve. But grieving, we relieve what has been lost in the time and space. Our capacity for anticipation creates another set of challenges. For every relationship, there is separation. For every beginning, there is an end. For every embrace, there is a good-bye. We can anticipate death for ourselves and for our loved ones. We feel the pain and void of anticipatory bereavement. Thus, we mourn for tomorrows as well as yesterdays” (Tomer et al 2008: 375-376).

The reader will notice that all that is said about grief so far happens spontaneously to any person affected. It continues to do so even in times of sudden death. But when it coincides with a level of weaknesses in some of our personality balances, it may turn out to be impossible, and may yield other problems including of chronic ill-health of different kinds.

The first important thing about grief through bereavement is that it is importantly based on bonding: the stronger the attachment with the deceased then, the greater the grief. Because it is not possible to void all relationships and attachments, there is no escape from grief. We all have experienced grief through bereavement one time or another. Children’s first experience of bereavement grief may come from death of their pets, or the death of their grandparents. It is unfortunate that in current times of life death has grown to be very common and swift, so much so that children are bereaved through closely-tied family members quite often and early in their lives before they experience bereavement through their grandparents or very close ties like pets.

Those who strongly cling to their loved ones as if their life depends on it, suffer intensely when they lose them through death or any separation. The experiences of bereavement grief vary from one individual to another due

to the uniqueness nature of relationships, and even due to the various attitudes towards death. Thus, there is different affliction of stress to individuals. However, in spite of individual differences, there are some common processes, and this could be breeding a ground for pastoral caregivers to work from.

Grief is such an intimate and yet strange wasteland. The Batswana people sharing this insight about bereavement when faced with this sadness agree that “pelo ga e rupe”, meaning “in the face of sadness, the heart cannot be pacified” or more literally, “there is no initiation of the heart to out-grow grief”. Even though we are acquainted with loss, we still do not know how to face it with ease and equanimity. Part of the problem is that it is difficult to separate death anxiety about one’s own mortality, and worries about financial consequences from grieving the loss of a loved one. The impact of grief can be very intensive and extensive, because it touches almost every aspect of one’s life.

It is very important to emphasize, therefore, that the battle against grief by the bereaved is fought on two fronts---both internal and external. Internally, apart from the emotional tumult, mental disorientation, and flooded memories, the death of a loved one may also trigger an existential crisis and spiritual quest. Therefore, religious and philosophical beliefs play a role in the grieving and recovery process. Externally, the bereaved often have to take care of the aftermath of the death of a loved one and cope with the many demands of life. Funeral arrangements, settling the estates, taking care of personal affects of the deceased, dealing with relatives and re-igniting past conflicts, are all concomitant stressors. Another external source of stress comes from colliding cultures and customs. Conflicting cultural prescriptions for the funeral rites and mourning rituals can become a fertile ground for conflict, especially when family members involve inter-racial marriages and different religious practices. In these cases, death especially when it is sudden may divide more than unite members of the same family.

Whilst saying this, the author is reminded of this particular sudden death that based this research, the one where the sister lost her husband and two children. More over when this happens at a very young age and time of life at where they were. All traditional suspicions and pessimisms some of which may be nonsensical when they come into play. Some religious rituals also yield conflicts in that they turn out to be important to some and not to some. All these may destroy more than build.

Wong identifies that grieving typically refers to our emotional reaction to loss. He continues to motivate that it actually involves the adaptive process of our entire being---affective, cognitive, spiritual, physical, behavioural, and social. “In order to regain our equilibrium and refill the void after the loss of a loved one, the adaptive can be elaborate, complex, and prolonged. It may last for years, even a lifetime. Grieving may involve most of the following responses:

- ✓ Yearning and pining for the deceased.
- ✓ Enduring disorganization and disintegration.
- ✓ Coping with the aftermath and changes.
- ✓ Reorganising our lives and routines.
- ✓ Reviewing events surrounding the death.
- ✓ Working through inner conflicts.
- ✓ Seeking reconciliation.
- ✓ Sorting out confused and conflicting emotions
- ✓ Expressing and sharing our feelings with others.
- ✓ Reaching out for help and social support.
- ✓ Finding ways to alleviate the pain.
- ✓ Transforming the pain to creative works.
- ✓ Questioning our own identity and life purpose.
- ✓ Discovering new meanings for the loss and suffering.
- ✓ Nursing and healing the wound.
- ✓ Trying out new things and new relationships.
- ✓ Re-examining one’s own identity.

- ✓ Revisiting one's priorities and life goals.
- ✓ Integrating the loss with the present and the future.
- ✓ Attempting to move forward in spite of the wound.

When one or more of the above happens, the person is consciously or unconsciously stressed. The stress will differ based on many factors that are already mentioned. What, then, is mourning?

#### 2.4.2. MOURNING

--- is when a person expresses his/her grief, either privately or publicly, often according to cultural prescriptions. Mourning tends to be a shared communal experience. This is so because during that period there is a collective observation of cultural/religious rituals at memorial services and funerals. By so doing, the burden of grief is lightened, and the significance of loss is recognized. Mourning serves as the adaptive function of extending comfort to each other. The outpouring of collective grief can be a powerful source of comfort to the bereaved, because it conveys the messages that the deceased has not lived and died in vain and he/she matters to others. A period of mourning, which varies from culture to culture, facilitates grief work. Grief can become complicated and prolonged without benefit of publicly acknowledged mourning. This stands as a reason to many why's on young people in the matters that pertains to death and funerals today in the current Batswana people and tradition. Deducing from what has been picked up by Wong in the Chinese culture, mourning can go on indefinitely, when it becomes part of the ancestor worship; the offspring would burn incense, offer food, and paper money to their ancestors on various occasions each year, it is everything that does not differ much with the Barolong of Ganyesa. In fact, the whole idea is the same but may just differ in some applications and articulations. These

rituals provide perpetual opportunities to remember and honour the deceased, and form part of dealing with mourning process.

Whilst the focus is still on mourning and grieving, there is reasonable temptation of looking a little deeper into the same concepts. It should, however, not be misconstrued with Kubler-Ross's stance, which will be dealt with in the next chapter. Though the series and stages of response might sound very much the same, the difference with Kubler-Ross is that, the said stages are identified and followed with the dying people, and we are here looking into the bereaved and grieving. A fact worthy to be sounded is that there are common themes in response to every loss.

## 2.5. RESPONSE TO LOSS

By this time it is known by all that the loss of anything, and specifically of the loved one is stressful. Naturally, the bereaved individual adjusts to a situation they find themselves, and they establish a homeostatic and ecological equilibrium. This equilibrium provides gratification, support, fulfilment, and enjoyment, as well as new challenges. The problems and opportunities posed by loss change over time and require varying, creative solutions. The bereaved individual copes with a multiplicity of intellectual, emotional, and behavioural techniques.

Jacobs, a profound professor in the field of psychiatry, distinguishes two principal perspectives on coping namely: "The first is conscious coping, which typically denotes a problem-solving orientation, and the second is unconscious coping, which implies a more defensive function. However, on close examination, we see that both views of coping have problem-oriented and defensive qualities." (Jacobs 1993: 115).

He went on to explore both types of coping in relationship to each other and in relation to neuroendocrine function as an index of physiological arousal. It is a thought of the author that it is important to go through these thoughts and evaluate what we all do in families and as churches

in the times when we are struck by loss of loved ones through sudden death side by side.

The following broad categories are used by Wong on the other hand to illustrate the same coping mechanisms by people under stress. They are:

**“2.5.1. Denial and avoidance: people dealing with loss especially through sudden death resort to all sorts of defence mechanisms, such as suppression or repression. We carefully avoid every reminder of our loss. We seek asylum in the bottle or a pill. We seek escape through work or love. Even when the very foundation of our lives is crumbling, we still refuse to face the reality of our severe loss. We try to convince ourselves that the pain will eventually go away. But a prolonged state of denial can only make things worse. Grief may evolve into post-traumatic stress disorder or some other forms of adjustments difficulties.**

#### **2.5.2. Endurance and rumination:**

**We drown ourselves in sorrow, and make life unbearable for everyone else. We may even delight in becoming victims, because masochism helps reduce survivor’s guilt. In some cases, the loss is so traumatic, so severe that the only energy left is to passively absorb the unrelenting punishment. We savour the excruciating pain and let our wounds fester unattended. We are obsessed with regrets and past failures. We become the walking dead.**

#### **2.5.3. Anger and aggression**

**Our inner becomes uncontrollable rage. We lash out at everyone or channel our anger toward those responsible for the death of the loved one. We ask for blood, for justice. Rightly or wrongly, we believe that only revenge will ease our unbearable pain.**

#### **2.5.4. Meaninglessness and hopelessness**

The loss of a loved one often creates a sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness. An untimely and unexpected death may also shatter our assumptive void. The bereaved may be troubled and crippled by a profound sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness. Depression and bad grief may set in. However, in most cases, the bereaved would struggle to make sense of what has happened and to reconstruct basic assumptions in order to accommodate the loss in building a new future.

#### **2.5.5. Transformation and growth**

The painful experience of grieving provides a unique opportunity for self discovery and personal growth. The basic process involves some fundamental re-organisation and transformation of our priorities and belief-meaning systems. However, the steps may be painful and torturous, often involving some elements of the first three types of grief reactions. The process may involve a variety of strategies and practices, such as mindful meditation, spiritual pursuit, and a change of life goal.” (Wong et al 2008:378-379).

Learning from what is said by Wong, it can be comprehended how delicate some situations of grieving can be. This can not over-emphasize the need for skilful handling by all those who come with pastoral intervention to them. There is much to learn about coping during bereavement, and there is also much to be gained with such knowledge. An understanding of how acutely bereaved individuals successfully cope with loss holds the potential for providing a greater appreciation of the natural history of healing and recovery from the emotional distress and social disruptions caused by death. This

knowledge can serve as a cornerstone for developing psychotherapeutic interventions to help bereaved individuals that go beyond the basic strategies of fostering expression of feelings, if there is avoidance of grief, and supporting mitigatory efforts of the individual to modulate the emotions and if the distress of grief is subjectively overwhelming. We need to interpret grief work in broadest terms, including not only the emotional, social, and cognitive tasks discussed. In the current and practical pastoral care context, many ministers and pastoral care givers are found wanting in various ways when they meet people troubled by trauma, stress or depression through sudden death, and many therefore are simply referred clients and congregants to other sciences for help. It looks more likely as shunning the responsibility at times. But for the purpose of this study, conference with such sciences is important for complementation insight enrichment of service by the general church and pastoral caregivers.

## 2.6. COMMON REFERRAL SCIENCES

It is almost obvious that any attempt of seeking understanding about stresses inflicted by death, evident in the times of grieving and mourning, should be complemented by viewing the same from the views of the referral sciences. These sciences happen to be working very closely with one another in practice that distinct as they might be, they are also inseparable.

When people view sudden death and also death from their experiences, they describe it very often as painful. Psychology deals with descriptions and models of pain, and to a large extent, it involves medicine as the way of healing pain.

Ogden recalls a gate control theory (GCT) of pain as developed by Melzack and Wall (1965, 1982 and Melzack 1979) which represented an attempt to introduce the psychology of understanding pain. Following



**Melzack and Wall suggestion, several factors can open the gate. These include:**

- **physical factors, such as injury or activation of the large fibres;**
- **emotional factors, such as anxiety, worry, tension and depression;**
- **Behavioural factors, such as focusing on the pain or boredom.**

**They state further that closing the gate reduces pain perception, and there are also factors that can close the gate namely:**

- ✓ **physical factors, such as medication, stimulation of small fibres;**
- ✓ **emotional factors, such as happiness, optimism or relaxation;**
- ✓ **Behavioural factors, such as concentration, distraction or involvement in other activities.**

**Though the model represents an important advancement on the previous simple stimulus response theories of pain, there are problems identified with it. It has introduced the role of psychology and described a multi-dimensional process rather than a simple linear one. Firstly, there is no evidence to illustrate the existence of the gate or the interaction between the three components. Secondly, although the input from the site of physical injury is mediated and moderated by experience and other psychological factors, the model still assumes an organic basis for pain. This interaction of physiological and psychological factors can explain individual variability and phantom limb pain to an extent, but, because the model still assumes some organic based around a simple response process. Thirdly, the GCT attempted to depart from traditional dualistic models of health by its integration of the mind and body. However, although the GCT suggests some integration or interaction between mind and body, it still sees them as separate processes. The model suggests that physical processes are influenced by the psychological processes, but that these two sets of processes are distinct. (Ogden 2000: 257-259).**

Sudden death happens to be an incident that is problematic as seen through the eyes family, friends and relatives, but the dissection of the problem will show the psychological engagement of those in grief to the subject, and all mourners will see physical actions and reactions manifested in various ways. On the other hand, psychiatry distinguishes many kinds of anxiety disorders, of course, resulting from many causes. The author would like to call to the remembrance of the reader here that the subject under discussion now is one of the known causes of such disorders as they are mentioned in this chapter. Sudden death makes many people suffer severe loss and/or stress. Tomb agrees with this and even goes on to assert that people suffering under such conditions may develop clinical syndrome of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Later, depression, emotional numbing and preoccupation with the trauma may dominate. The more severe the stress, the more likely PTSD is, firstly to develop, and secondly, to be long lasting. This may be resolved after months varying from one condition to the other and from one patient to patient.

What is of higher interest is the treatment of such conditions.

Tomb states that medical drugs substantially reduce symptoms in 60% of the cases and should be tried. He recommends clomipramine as the first choice, then fluoxetine and later augmentation with buspirone or clonazepam. He considers that behaviour therapy is essentially complemented to medications. This conviction clarifies how medicine perceives and treats people with stress. Science sees people more like objects or machines that can be normalised by drugs, whilst theology, through pastoral care, sees the image of God in people and can be blessed by grace to completeness of healing. This area is a shortfall in the medical science world and theology can strengthen it. However, Tomb goes on to note that, ritualizers should use a combination of

exposure to feared situation and response prevention. In all the tried means of treating stress by all the above sciences, psychotherapy is also pronounced to be one of the avenues to be employed in many patients. It stands to reason therefore that psychotherapy is almost indispensable in dealing with the problem of stress and depression as seen by the afore-mentioned practices.

Considering closely what is mentioned by the above sciences, one notes an implicit stress on the usage of drugs to remedy the situation. Given the kind of pain that hits people in the event of sudden death and studying or applying the gate control theory by Melzack and all who subscribed to the same theory, one would like to specifically concentrate on the emotional factors that open and close that gate. The open gate of pain through death should be sort to close through the effort to induce optimism and relaxation on the affected. It is a focal point and area that theology has power upon. Tomb happens to be one amongst many psychiatrists and medical practitioners whose focus on drugs leaves a big room to be desired. This is said given the current state of affairs with regards to human beings and human life suffering under stress and depression. The general health of people and their susceptibility to diseases has channelled many people into drug addicts of different kinds so much so that there is a need of trying to win human beings away from such drugs rising everyday.

Death no matter how sudden it may be, or what loss it may mean to the bereaved has got no connection with having to weaken people in anyway to depend on drugs especially in the presence of the practices and sciences like theology and psychology. This is just another way of stating to the public that following the bereavement of loved one through death, one has a disorder called drug abuse. It becomes clear as one deals more and more with the subject and the patients that as much as all the sciences need each other, theology and psychology

**gives more responsibility to the affected or the bereaved to work out of the otherwise undesirable situation of stress and later depression, whilst psychiatry and medicine, in some way, guides what they call their patients into the right drugs and right usage.**

**Acknowledging that we all need one another for complete success, it is worth remembering how wonderful has Kubler Ross considered the constitution of a human being into four quadrants that was noted in chapter one, the physical wellbeing, the emotional, the spiritual and the cognitive wellbeing. As the medical world concentrates and claims a lot of victory on the physical, they overlook the spiritual. In the instances where the ailments to the physical are caused by the spiritual, medical drugs cannot win over ill-health, and thus no success. The human being under such conditions is then in need of theology and its pastoral care for completeness to the person's constitution of being.**

**What all practitioners must be taught to handle with care is the fact and knowledge that death has the ability to negatively touch the bereaved holistically, especially those who are Pastoral care practitioners and givers. The first reason might be that death induces stress, a subject as well which the likes of Palmer and Dryden has affirmed to affect the whole being of a person. The statements is made more real by the conviction that even if any one argues that some part of what forms the human being may or may not be touched, the oneness of being human proves it otherwise. Apostle Paul understood the body well when he taught that even when one part of the body is hurt, the whole body becomes hurt with it.**

**The fact that human beings live in particular societies they either form or find themselves in, makes every skilful practitioner consider the traditional, practical and physical situation of people suffering from stress and/or depression.**

Theology through pastoral care has succeeded quiet convincingly over the years in assisting the people faced squarely with their threats about death and all what it brings central to her mission, and as it is prescribed by Christ Himself. Through her committed ministers and pastors, the Church has ushered comfort to hurting people with prudence, and supported them through. This is one common ground all sciences and practices under consideration would embrace, and a ground that can benefit all, if it is carried forward into the next century. Cooperation amongst the said practices and reliable validation of practitioners and caregivers stands as landmark of claiming back the authority of the church on the entire human race. We have had a reasonable journey about stress and depression as a result of death. And facing the reality that different fields and sciences also deal with the said by products of trauma, it is important and exciting to note that there is a virtual common point by all to agree upon. This point happens to be the fact that every field, one way or another, believes and uses rituals in their route towards helping the affected. It suffices to say that we all know that rituals that are well understood and practiced have a lot of positive impact on the lives of people. Much as the approach happens to be from various angles, the problem is one of the potential common chords which can be used to embrace our convictions to that which we do, aiming at easing the pain and all effects of sudden death. It is the reason why rituals form part of pastoral care, and must be understood by current ministers and pastors, and all pastoral caregivers. We shall deal further with this point in chapter four as we shall be looking into pastoral care.

## **2.7. SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have explored the concepts surrounding stresses resulting from sudden death that are common in the lips of people today for better understanding. We discovered a number of relationships

between and amongst such primitive concepts and losing their original meaning. We noted that in reality, sudden death induce trauma in people, and trauma yield a number of responses which include stress and depression. Effort was made to project the build up of stress in the body and psyche of the human being, and how complicated stress is and that it may result from a simple practical situation. Some of the perceptions and the interpretations of sciences in collaboration around stress were conferred with. Quite importantly, the chronology of sequence of responses to situations by emotions was also dealt with. This has shown that bereavement through this sudden death happen first, and then grieving follows as an inevitable response, and thus this grief is expressed in our mourning.

In the next chapter we look into what death is. We shall discover if there is a relationship between death and sudden death. Given how medical science, psychology and psychiatry views and interprets stress and depression, we shall explore some of their views of death. This will be related with what theology has to say about the image of God that is immortal even in the event of the death of the body. We shall put some effort into refocusing the reader and the church on to the spiritual component of a human composition, the component that falls squarely on to the responsibility of the church and her pastoral care.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1. DEATH AND DYING

Despite the presence of death in the midst of our lives, we continue to live our lives as not having any relationship with it (death). This is caused by our dislike for it. Instead, we are more closed, in relationship, to funerals than death as the (funerals) happen to be a way of acknowledging that death is residing in our midst. Clearly, many of our people especially the young generation, is struggling to talk and discuss about this issue, although they want to know and speak of death by 'personification' as a funeral. This necessitates more the responsibility of defining the same death by pastoral caregivers at all angles of life. It can not be disputed here therefore that death and funeral of our beloved are inseparable, yet can be distinguished. It is because of the death of all of those that we bury, and in burying them we order the burial in the kind of a battery called funeral. This happens to be more of a battery because it is an order of how the service of burial which incorporates pastoral care will unfold, and this differs from one context to another.

The author, in his life experience, has witnessed and conducted many funerals. This witness comes from different angles that happen to face us concerning funerals of the dead in our lives. He has attended these funerals as a mourner, a pal bearer, a minister and other ways that may include just accompanying people. As a member of the clergy himself, he has also listened and heard many of our brothers and sisters both from the clergy and laity in their sermons making shocking claims of the authorities they have over death. This is claimed as either a particular church denomination or in their own personal selves, and this has always left the author asking serious questions about us (pastoral caregivers) as the church, and our

responsibility during funerals and when burying the dead. This state of affairs tears every grounded pastoral caregiver in attendance of such services to the level of even feeling lost and losing the entire purpose of attending such funerals.

In a rather positive note, when all this happens it sparks dialogue that yields introspection about what we all say and do in the times when the society is looking to us as a ministers to bury the dead. In a number of instances, this has compelled the author to confess that his lack of knowledge of death, but at least he knows that human beings and all living species of the universe do die one time.

In remembering the times when we were growing up as small boys and girls, a long time ago before there were current common accidents and diseases, many construed or misconstrued death to be something of the adult and the aged people. It was then a conventional belief that children are born, they grow into adolescent and adults, they age into old men and women and then they die. The current struggle that is sometimes heated by sudden deaths and bereavement that we all experience is the question whether we are losing so young people. The answer is shocking. They are lost in many ways and accidents, long time before they age into adults and the aged. The unbearable pains we have had to face are the loss of the promising life and success, sometimes even comfort of prosperity.

Kubler Ross' definition and/or thought of death as a 'final stage of growth' is very dear to the author's heart given what happens at that stage. That can be understood through conscious and careful imagination. We all grow in many ways, but the growth that happens at the time when one is in death's path to be exclusive to the dying.

Following their belief then, nearing the grave as a journey was a thing for the aged. One feels safe today following current experiences about death



to state that 'the journey to one's death and grave begins immediately after birth, actually at conception, immediately when life begins'.

The state of not knowing what death in itself is, answers the question whether we know what life is. Our life is so overwhelmed by death that we never really consider and capture what life and living is for us. We very often confuse life and living to be frantically accumulating a range and the quantity of experience valued in fantasy by others. We ultimately just pass through our lives without really living them.

It came to the author's realisation that life is a period or time of being alive and it is characterised by all biological processes such as growth, reproduction, movement, respiration etc. And living is expressed by the way we struggle to find in this time a sense of peace and strength to deal with disappointments and pain, while always striving to discover vehicles to be more accessible and to increase and sustain the joys and delights. Death is thus captured by many as is by Barnhart who defines it as:

- 'the fact or act of dying' (World Book Dictionary 1995 : 533).

It is a deduction from the above definition that dying is a fight against losing and loss of life. Having acknowledged the flaw of not knowing death, one has to come out straight and bold, and say that death is 'known' by the dead. It is one of the absolute myths only tangible in the hands of God, the one believed to be the giver of life.

But our human views and responses of those affected by death induces our attitudes towards death. Very often and commonly, we view death as undesirable, unwanted, sinful, bad and in all negative other terms that describes how we do not want it and perceives it as the worst enemy to be conquered and yet always conquering us. More often than never, we HATE death. But negative as our perception might be about death, times warrants and oblige us to begin to revisit death as in Kubler Ross's words:-

**'Invincible, but friendly, companion on our lives journey---gently reminding us not to wait till tomorrow to do what we mean to do'  
(Kubler Ross 1975: x).**

**In any event of death we suffer, and in our suffering our faith can be seriously shaken and severely tested. It is when one is directly and specifically hit by death that one realizes that one is only a 'nominal' Christian whose faith has weaknesses and with biblical knowledge fragile, and quite often lacks firm grounding. At these times, being told that it is 'the will of God'; whilst of course ultimately true, it might not satisfactorily explain the tragedy especially in cases of sudden and tragic death. Whilst agreeing with Smith, that until this day:**

**'Psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists have made contributions from their own sciences, and novelists and poets have addressed the subject',**

**One also has to stress with complete affirmation Smith's own finding that:**

**"Death and its results, for the living, comes in many different ways and combinations" (Smith 2002: 2).**

**This is exemplified by the numerous shocking news of death we all have received in many instances such as:**

- The old age home that suddenly catch fire and many die there unexpectedly;**
- Many friends go to the soccer match in the stadium and suddenly there is stampede and many die there;**
- A father leaves home going to work after being home for holiday and on his way he meets an accident and dies;**
- A mother attends a church conference and on the way home she meets an accident and dies;**

- A young adult and a son in a home has conflict with his girlfriend and in the misunderstanding he decide to commit suicide; and many other ways and forms in which sudden death hits us.

All the afore mentioned examples leave the bereaved with very intimate and crucial questions to respond to, and often the responses conflict with other dear people, sometimes even result into being serious enemies.

The author believes, it all begins with LOVE. In the event of every death there is grief. All this is squarely founded on an aspect of our human formation called emotions. Smith distinguishes two sides of our emotions as the concupiscible and the irascible. The concupiscible being love, desire and joy, and their opposite being hatred, aversion and sorrow. (Smith 2002: 55). When we deal with the frustrations of our desires, we become angry and we fear, we become anxious and so forth. When we grieve or are bereaved, we are in a state of sorrow, but can also be angry or anxious, depending on the situation we are in. This is also correctly captured by Kubler Ross on the five reactions people often experience when they face their own death.

‘These are: Denial,  
Anger,  
Bargaining (with God),  
Depression and perhaps final,  
Acceptance’. (Kubler Ross 1986: 34-121).

I have to remind the reader that Kubler Ross was dealing with the dying and all these stages relate to that same person, dying. But I have noticed from interaction with the people that the same stages apply even more practical to those who remain the bereaved. At the reception of the news of death, many often deny that. They keep asking questions such as:

“Is this true” and followed by the answer, “no, this can’t be true” There is naturally a following up anger with someone, usually the one that is believed to have caused that death then. On and on the stages go, until

the final acceptance that “s/he is gone through death, and nothing can be done to undo that.”

It is worth asserting also that given all our different experiences with these bereaved and grieving on loved ones, the afore said stages are not always all there, and their order vary naturally.

Whilst striving to love as we all must as a way of responding to God’s love and commandment, and law through Jesus, we also must accept that love is a risk of sorrow, sadness, grief, and all such feelings expressing frustration at a particular time in our lives. This was also exemplified by Jesus at the grave of Lazarus and the Jews affirmed it: “see how he loved him”. (John 11: 36).

Death is most of the times a fact; but a fact that necessitates grief. It is thus a subject that is evaded, ignored and denied by our youth and all progress-oriented societies. It takes courage to stop and think positive about it, and if done well, it brings about development and informs life and living as gifts, and guides towards life’s fruitfulness of happiness and productivity. But until this stage, and from the community I come from and even the one I care for as a pastor, death is a problem. It is more a problem when it is sudden because to the relatives, such deaths cause a strong sense of unreality and even feelings of guilt. There is sometimes increased need to, kind of, blame somebody in the feeling of helplessness and deeper depression than might be expected. The relatives affected by sudden death ask among other questions:

- “ if only I had seen him/her once more before s/he died”
- “Did s/he say anything before s/he died?”
- “I feel terrible. We had a fight this morning, before I left for work, and we both said some awful things to each other. If only I could make things right with him/her”.

- “I wish I had been a better husband/wife/daughter/son/mother/father etc to him/her. If only I could start over”
- “Why can’t I see him/her just once more so that I can tell him/her how sorry I am, and how much I love him/her?”

It is never enough to love a person, even when true love is shown to people in different ways, love is never saturated. It is a feeling and a part of human nature that demands more and more. Sudden death is like a bullet that shoots the chord called love that binds people, and it shoots with the intention of killing it. In the event of failing to kill it, strain of this chord result because a host of ‘meaningful’ gestures and expressions are impossible and many a times does not fulfil. Kubler-Ross had a better expertise in this field because of the kind of pastoral care she did. It is important to look closer to her discoveries by way of explaining what we hold in our hands today about the same problem to inform our responses in such times of need.

### 3.1.1 ANALYSIS OF Kubler-Ross’s VIEW

The author reached a point of adoption that the most distinctive feature of Kubler-Ross’ thought on the dying is to imagine death as a ‘process’ rather than as a ‘state’. Her work like that of many other researchers was done in hospitals with the terminally ill. Her patients had plenty of time to reflect on their situations. She speaks of the ‘stages’ of as distinctively psychological happenings, and organizes her data into a schema of progression. That most empirical studies have not entirely validated this area, or revealed only unsurprising conditions such as denial and depression, does not make the idea of stages less attractive. A process heads somewhere, and this fact in itself implicitly promises an order and goal. This is perhaps what has made Kubler-Ross uniquely popular. It re-visited time and again that

Kubler-Ross' work differs with this topic, as was noted in the research-gap above, in that she dealt with the dying whilst the topic focuses on the stress and depression which forms largely the contexts within which pastoral caregivers and practitioners work in any event of sudden death.

### 3.1.2. DYING 'STAGES'

If dying is progression, and this is a psychological process and not just a way to describe the course of the fatal disease in Kubler-Ross' view, then the process has a starting point and a goal. Lucy Bregman notes that:

“The five stages of dying are Kubler-Ross' major contribution to the American culture's perspective on death. The stages begin with 'denial', when the person first hears the diagnosis, generally, and proceed through anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. (Kubler-Ross 1969: 264).

Overall, what this process accomplishes is to acknowledge the reality of impending loss, conclude one's 'unfinished business', and finally let go of life. This schema requires an attitude of renunciation, expressed perhaps in the ancient near-death posture of turning one's face towards the wall and away from the living. But the term renunciation forms no part of Kubler-Ross' vocabulary. Instead she transforms this into the very positive-sounding goal of 'acceptance'. (Bregman 1992: 33).

In our context of Africa, all these stages affect not the dying only, but the entire family and relatives. The stages have got no order, and often are distinctive to all. As a result, there come various hallucinations of seeing and hearing this and that by many people involved. Given the strength of faith and believes in supernatural powers, the possibilities of witchcraft become important to be investigated. In pursuit of such investigations people are either made or destroyed, healed or seriously wounded by some of false traditional healers are the result of hunger and starvation due to economic ups and downs of the whole world. A closer attention to

people by pastoral care at this point is inevitable, and this must come from both inside the family and outside.

On death and dying concepts, when we begin with such American-Freudian generalizations as “in our unconscious, death is never possible in regard to ourselves... in our unconscious mind we can only be killed” (Kubler-Ross 1969: 2). “Fear of death is a universal fear.” Kubler-Ross 1969: 5). Denial and projection are seen as universal responses to the frightening power of death. Children are not aware of death’s irreversibility; like the unconscious, they simply do not believe in it. (Kubler-Ross 1969: 3). We can sit and think today but we can never come to imagine the conclusion of what the goal of acceptance would be or would mean. Maybe it becomes as one way of trying to legitimize the repression of death as it often was to the American society. Kubler-Ross then shifts to factors within contemporary culture that exacerbate the denial of death. Among these are the elaborate medical technology and the impersonal bureaucracy of hospitals, the setting that turns human mortality into ‘management of terminally ill patients’. She then relates a story that plays a key role not only in her work. When she was a child in rural Switzerland, she remembers, a farmer had an accident and died a few days later in his bed at home. His family was with him; even she, the neighbour’s child, was present. He had time to say good-bye amid familiar surroundings. This is the way most people once died, and this, she claims, is the way people ought to die even today. (Kubler-Ross 1969: 5-6). Such a death is termed to be ‘natural’, it forms the peaceful and terrifying end to life. In such a setting, death can be ‘accepted’, not just by others but even the dying person. It is a kind of way that one can ‘wish’ to die by his/her time of death. This kind of death comes after following a kind of closure for both the dying and the next of kin, and therefore does/should not in any way result in casualties that needs immediate attention by pastoral caregivers.

Kubler-Ross' five stages are defined as emotional state. She insists that denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance can have any variety of cognitive contents. What is constant of the dying patient is to express the emotions appropriate to each stage. Unlike a denying patient, an angry patient disrupts hospital civility and routine, and will often be deliberately avoided and isolated by the staff. Kubler-Ross' strategy for dealing with anger is to stress to its human targets that it is not meant personally, and to encourage its expression for emotional catharsis. Screaming, hitting a pillow, raging at God all right; they express, but in such a way that no one will be hurt. She continues to assure her readers that God is mighty enough to be able to take and welcome our anger. But at all stages, emotional expression is healthy; suppression is not. In addition, some of the responses mostly accepted as proper such as fighting one's illness to the end, are seen by Kubler-Ross as unhealthy and unnatural. "If dying is a process that unfolds spontaneously, then 'the will to live' can impede the process. To cheer up patients, to encourage them to fight, is counter-productive". (Kubler-Ross 1969: 87). So is pressing them to continue treatments when they are 'ready' to die. She deliberately challenges the language of heroism, of military resistance to death. "After all, the entire medical profession relies on a military model of conquest, of unlimited unconditional war". These are the words of William May as quoted by Bregman in her book, *Death in the midst of life*. She continues to assert in line with her source who is Kubler-Ross, to say medicine sees in any patient's death its own defeat. Knowing Kubler-Ross' line of thought now, one can safely say how much would she refute such a stance of medicine. The importance of medicine must be ensured to reach human nature relative to death, and what death is relative to what life is. This might help in the redefinition of death, and what it is when sometimes it hits us all of a sudden. The distinction of death as an enemy and death as a friend shall be made, and the paradox of bargaining with death shall be given a new meaning.



### 3.2. Towards defining Death anew

Death is already defined above by scholars who worked deeply and broader with the dying and the bereaved. Given all our experiences about it and following what we felt in those times, one knows it as, at least, more of an enemy than a friend. Death has suddenly gained more and more explanations recently in our modern society and relative to our broad diversity of beliefs some of which we have acquired with the modernity of our life. It raises eyebrows when at any given time one tries to differentiate between deaths. Whether death differs from sudden death in any way is debated by many saying all death is sudden because nobody knows the hour of death in advance. The answer to the above has given particular and new responses and thoughts by many people in different societies, including the bereaved and this fact has emerged as one of those aspects which have concerned the author to necessitate an attempt to answering these questions.

Charles-Edwards thinks' of death as:

“Both a passive and an active force. The figure in mythology is sometimes given an active character: in Ingmar Bergman’s medieval film, *The Seventh Seal*, for example, the figure of Death challenges the knight to play chess as a means of postponing the knight’s own death. When the game is over, inevitably Death wins, taking the knight’s life as the prize. Death is prepared to cheat but always wins in the end. The chess game is a powerful metaphor for millions of different battles with Death. Some of us endeavour to keep Death at bay by building up our health, giving up smoking, saying our prayers or making some sacrifice in order to benefit others. Death can be given many names in this active role, sometimes neutral, as in *The seventh Seal*, sometimes as a malign force, with such negative as Satan or the Devil, or the positive personality of an active God who chooses when each of us is to die: ‘the night thy soul is required of

thee'. Death can also feel as if it is passive. It has been described as a fact rather than as an experience. It just happens, perhaps by chance: why that night for the heart attack, that journey for the fatal accident? Death can occur without apparent reason. Just as the sun rises on the just and the unjust, so some people live comfortably to old age, while others die young” (Charles-Edwards 2000:118-119).

But the sudden death that occurs in the form of accident, murder or suicide evades in many ways the description as that ‘it is the loving God’s choice’ for the person to die. It befits in many ways to be related to the devil’s negative ways, and such death comes to many people as loss to the devil’s evil thoughts and actions. Such death inflicts stress and challenges in a serious way to even those who we consider grounded in their faith in God. This kind of death inflicts stress, some of which might be possible to result in undesirable responses such as depression. The people, who happen to, one way or another, reach these levels of stress responses cannot simply be construed to be unreasonable weak, they need pastoral care that is skilful from the broad church.

Death itself has many meanings. Raphael remembers it as: ‘the grim reaper; a sleep from which the sleeper does not awake; a catastrophe and destruction; non-being; transition to another life; the end; the loss of loved one; the death of self’. She continues to stress that:

“it is the inevitable part of human experience. The knowledge of its inevitability is incorporated into the psychological structure of each person and accommodated in many ways. Human society, from its earliest times, has evolved rituals and myths in its attempts to give meaning to death: the mysterious, fearful, and the unknown. Through the ages man has devised many symbolic primitive ritualistic ways to cope with death and bereavement. Many include magical beliefs about the causes of death and ways one may be protected from it---as if in an attempt to

control it and make meaning of it. It is commonly assumed that many contemporary societies are death denying.

Death is conceptualized in many ways. In early childhood, its nature and finality cannot be easily visualized, yet as the individual grows he/she comes to understand it as personal and inevitable and associated with the natural cessation of bodily processes. The individual may understand this for others, but analytic views would suggest that the unconscious mind cannot accept death, and that human being cannot contemplate own death as absolute cessation of all existence. Freud thought that all interest on mortality was denial of death. Jung, on the other hand, saw enormous significance in the symbolic idea of immortality, yet he recognised the fear of death and described it as 'the fear that envelopes the sleepless one like a smothering blanket' (Raphael 1989: 19-20).

It should be noted to the reader that Raphael's thoughts above is looking at a person that is thinking of his/her own death, no matter how sudden it might be. It must be mentioned here that in practical circumstances all the uneasy and undesirable feelings about and around death end at death itself. It can be pronounced that it is how the one dying approaches his/her own death, and that this happens independently from all other people without any consideration of the closeness of a relationship. The big struggle, the one pastoral care is handling at the present moment is about the appropriate journeying with those who are struck by this death all of a sudden.

Our South African constitution's chapter 2 is about the bill of rights. Very crucial among these rights is a clear and well documented 'right to life'. This is one aspect of our being that is currently under scrutiny. It is this right that is questioned against God in the event of any sudden death. Even in the hospital wards, many who are passing on and pronounced by medical

doctors to be 'naturally died', are not always seen as such by family and friends.

Hannelore Wass, picks up shortly a pronouncement of sentiments from two sciences represented by two people, Dr Rieux and Father Paneloux. At that time they both worked very hard, spending many long hours in the hospitals and other places where the risk of contracting plague was great. They came to a young boy who was suffering, and both their efforts --- prayers and the antiplague serum--- failed. Simply put: 'human might and wisdom came to an end'. It was after some exchange of heated words in argument when Paneloux said to Rieux:-

Then he shook his head. "No, Father. I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture... but I'd rather not discuss that with you. We're working side by side for something that unites us---beyond blasphemy and prayers. And it's the only thing that matters". Paneloux sat down beside Rieux. It was obvious that he was deeply moved. "Yes, yes" he said. "You. Too, are working for man's salvation". "Salvation's much too big a word for me. I do not aim so high. I'm concerned with man's health and for me his health comes first" (Smith 2002: 176). "That is, sort of, revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand". Rieux straightened up slowly. He gazed at Paneloux, summoning to his gaze all the strength and fevor he could muster against his weariness. Paneloux was in the face of this suffering boy till the boy's death, and was greatly changed in his perception of death. And shortly before his own death he preaches a sermon to his congregation, with a much changed perception to the one then known by the same congregation. He is quoted saying:-

"And, to tell the truth, nothing was more important on earth than a child's suffering, the horror it inspires in us, the reasons we must find to

account for it. In other manifestations of life God made things easy for us and thus far, our religion had no merit. But, in this respect, He put us, so to speak, with our backs to the wall.... My brothers, a time of testing has come for us all. We must believe everything or deny everything. And who, I ask amongst you would dare to deny everything? My brothers....the love of God is a hard love. It demands total self-surrender, disdain of our human personality. And yet it alone can reconcile us to suffering and the deaths of children, it alone can justify them, since we cannot understand them, and we can only make God's will ours. That is the hard lesson I would share with you today. That is the faith, cruel in human eyes, and crucial in God's; which we must ever strive to compass. We must aspire beyond ourselves towards a high fearful vision". (Wass 1979: 371).

What a portrait! That would be the author's first comment about the above argument as it does so much in pronouncement that much as we all are so pro life and claims the right to it by will and supreme law of our country, we must assimilate in our being a conscious knowledge of our 'right to death' of course, as a consolation, at the will of God. Whilst the church as a pastoral care community comes in for the help and protection of the vulnerable in the face of grief and bereavement, the church must also as its responsibility help them to face the death. In the event of disagreements and misunderstandings, either between/amongst the siblings or relatives, or between relatives and the church, or in any form or way, death can become not only a pain but also can strain all who are involved in almost every way.

Death, especially when sudden, forcefully pushes the bereaved and mourners into a journey into the unknown land, 'From life with the deceased person, to life without him/her.' The church needs to prepare them for this journey. The author asserts, that if the living may pause to consider the meaning of death to the dying and/or the dead, relative to the meaning of

the same to the mourners, the impact and pain it has on us, the living, would be alleviated in a way.

Veatch defines death as:-

‘a complete change in status of living entity characterised by the irreversible loss of those characteristics that are essentially significant to it’ (Wass 1979: 324).

Not in any dispute with Veatch, the author may pronounce, but realising that given the definition of death by Kubler Ross, all who tries to define it again do so relative to what they would like to say about the same thing. Agreeing as already said before by Kubler Ross saying that death is the final stage of growth, I also say not only growth occur during death, but also loss of everything is evident. But we are bound to ask a question ‘what is essentially significant to a human being’ so that we can understand Veatch’s definition. This question is in its nature a philosophical question--- having ethical and other values. But pastorally as well, when the same question is asked, it refers not to the dying or dead, but the bereaved and the grieving. Following this recognition the author picks up the following significances as those that are essential and actually characterize somehow, human life:-

- Flow of vital fluids. ....as an instance, breath and blood.
- Soul from the body ....that is the animating principle of life according to Aristotle.
- Capacity for bodily integration.
- Capacity for social integration.

It is striking to discover that all four essentials directly affect the dying and only the fourth one directly affects the mourners. The definition by Veatch also explains why death is so undesirable and viewed with all negatives; --- Death is a loss of life, both by the dying and the living/mourning. Facing up to it is a monumental task. It seems to be the worst thing that could possibly

happen, and that once the hope of a longer, healthy life has gone, there is nothing except despair.

Buckman concurs that, “despair, like anger, fear and denial, is a very common phase in facing the threat of dying. There is no magic formula that will instantly banish it. This word ‘despair’, really, means the loss of hope” (Smith 2002: 65).

I want to use these sentiments relative to the observations, and of course remembrances about our whole family during and after that time my own sister lost her husband and children in a tragic car accident that is already mentioned in chapter 1. I realise that it was, and still is, the journey she and all of us had to undertake into the unknown land and destination. I speak with clear conscience and experience that this can be a daunting prospect. But the following steps are worth emphasis by pastoral care givers, (they shall be stressed in the next chapter)

- Accept the way you feel. Do it without thinking who you are.
- Assess your needs. Clarify them from your wants.
- List your resources. Do it relative to all your aims and goals of life.
- Do not make big decisions rapidly. Even if we do not have a guarantee about the length of life, we are at least sure that loss of loved one through death is long term.
- Get help if you need it. Deceiving as life might be today, there is inevitable development in all its angles, and surely, human being and structure of assistance everywhere.

Be it as it may; death, more over when sudden, presents faith with its greatest challenge. People are torn apart in almost every way. Faith that has been received and lived with for a long time comes under threat of being abandoned. The people’s spiritual being is wounded to death as that of Jesus in Gethsemane. It is so because it suggests---there is nothing to

hope for, nothing to gain in journeying on, when at the end only loss, blankness and extinction is inevitable. Given and following Pauline account that, 'our life and bodies are just but earthly tents that are sometimes destroyed to usher our permanent state and dwelling place'. (2 Cor. 5: 1-10).

The author understands the term 'destroy' clearly, and its Paul's metaphor of likening human body to the dwelling, death has no other way of explanation in the mind that portrays it as to destroy a dwelling place---merciless, noisy, disharmonious and leaves a very uncomfortable gap. There is room to affirm, therefore, that the relationship between a human being and death is characterized by fear. One is bound to understand when Raphael goes on to describe this fear as: "fear of pain, of destruction, or mutilation, for example. It is the fear of the unknown, a fear of the annihilation of self. It may be a fear of the process of dying with loss of function, dependence on others, incapacity to tolerate the pain involved; or it may be a fear of being alone." (Raphael 1989: 21).

All that is said here culminates into one meaning: Death means a dead human body, the body that lacks breath, still, cold, having absence of response in all respects. Coming into face with this for a loved one brings pain that cuts to the core of personal experience. There are many deaths for many people, but only one death for each individual. Whether it is Raphael, Kubler-Ross, Lyall, Zurheide, Charles-Edwards, Nadeau, and all, I affirm their correctness in what they say about death, what it is and its effects on different people. But I also affirm, with crystal clear conscience, that they all see death from their own contexts. Death from here where I am, where one loses the loved one for no reason at all through sudden death and have to face all repercussions which include caring pastorally for stressed people responding in various ways, and others become severely depressed, is intangible, it is not imaginary but real. It stings human life to extinction at the time that it chooses to, and claims it as its own. No one



knows its structure but all know its effects. I knew it for a long time, but knew it better after claiming the life of my sister's husband and two children at once. In that angle 'death is the worst part of our life', a part of our lives where we are very vulnerable, and in serious need of accompaniment.

### 3.3. DEATH VIEWED BY PSYCHOLOGISTS

With the accompaniment of Bregman, we examine three psychological thinkers whose thoughts are greatly carried in the psychologies surrounding death. These are Ernest Becker, James Hillman, and Robert J. Lifton. They all distance themselves from Kubler-Ross' popular 'death-awareness' movement. The first two are implacable foes of ethical naturalism, and the third one is a serious critic of its simpler formulation. But all three of them rely explicitly on the Freudian, Jungian, and Existentialist legacies, seeking in the these sources an alternative to both American denial of death and the naturalist entering into an explicit use of 'mythic' language in order to express adequately their perspectives on death and its relation to the entire sphere of human life. The contextual South African settings will naturally be implied by inference into specific myths that are applied around death. The 'mythic' dimension is intrinsic, not accidental, to do their work. It suggests how death as a topic may lead spontaneously and inescapably to such language, and how the quest for an adequate mythology of death is part of the depth psychological heritage itself. These authors present the most challenging options for psychologists---as a springboard for rethinking their presuppositions about death---and for Christians who wish to integrate psychology and their own faith.

But the direct use of religious and mythic language by these three depth psychologists raises questions for the entire issue of 'integration'. For psychology as represented by these three, it is already so deeply and intrinsically in the myth-making business that the metaphor of 'integration' with Christianity, is partly misleading. Instead, one might follow Paul Ricoeur,

and speak of conflict of interpretations (Ricoeur 1970: 20), or even a conflict of myths, in order to underscore this point. Insofar as Christian is concerned, faith too makes use of 'myths' as a special form of thought, and cannot be consistently 'demythologised' without losing its central imagery and meaning, the hope for any integration with theories of depth psychology requires that we admit to the mythic character of both partners in the endeavour.

### 3.3.1. ERNEST BECKER

He wrote 'The Denial of Death' short before his death from cancer in 1974. The sense of existential crisis and urgency throughout the book makes this autobiographical tie-in seem more than poignant coincidence, although it remains unclear how much actual knowledge of his illness he (author) had when he began the project. The Denial of Death is a reinterpretation of Freudian depth psychology and existentialist perspectives by way of Rank et al, in their 'Life Against Death'. All of these sources, however, are subordinate to Becker's own polemical, passionate vision. It is impossible, he proclaims, to write an 'objective' and disinterested study of death. Becker's book appeared during the height of the human potential movement, with its rhetoric of health, happiness, and wholeness, of fully actualized potentials and self-enhancement through perpetual growth. For many readers, Denial of Death was a sharp reminder of how far away popular psychology is, and moved from its links with existentialism's more somber view of the human condition. Insofar as Kubler-Ross' popularity was intrinsically tied to the same rhetoric of wholeness and fulfilment---with death as 'The Final Stage of Growth'---Becker's vision is also a bitter critique of that 'healthy-minded' approach. Becker provides readers with a choice from the start: hear what is real, however terrifying, or flee into healthy-mindedness, into all comforting illusions about oneself and the human condition. The first path is heroic and authentic, and it allows for the

unmasking of all those pseudo-solutions that disguise our horror of death. The reader is incessantly aware of the author himself struggling with this choice, or at least the author's persona within the text. Egocentric, outraged, grandly masculine, but in some ways pathetic: this may not be the 'real Ernest Becker', but it is a self-presentation that emerges as a model for those who choose the 'morbidly minded' and courageous path. It is not Becker's empirical arguments that convince the reader, but the degree to which the latter can identify with the author's style of being human.

### 3.3.1.1. Death and Denial

Denial of death stems from the idea of death, the fear of it, something that haunts human beings like nothing else. It is a mainspring of human activity--an activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man. All childhood, in all cultures with their 'her-systems', and all of everything that humans do are fundamentally expressive of this is denial. Every nook and cranny of human existence is contaminated by death's terror. Clearly, death is not 'acceptable', and words such as terror, horror and fear can be repeated more and more. It is as if we, the readers, were always on the verge of slipping back into denial by mitigating the stark reality of death, and only such vivid verbal reminders could halt this process.

"Death is the constant dread presence discovered by Becker in every situation of vulnerability, humiliation, and violence. The task of all alike is to strip away the levels upon levels of desperate lies, which attempt to deny this reality. Becker claims to work from Freud in the light of existentialism. For Freud, as we saw, every situation is construed as a conflict between two psychic forces; Freud was happy to admit that he was forever a dualist. Becker is also very definitely a dualist. Yet unlike Freud, for whom instinct is both biological and psychic, Becker is a much more traditional Cartesian dualist. He splits person

into mind and body far more neatly and artificially than Freud. He assert that nature's values are bodily values, human value are mental values, as he claims for his own one of his chief themes of the existentialist legacy. Thus, Freud's duality of mythic instincts is transformed into mind/body relation of continuous warfare, which ends only at death when both mind and body lose, in simultaneous destruction. In contrast, Freud's death instinct is actually a way to say that mind-cum-body seeks its own ending, an idea Becker entirely rejects. Death remains an external horror unbearable to the mind that turns body into threat." (Bregman 1992: 73-74).

In some way or the other, Bregman through Becker's stance educates the author as she educates many about why the conditions of sudden death turns out to be as horrific as the happen to be sometimes, and affirms the truth that in dealing with matters concerning death when it is sudden, one should better understand the position of the bereaved.

But Becker's point is that ultimately nothing can reconcile the individual with the body and the death it bears within it. We may imagine that we might relinquish the heroic, and slip into a more 'natural' outlook, but this is an impossible dream. Human nature can never be 'natural' and it is not possible to live contentedly within our psychic means. At this point, the existentialist triumphs over the Freudian in Becker, for as we remember, Freud defended his 'conflict of instincts' model by an appeal to solely 'natural' evidence such as death in amoebas. When Becker derides 'nature' in this way, we can hear him sneering at those same hopes cherished by Kubler-Ross and others, that because death is 'natural' it couldn't be so bad after all.

Becker is a religious person who claims that the only sphere in which the human dilemma can even begin to find adequate expression, if not a true resolution, is that of religion. He surprisingly departs again from the

Freudian legacy with a more explicit and acknowledged departure. Surely, all cultural systems and religions religion are the least likely to appeal to Becker, who champions a hermeneutic of suspicion toward culture and symbols. Not only has religion generally advocated a life after death, the most transparent form of denial, but has also been the implacable enemy of the individual's *causa Sui* aspirations (drawn from Freud's view of Oedipus complex), the wish to be the ground for one's own existence. But Becker surprises us here because in his eyes all culture rests on denial of death, religion is not qualitatively different from the rest of it---something Freud would have denied, since for him science could offer sublimation and resignation to reality, unlike religion's widest possible stage, the cosmos itself. It provides suitable grandeur for our basic situations. The traditional antithesis between religion and absolute human freedom is also reinterpreted.

Becker continues in many instances to resort to the language of myth. He wishes to provide a religious vision unabashedly rather than merely covertly. He realizes that a psychology adequate in its apprehension of death's power over human life requires a larger theatre than this life, than normal psychologies focussed upon interpersonal relation and emotional adjustment. But in dealing with it in more and further details with Becker, one discovers that it remains yet to be answered:

Why has Becker re-evoked a style of religiousness that few of his sources would support?

What is Becker trying to say about the self and death?

Why are nature, matter, mother, and the body so horrible, so bound up with the imagery of violence, death and decay?

Why does he find in religion not the reconciliation to those realities, but the triumph of a disembodied self-justification?

It can be deduced that Becker found in humanistic psychology, including the healthy-minded ethical naturalism represented by Kubler-Ross, a superb target, against which his myth of disjunctive,

tragic estrangement between self and nature cries out. But at the same time, the focus at a deeper level, the myth of the Gnostic God and the heavenly self may be a profound and perennial response to certain agonizing failures in present cultural possibilities for meaning, heroism, and trust. Hence, it is part of that myth, which Becker adopts, to demote most of culture to the realm of the hopelessly inauthentic, the earthly and the bodily. The very one-sided quality of Becker's vision makes it all the more powerful and provocative, yet should and cannot be underestimated.

### 3.3.2. JAMES HILLMAN

His work expands on and considerably elaborates a distinctively 'Jungian' approach to death as psychic reality. Like Becker but far more forcefully, he is explicit in his use of mythic and religious themes. In fact, he occasionally reassures the reader that these are meant psychologically, and not as a call for new forms of worship. His writing is even more distant from conventional depth psychological discourse than Becker's. It is intrinsic to Hillman's re-visioning of psychology to break the illusory bond that has been forged between depth psychology and natural science, and re-establish the former's truer tie with myth. Here is a simple sample of Hillman passage, demonstrating how (as with Becker) style is not separable from subject matter: "We ask: what is the purpose of this event for my soul, for my death? Such questions extend the dimension of depth without limit, and again psychology is pushed by Hades into an imperialism of soul, reflecting the imperialism of his Kingdom and the radical dominion of death" (Hillman 1979: 31-32). This reference to Hades and the echo of the New Testament are central to Hillman's purposes.

The Jungian legacy gives Hillman several advantages. First and foremost, he is not burdened with a defensive view of symbolism, one that assumes (as was the case with Becker) that all symbols are fundamentally mystifications to screen or shield the symbol from the naked reality. Hillman insists that images, symbols and myths are the true stuff of psyche, and should not be denigrated as poor substitutes for a 'reality' stripped of imagery. Second, the Jungian perspective is not compelled to find in individual childhood the prototypes for all adult struggles. It is a relief when Hillman relinquishes the Freudian literalism of childhood origins along with many other literalisms. Hillman, however, rejects two central themes of the Jungian legacy: the balance model of "conscious" and "unconscious"; and the progressive individual process, culminating in the archetype of the Self. "The unconscious", as reified entity, Hillman believes, rests on a false hope that depth psychology can duplicate the structure of scientific theory, and on a falsely mechanical style of explanation. "Balance" as psychological motif was always ill-served by such association. Thus, gone are all those geometrical diagrams that fill the pages of Jungian expositions. But the disappearance of the individuation process and the Self-archetype is even more central. Jung's own religious hopes were pinned upon this symbol, and the Self with a capital S dominates his equation of mandala, Christ, the alchemists' lapis, and other images of "the God within" toward which psychic transformation aims. (Jungian psychological language). The disappearance of Self-archetype brings us into the heart of Hillman's own psycho-mythology.

### 3.3.2.1. Hillman Mythology in a nutshell

Hillman, as in Bregman, holds that the proper starting point for psychology is soul, "a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself". Psychology, he believes, has

been everything but soulish, taking its norms and methods from biology, sociology, and even theology rather than from the psyche. Within soul, there are depths, death, dreams, and whole 'night side' of life, waiting to be discovered. And there are beneath all, Gods. These Gods are the personifications and the powers that have always haunted inner life" (Bregman 1992: 82). All these were rediscovered in some ways by Jung and renamed them in his own way. But the equivalent in Hillman's psychology to Becker's freedom-loving self is the 'heroic ego' that plays the role of the villain in Jungian thought, and especially in Hillman. Ego psychology is the dominant form of contemporary clinical psychology, Hillman says: "because ego mirrors the literalism and materialism of contemporary culture, its fear literalism and materialism of contemporary culture, its fear of misunderstanding of the entire realm of soul. The ego desires strength, light, height, one-ness, finds that Western monotheism has confirmed these aspirations, as has Western philosophy. Psychology simply perpetuates them. This is why, even when 'self' or 'spirit' is substituted for ego, all systems are suspected to be based on 'one-ness. Unification, the sublime integration of all opposites---this basically Jungian theme is discarded, by the equation of all such hopes with the triumph of the heroic ego. The ego represents an alien intruder into the realm of soul, a Hercules in the house of Hades, wielding a material sword against shades". (Hillman 1979:110). The evident question now is how does death come into this whole explanation and psychological view of the psyche as God-laden? But implication from closer dealing with the conviction tells that, the link between soul and death is firm, not because of any alleged immortality, but because through the soulish perspective death too is re-visioned. So, emphasis upon physical death corresponds to our emphasis upon the physical body, not the subtle one; on physical life, not psychic life; on the literal and not the metaphorical.



For Hillman, it is abundantly clear that our culture's ignorance and silence in relation to death are not norms, or attributable to any universal human nature. They are abnormalities of the ego's dominion, and the soul-loss this entails. Thus, dying out of life, the realm of the external, literal, material, and into soul: there is seemingly, no less metaphorical way to state Hillman's telos. Ironically, Hillman has rediscovered the most controversial aspects of the Freudian legacy, the theme of internally sought death, now stripped of its biological reductionism and set forth as a perspective of psyche itself. If we hope for a non-mythic alternative, we are still caught in the realm of the ego, like Freud with his speculations on death among amoebas. Instead, Hillman uses phrases such as "the radical dominion of death", "the Resurrection of Death itself": these are the terms that suggest this sinking down to the underworld, the realm of shadow, sleep, decay, and disintegration. The above cannot bring shock, but grasping the subject death as the having the kind of dominion, it has can in someway calm the soul that is impossibly troubled by sudden death that has just hit. But, as well, it is a truly soulish version of the Freudian instinct of how organic life should return to an inorganic state. Further more, like Becker, Hillman repudiates the hope and the imagery of the ethical naturalist. Harmony with the earth, natural cycles, and growth are not what 'soul' is about. 'Nature' Hillman insists, is not a given, but itself 'one of the fantasies of soul and itself an imaginable topography. Therefore, in one step, Hillman undermines both ethical naturalism and the intensified 'Gnostic' opposition between nature and spirit championed by Becker. But, like Becker, Hillman, takes the isolation of the individual as given, although internal plurality reigns, his world view makes no allowance for a plurality of souls. Family, community, and nations are all consigned to earth's surface, severed from inner life by the power of Hillman's own imaginable landscape. These realities remain thoroughly outside the proper range of a truly psychological

perspective until they are transformed into underworld images. Just as Becker ontologizes a specific historical conditioned style of selfhood by jumping into the language of 'universal human nature' so quickly, Hillman's surface/underworld imagery eternalizes an isolation of the inner self that just clearly seems a product of a certain specific historical situation.

Hillman's project aims at overcoming the 'balance' model of Jungian legacy, with its dualism of ego and unconscious. Yet his dualism of ego and soul, surface and underworld, thus ends by retaining this original Jungian motif, and tearing apart our experience. Although he introduces death into psychic life, he does so by re-dividing psychic life from ordinary life. Of course, a true Hillmanian's reply would see this complaint as a sign of the ego's insistence on 'integration' and 'unity' no matter what the cost. But a psychology of death ought to be prepared for the twenty-first century images of death, including the very worst images of death, and be able to trace their impact upon soul.

### 3.3.3. ROBERT J. LIFTON

The most comprehensive, balanced, and integrated psychological theory of death's roles and meanings is that of Robert Lifton. In 'The Broken Connection' he offers his solution to the issue discussed by Becker and Hillman: can psychology find room for death, and so acknowledge its presence throughout human life? Lifton differs from them in his direct inclusion of culture and history as factors in their own right, not automatically reducible to psychological forces. His use of the Freudian and existential legacies is mediated by the ego-psychological theories of Erikson. Lifton's outlook upon human beings appears considerably more 'healthy-minded' than of either Becker's or Hillman's. Where Becker sees nothing but tormented paradox and

Hillman only anthologising, Lifton finds conflict and resolution, suffering and renewal, death and immortality. Nevertheless, Lifton's moral outrage at contemporary culture's distortions of death goes at least as deep as theirs. The difference is in the ground for his ethical vision humanity.

Lifton begins his study of death and its meanings with a rejection of both Freud's 'Death instinct' and the common post Freudian view that death is unsymbolizable. Lifton believes the idea of an 'instinct' to be a confused intrusion of a biological force into a psychological theory. It is seen from the look at 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' that he is probably right. Yet from the same principle he does not conclude that the body will be merely an external, accidental factor in human identity. Lifton always finds the body as an element in human identity and the lifecycle; he is no dualist in Becker's style. For Lifton, the body is mediated and experienced in terms of psyche and culture, a fact that the language of 'instinct' thoroughly obscures. Every vision of embodiment is already psychic; what we experience as 'the body' cannot be severed from human capacity to symbolize.

As for the mind's supposed incapacity to symbolize death, this is simply inaccurate. Freud himself, Lifton notes, was pre-occupied with death fears, and did not interpret them as disguised castration anxieties. Lifton notes also how this version of Freudianism dominates the American scene, because it falsely legitimizes their cultural inability to symbolize death. Their own society may find death 'unimaginable', and they have misread Freud so as to justify this. Moreover, they have denigrated or misunderstood past cultures' attempts to symbolize death, automatically labelling these as defences against death's terror.

### **3.3.3.1. LIFTON'S PSYCHOLOGY**

Lifton believed that a better understanding of death symbolism yields a more comprehensive sense of its power for a vision of life. He sees the symbolism process around death and immortality as the individual's experience of participation in some form of collective life-continuity.

There are three dominant claims in his assertion, namely:

- 1. When one speaks of humans psychologically, one should never omit our capacity as symbolizing beings. Human nature, so defined, is never stuck within what suffices to understand nonhuman organisms, and Lifton is able to treat spiritual and cultural capacities as if these were primary to our definition as a species. In this way, he supports exactly the position Freud explicitly denied when he refused to allow for a progressive instinct as an explanation for such achievements. Nor, as in some more simplistic versions of ethical naturalism, can nature be turned into a benevolent force pitted against culture.**
- 2. Lifton's nonsuspicious approach to symbols includes, particularly, symbols of immortality. No longer are these prime seen as examples of benevolent illusions. So deeply has depth psychology become associated with the hermeneutic of suspicion as a cultural stance, that it is hard even for Hillman to let go of this attitude with regard to such symbolism. Jungian when it comes to most images, balks at approving fantasies of resurrection and birth.**
- 3. The autonomous is replaced as the centre of meaning by a view of humanity as interrelated. Thus, for Lifton the individual's own death should not be confused with the end of everything. The whole purpose of immortality symbolism is to help apprehend and acknowledge those continuities and**

connections within nature, history, and the cosmos, that link each individual self to all other selves.

He continued to identify five modes of symbolic immortality patterns of symbolism. These are Biological, Theological, Creative, Nature, and Transcendence.

**BIOLOGICAL---**is expressed in the hope to live-on in one's children. This has always been the most popular way that human beings imagine their own continuity. Lifton's appreciative stance toward this hope has been shared by a few psychologists. Lifton insists that the underlying wish for continuity is a valid one. We are not 'causa Sui', that is, 'the fathers of ourselves'. This is not a tragedy but a built-in feature of the human condition of one of the auto biographers, Joan Gould, for whom the spirals of interrelated generations form the very texture of human life, and give meaning to individual deaths.

**THEOLOGICAL---** is the belief in an afterlife and the concentration on the thought that 'the common thread in all great religions is the spiritual quest and realization of the hero-founder that enables him to confront and transcend death and to provide a model for generations of believers to do the same'. Thus, we see Lifton retaining some distance from traditional religious beliefs about 'survival', yet attempting to approach such traditions' ideas appreciatively. This is clearly a different reading of religious immortality than Kubler-Ross' caterpillar-into-butterfly imagery, in which personal survival of physical death is the sole focus.

**CREATIVE--**this requires connectedness with the future through some lasting cultural accomplishment. We may think of a giant artistic or scientific achievement here, but one can also imagine persons participating in this mode through self-identification with a major

cultural institution. For scholars, ideally, this mode of creative symbolism immortality should be particularly salient.

**NATURE---**this is the fourth mode of symbolizing connectedness with a world that will live on after one's individual death. Lifton, who relies on the Japanese examples throughout his book 'The Broken Connection' to compensate for the Western bias of most psychological studies and he notes that in Japan, continuities in nature have been given great spiritual significance. 'The state may collapse but the mountains and rivers remain' (Chinese proverb) meaning nature stays as it is, it stays independent of what may happen. This is a different use of nature than in Western versions of ethical naturalism. In the latter, nature legitimates individual death but does not offer strong images of continuity. Once again, Lifton is clear that nature is a symbolic concept, not just a 'raw given'. Thus, when situations go beyond possibility, in the event of sudden death, it becomes sensible to view it relative to the entire nature and assimilate the fact that death is a practical and natural fact.

**TRANSCENDENCE---**this is an altered state of consciousness, a breakthrough for a sense of abundant life in the midst of death. Transcendence is the foundation for all the four other modes. It liberates the individual into ultimacy, splendour surpassing what were thought to be the boundaries of the universe. It is the Liftonian equivalent to a moment in Becker's thought when the self, faced with the wonder and mystery of the cosmos, 'sees God and dies'. Paradoxically, it is in the moment of transcendence that the self feels fully alive. Because Lifton is not hostile to embodiment, he is willing to include sexual union as one of the potential vehicles for transcendence, alongside mystical states. Where Lifton differs from many recent advocates of 'transcendence', he sadly recognizes how it alone is not sufficient to guarantee a sense of immortality. It must be communicated in terms of

intellectually, emotionally, and culturally meaning sustaining framework. Pure, naked transcendence will not have more than private and temporary effectiveness. For this reason, transcendence has in the past invariably been linked to one of the other four modes of symbolic immortality.

Lifton believes that death as well as immortality can be symbolized:

‘Death is indeed essentially a negation---the epitome of all negations--  
-but that does not mean that the mind has no way of representing death, of constructing its versions of death’. In fact, each individual learns to symbolize death, in analogies drawn from other experiences. Just as death is the opposite or negation of life, so is each experiential cluster of death-imagery that is actually a polarity of life/death symbols. (Bregman 1992: 81-92).

The same negation is actually the one element that is a core source of stress that trouble people. When the symbols converge in the mind of a person who cannot align them, sometimes due to how abrupt they occur, such as when death happens to be sudden, this can have far reaching effects that are a cause for concern to the church and her pastoral care.

The ideas drawn from Lifton, Becker and Hillman above, are just but a small sample of how psychology views the way death rests in the being of all people. Considered in all fairness, pastoral care can affirm the said situation as, rather, illusive. But practically, it yields a syndrome that was alluded to in chapter one---‘beyond my scope’--- syndrome that happens to be accompanied by a level of laziness by pastoral caregivers and the current church, which has robbed theology of her potential of the restoration of troubled beings of people. Their ideas can strengthen theological reflections and enrich pastoral counselling if they are taken side-by-side with all tools used by the church in dealing

with sudden death. It stands to reason, then, that we should deepen our theological reflections on death.

### 3.4. DEATH VIEWED THEOLOGICALLY

The attempt to cover up death during a funeral service is an unmitigated disaster for the church, preceded and prepared for by the church's failure to reckon with death in its own preaching and pastoral life. This has been exemplified a number of times where ministers and pastors fail to correctly claim a sinful and unnecessary death as what it really is, with the aim of either avoiding to harm the bereaved or wanting to appear or sound sweet to the hearers. The author remembers the proceedings during the death and funeral arrangements of the late 'Boitumelo' commonly known as Tumi (both not her real names), a young lady from Takeng village in Ganyesa. This woman died as a result of a minor squabble between her and her boyfriend. That same night it was reported to have been full of pathetic abuse of this lady, where she was found lying on the ground naked, and was beaten by this man until he stabbed her with something very thin and sharp behind her neck, which ended in her sudden death that was reported the next morning. Almost the whole village was moved with anger in hearing what had happened, and of almost everybody, kind of, wanted to revenge against this man he was in the hands of the police. This was impossible. Whatever the finer details of the story are, they are not the discussion now, but the messages that different preachers kept saying to the bereaved and the grieving---"please accept all that happened to your child, because it happened through the love of God"---more over, some preachers do this full of vim, reading and wrongly interpreting the scriptures to ensure that they say what they wanted to say. It is true 'everything happens at its own time as put forward by Ecclesiastes, and people might have their time to cry



as they have time to laugh. But it is disastrous to attribute selfish and devilish abuses that touch people's lives fatally to the will of God.

Many persons have said that they have never heard their minister take a clear stance and with certain term in a sermon the question of their own death. This state of affairs, once again, is not entirely the fault of the professional. People tend to expect from the church service an hour's relief from the demons that plague them during the course of the week. This refers to the Sunday church services that we attend. People come to these services having gone through a week that is full of many questions and concerns acquired through their normal life and their meditations about various issues. It is here, where in the event of someone having through bad thoughts or came across some horrendous experiences, that they feel having been in some shadows of devils and/or demons. These atmospheres sermons on death would seem intrusive and unsettling. Better to avoid them and protect this hour from everything that strains the nerves---even though the service comes to an end and the demons, sometimes practical concerns in one's life, must be faced once again next day, fully intact, unexorcized, and screeching. The melancholic effect of this arrangement is that the church offers a temporary sanctuary, a momentary respite, from one's secret apprehensions about death, but inevitably they take over once again, without so much as a candid word of comfort intervening.

To preach about death is absolutely essential if Christians are to preach about joy, God, such as when one has to consider the fact that 'there is only one God' and this God is the God of love to God's entire creation. Otherwise, they speak with the profound melancholy of men and women who have separated the church from the graveyard. They make a practical assumption that there are two Lords. First, there is the Lord of the Sabbath; this one is the God who presides over the affairs of

cheerful people while they are still thriving and in good health. Then there is a second Lord, the Dark Power about whom one should never speak, the Lord of highway wrecks, hospitals, and graveyards who handles everything in those corners of the universe. Under these circumstances, there can be no doubt as to which of the two Lords is the one of sudden death, and unfortunately the one commanding more power. The 'death-bringer God' already encroaches upon the sanctuary itself, inasmuch as people gathered there are so unsettled as to refuse to hear of his name.

The Christian faith, however, does not speak of two parallel Lords. The Lord of the church is not ruler of a surface kingdom. His dominion is nothing if it does not go at least six feet deep. The church affirms that the one Lord who went down into the grave, fought a battle with the power of death, and by his own death brought death to an end. For this reason the church must be unafraid to speak of death. It is compelled to speak of death as the servant of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and the Risen saviour, who has freed human beings from the power of this almost unmentionable one. But even when the church speaks about the subject, how does the church do it, is an important question? Is theological reflection on the subject of death itself a method of just sweeping over? Existentialism, after all, from Kierkegaard to Heidegger, has made human beings sensitive to the way in which objective discourse on the subject of death may be a way of escaping from one's own destiny as a creature that dies. This is inherent in the arguments from the psychologist already mentioned in this chapter. The condemnation of the Christian thought on the subject of death for placing, in effect, the theological screens before the eyes of the condemned cannot be overlooked. At the outset, it must be argued that Christian reflection, far from screening death from the view, actually tears away the screens and forces human beings to look at death and to look towards their own death. This is the unavoidable

focus of faith that has to reckon with the factual the dying of its Saviour. Even if human beings wanted to fear death, they cannot do so, or rather should not, if they look toward such a saviour for their rescue. In fact, it is the exposition of the flimsiness of the partitions that human beings raise in order not to have to consider death. The purpose of this comment is not to outdo the existentialist in pessimism but to lay the only sure basis for Christian hope, a hope that is not based on screens, mirrors, or sentiments. The one that based on the good news that 'human being does not have to go beyond Jesus for knowledge of death in its fullest scope'; and that death is not an additional realm alongside of Jesus terrorizing men and women from the side.

The point under argument here is the indispensable need of theological thought that should be brought to the bereaved in the event of sudden death for purposes of focus, and equally this need to those who may be taking stake and playing the role in the same event of death. The same need may be sounded when consideration of where the focal point of pastoral care should be in the midst of confusion caused every time when sudden death strikes.

Mills was spot on in his perspective on death that when he assets:

"In the light of Jesus Christ it is possible to explore the scope of death as it threatens a man in his three most fundamental identities as a human being. Death threatens a man's (sic) identity with his flesh, with his community, and with his God." (Mills 1969: 178).

It is by inference from the above that, first, a man (sic) is identified with his flesh. He is not a ghost. The body is more important to his identity than words to a poet. He both controls his world and savours his world, and reveals himself to others, in as through the living flesh. Part of the terror of death is that it threatens a human being with a loss of identity with his flesh, an identity which is essential to him in at least three ways. The aspect of flesh is becoming important in any consideration of sudden death because many such deaths are accidental, and in many accidents

especially, road accidents, the body/flesh of a person is badly affected. The spectacle of badly a damaged body of the loved ones signify the pain that the said person might have gone through, and out of sympathy, it breaks every wall of the person's emotions, and thereby cause the person to harbour stress that causes enormous problems to other people and pastoral care.

Human being's flesh is the means to his control of his world. Except as one uses his/her flesh instrumentally (feet for walking, hands for working, tongue for talking), one could not relate to the world by a way of mastery and control. When death, therefore, threatens to separate him/her from his/her flesh, it threatens him/her first with a comprehensive loss of possession and control of his/her universe.

Death meets him (sic) as the dispossessor (Luke 12: 15-21), even though one retaliates as best as one can against his/her loss of control with an assortment of insurance policies. Quite shrewdly, the medieval moralists saw a special connection between the capital sin of avarice and old age. Avarice is the special sin in which a human being focuses his/her life on his/her possessions. The closer a human being gets to the time of his/her dispossessions, the more fiercely s/he clings to what s/he has and the more suspicion s/he feels toward all those would disposes him/her with indecorous haste.

Secondly, a human being's flesh is more than instrumental, it is also the site for the disclosure of the world to him, the world which he will never be able to reduce to property but which is there for the savouring.

However, except as flesh is sensitive, susceptible, and vulnerable, a man could not be open to the world as it pours upon him a wild profusion of colours, sounds, and feelings. He could not fall under the spell of powers that threatens to separate him from the flesh it threatens but also to separate him from the property-less creation, the world which he may not control but which is his for the beholding in ritual, art, and daily routine.

Thirdly, flesh is more than instrumental and more than sensitive to the world; it is also revelatory. A human being reveals him/herself to his/her neighbour through the living flesh. S/he is inseparable from his/her countenance, gestures, and the physical details of his/her speech. Part of the terror of death, then, is that it threatens him/her with a loss of his/her revelatory power. The dreadfulness of the corpse lies in its claim to be the body of the person, while it is wholly unrevealing of the person. What was once so expensive of the human soul has suddenly become a mask” (Mills 1969: 178-180).

All threats mentioned above are once again threats that face the dying person. The struggle happens to be between dying and death itself, something that is in essence not the focal point of this discussion. The focal point under discussion now, is how the person who dies suddenly affects the bereaved and grieving. But relative to the dying person, this forms a basis for the denial and serious contest that a dying person meets at his/her time of death. It was explicitly noted by Kubler-Ross as she talked about the dying stages, until she concludes that the period happens to be the final stage of growth. The point under discussion is the question of death and how death affects those who are remaining in life, yet those who loved and lived in close connection with the dead. For all who had some experience of authentic pastoral care under the circumstances of death, they shall compare and note the commonalities of these threats. Much as Mills discovered the threats of flesh that are in onslaught to the dying, there is an onslaught of the same kind to the bereaved. This is substantiated by the reason that human beings live and make meaning of life dependent on those they are living with. Thus, whom we love and live with becomes our ‘special possessions’, possessions animated in the flesh mentioned above. In dying, such possessions are dispossessed of us. If such a dispossession happens suddenly, we feel the emptiness of being robbed of everything in a person, especially even an opportunity of wrestling with the dispossessor. We feel inadequate in the face of such death yet harbour convictions of

hope of victory, should we be given a chance. The fact that death cannot be undone happens to be one of the exclusive shots that sudden death shoots the human race with to a level of harmlessness, and projects the fragility of humanity in the face of such a fact. There is, therefore, a necessity to view death closure and to formulate a stance as to whether it is an enemy to all of us who become bereaved, or our friend. At this point, a lot might be known about the subject, but one thing that resonates clearly time and again in the mind of people is the fact that death is a robber that robs people of their loved ones. This robber quite often touches us in an unfriendly way, and leaves us helpless. A short journey with the subject of sudden death can empower us better to say whether this kind of death is an enemy or a friend to us.

### 3.5. SUDDEN DEATH, AN ENEMY TO THE BEREAVED?

The text:

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4), is very commonly used in different circumstances of in various crises of life. The same text has become primitive to the level of almost losing its meaning and the courage it induces to people in such crises. Sudden death happens to be a personal matter when viewed by all who are stricken, and hence, all problems surrounding it must be solved by every individual. Nevertheless, there are areas we can walk together in our reasoning about human finitude and death. It is high time that we emancipate ourselves from the idea that death is the punishment for sins. Human beings have always been finite and will always be. Whether death can be brought about as a terminal disease, old age, criminal passion, war or an accident, it is not an absolute evil. We should sometimes think of the tragedy that would engulf us if we had to live forever in spite of sicknesses, senility or total paralysis. Clearly, death even if it may be sudden, is not an enemy of life.

Death terminates the activities of life which are dependent upon our physical body as was seen by Mills above. After death, there is no more seeing and hearing, no more walking and talking, by the same token, after death, there is no more pain, no sorrow, no hardship, no trouble, no suffering.

Death terminates many opportunities of living. Yet, if we are to rely upon reason and experience at all, if we are to be guided by the personalities who have lived and finished their journey, we need not fear that death will undo what we have done; that it will destroy the values we have added; that it will turn our personal existence into nonbeing; that it will change our creative participation with God into ashes and dust; that it will destroy our identity.

Death itself is great transformation; yet it is a transformation only within the framework of God's laws, God's power, and God's love. Death has no power which is not delegated to it by God. Clearly, the sting of death is in our separation from God, in our lack of faith and confidence in his goodness and love. The sting of death is in our spiritual decay, in our spiritual dying. As Paul has put it, "the sting of death is sin" (1Cor 15:56). It is guilt and sin and selfishness; it is anger, resentment, and bitterness; it is our inability to accept the limitations and the laws of life that fill our souls with terror and dread as our own death and dying. We all have fears of death. Yet, they can be expressed and overcome. When we are sure of God's forgiveness, when we are aware of his continuous presence, we then can exclaim with great rejoicing, "death is swallowed up; victory is won" (1Cor 15:54). We can then walk through the valley of shadow of death with courage and without fear of any evil. In an event of sudden death, there is quite often some 'imaginary' shadow that befalls the bereaved, and in this shadow there are many challenges. Some of these are possible to overcome some very difficult to do so. All these are caused by the evident necessity to mend and take up responsibilities that had been shouldered by the deceased. These responsibilities are making part of our African

being---commonly known to be Ubuntu--- of community. If by any way or fault, the bereaved family fails to meet the challenges, based on their own self, they can never feel fulfilled. In short, their humanity is challenged at its core. It vibrates in our being as Batswana due to the saying---motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe---. This literally means 'a human being is a human being because of other human beings'. Thus, the bereaved family must, and have got no way out but just to grow at the pains of death, and these pains can be excessive when death is of a very responsible person who, in some ways, have been holding various responsibilities that takes the family forward, and is sudden. The friendliness of death is next to invisible, and the enemy-hood of it is very conspicuous.

### 3.6. WHAT, THEN, IS SUDDEN DEATH?

Preachers, ministers, pastors and many people have defined death to be a thief that comes in the night. This has been done in line with the misinterpretation of equating death to the day of the Lord, and thus supposedly preached in line with the text that says:

“Now, brother, (sic) about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” (1 Thess. 5:1-3).

A fair number of times as pastoral caregivers are endeavouring into caring for the bereaved, they have stressed the importance of being alert and always waiting for the unexpected, so to say expecting the unexpected. This does no way exclude fact that the expectation of death no matter how sudden it may be. Good and sound as the author might also subscribe to, this is better said than done. The same has well been misinterpreted to be the same thing Jesus said when he warned about his coming saying:



**“it will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. So you must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Luke 12: 38-40).**

**It can be stressed that with a lot of preaching done during times of death and especially when death is sudden, it has gained a lot of misinterpretation. Whilst many think of death as the day of the Lord, others interpret it to be the coming of the Lord. And the fact that in both texts, and several others may be, the thief and night are mentioned, sudden death is abhorred as a thief that steals people’s lives and people’s loved ones. It is by this picture that sudden death, much as death ultimately is death, hits and hurts more badly. Sudden death is in that way differentiated from death. All death is construed to have a sudden kind of wing in the sense that nobody knows the time of death, and the fact that there is no half life. That is, when health deteriorates through illness and our loved ones are shifting bid by bid into being terminal, they still are alive and fully alive. The beloved family and relatives’ hope is not erased by ill-health.**

**But sudden death is that particular way in which one loses life instantly in some kind of accident or human being’s free will without having lost health in any way. A death unprepared for, shocks and shatters our beings to the core. This crafts a need to be handled with more care by all who happen to be affected from all walks of life.**

### 3.7. SUMMARY

We have heard how psychologists define and argue about death and dying. This has also made clear how different the approaches of human beings are to death following their kinds of perceptions and ideologies. The author can confess here, that knowing all the ideas afore-mentioned does not address the effects of sudden death in a practical sense to the affected. However, the knowledge of the same by pastoral caregivers can add value to pastoral care in a general sense. It may be pronounced once more that the effects and the pain of being struck by sudden death of a loved one can only be known and felt by the self. In the next chapter we shall look into pastoral care, and what kind of such pastoral care these caregivers have in our practical circumstances. We shall explore what the church does today in the form of pastoral care to those who are affected in various ways by sudden death. We shall also make some enquiry in the practice of pastoral care on how possible if there is any possibility for the church, it is to re-claim her authority through skilful pastoral care and caring as a mission the owner and head of the church has commissioned her to do.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4.1 PASTORAL CARE

#### 4.1.1. A BRIEF REFLECTION

Pastoral Care in the context of stress that has reached depression through sudden death must be practiced with empathy. And empathy as seen by Oden is:

“the process of placing oneself in the frame of reference of another, makes one to end-up perceiving the world as the other perceives it, sharing his or her world imaginatively.” (Zurheide 1997: 51).

Thus empathy, in its most profound sense, might be seen as the grace ‘which is sufficient’ in Paul’s eyes. It is the way in which God communicates God’s power to us in the midst of tragic sufferings which is mourning and grieving the loss for our loved ones might be an example of.

If pastoral care is to be truly pastoral, it must focus on more than individual and societal concerns. It must focus on serious attention on the norms that emanate from the biblical and theological tradition. It is at this point that both young, inexperienced pastors and pastoral care veterans may often find themselves caught between in a dilemma when faced with the practicalities of sudden death. Shall one respond to an apparent invitation to share one’s pertinent biblical or theological wisdom and thus risk seeming to give authoritative or even authoritarian advice? Or shall one follow the admonitions of nondirective counselling and simply try judgements about one’s possible courses of action? Should one be implicit or explicit in one’s representation of the faith tradition? Somewhere between those two extremes lies the ground, undergirded by empathy and trust, where the pastor and the congregant can search together for the solutions

that consider the multiple facets of both the faith tradition that brings them together and the unique needs of the person who seeks help.

Gerkin confirmed the stance by Graham when he reckoned:

“The ministry of care is a particular context in which the suffering connected with symptomatic crises may be contained, their causes and meanings explored, and new patterns of relatedness fashioned. The ministry of care seeks to promote change. In general terms, change is understood as an effective increase of love, justice, and ecological partnership throughout the psycho systemic matrix. More particularly, the ministry of care seeks to promote a creative modification of power arrangements in the existing structure of things. It attempts to reorder the values that are contributing to symptomatic behaviours. It identifies destructive outcomes. Thus, for the pastoral caretaker, symptomatic crises are an invitation to be a participant in changing the fundamental fabric of personal and social reality and to reconstruct the environment” (Gerkin 1997: 142-143).

The time when people are destroyed by depression due to grieving over their loss through any kind of death vary widely, but they all share a common need of a care that shapes up their behaviours relative to the identified outcomes which might be destructive to themselves and possibly to the entire society. The pastor and the church, therefore, offer, or to the least must offer, a broad range of guidance to individuals and families, as well as to the faith community as a whole. This exemplifies pastoral care in many instances. It is done through sermons and stories, religious rituals, celebrations and crisis care. The pastoral care practitioner offers assistance to persons in his/her attempts to place all aspects of contemporary life within the meaningful framework of Christian language and imagery. This refers obviously to Christians because pastoral care in other religions would probably give meaning to life in the language of that particular religion. The

following is an example of how Paul animated the same assistance, and was also quoted in chapter 1.

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,  
Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can  
Comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we  
Ourselves have received from God. (2 Cor. 1: 3-4)**

These words are extracted from our exclusive Christian text, the Bible, and they bear thanks to God for making us what we are. Whilst fragile to life situations including death, we also have the comfort we can use to help others under various stresses. And as pastoral care practitioners and givers, and also by the nature of our calling, we have to minister to all.

In the event of death, pain and suffering results, and this becomes a reality to many. Therefore, death yields wounds of their own kind. Any pastoral caregiver will, in giving pastoral care to the infected, deepen the pain to a level where it can be shared. Paul, above with his message to the Corinthian congregation on comforting those in any trouble with the comfort they (Paul and Corinthians) have received from God, concurs with Campbell. Pastoral care in all troubles should be defined through the footsteps of Jesus Christ, seen through the eyes of Paul in the text above, and through Campbell as the wounded healer in his book *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*. He, Campbell, commences by describing a wound as:-

‘An opening in the walls of our body, a breaking of the barrier between us and the world around us. James Hillman points out that such an opening is a passage through which we may become infected and also through which we infect others’

He continues to explain and say:-

**‘Naturally, then, we view wounds with distaste and alarm. The sight of blood and of gaping flesh creates sensations of nausea and fear in us, because it warns of pain, permanent damage to the body and the spread of infection’ (Campbell 1981: 39).**

**It is already stated above by the author, that the various angles from which he attended many funerals, and thus he can claim witness from all these angles. Sudden deaths, in particular, open many wounds in the hearts and beings of all those who mourn. This wound is painful and infects all friends, relatives and the entire society. It has revealed the fine boundary between living and dying, and thus has made human life very precious and revered. Whist Campbell uses this analogy so perfectly in that he captures attention as fully as he goes on to warn against becoming morbidly and sentimentally preoccupied with blood, wounds and death when giving pastoral care, as though all these are themselves sources of healing. He says:-**

**“the pain of wounds can demean and destroy people, closing them off from hope in an in-tuned and seemingly endless agony. Death is not the only token of humanity. It is also an affront to our humanity, bringing fear, anger and loneliness in its wake. Wounds, and the vulnerability which they represent, lead to healing ONLY when they have been uncovered and dealt with, otherwise they are festering sores which destroy our health and the health of those with whom we deal. The practical consequence for the person who would help others is clear: ‘pay attention to own wounds to be service to anyone else’”.**  
**(Campbell 1981: 41).**

**The gospel of St. Matthew alludes to this on two incidents that come to mind. The anointment of Jesus in Bethany--- where Jesus rejects the protest of his disciples that such a costly gift could be better used to raise money for the poor. His is the greater need, for His death is impending and this act**

acknowledges in a sensitive way the suffering which is to come. This is an act of loving with enduring significance, ministering to the dying and the wounded one. (Matt 26:6-13). Though seen and interpreted differently, it is in itself an act which has a pastoral element. The whole story sends one into a voyage of silent thoughts and meditation when we consider the extravagance we see in and around our funerals today. But in a way, one can admit that it is by way of exercising our love to loved ones and facing the pain of loss we experience.

The second incident is the one where Jesus goes to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, overwhelmed by sorrow and longing for the release from the darkening future, he asks for support from his friends (the disciples).

‘The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me’. (Matt 26: 38).

Jesus knew his need well. As it turns out, his friends failed to respond to his need and he resultantly had to face the darkness, interceding alone with his Father. But he did not hide from his fear, and when he took the cup of sorrow it was with the tranquillity of the one who has faced his own terrible destiny. The pastoral care that we give should, in our life contexts and painful funerals, be a way of clarifying needs to the affected, which would prepare the bereaved successfully for the future which lies ahead. Campbell summarises it by saying:-

‘the wounded healer gains power by acknowledging weaknesses and by finding God’s healing force at the moment of deepest despair’  
(Campbell 1981: 41).

The image and use of a SHEPHERD in pastoral care has always appealed to the author, and is advocated to do so in the hearts and minds of many of those who are hands-on in pastoral care. The circumstance of funerals, and more particular, funerals of the departed through sudden deaths, need the church to give proper pastoral care and pastoral counselling. The church as

**an institution should be well resourced for its calling, and it should duly make use of its resources for the benefit of its members and the entire society.**

**Gerkin is also right in his view of pastoral care as being multidimensional in nature. The practical and natural situated-ness of the church is such that, she must benefit the quadrilateral schema he (Gerkin) discovered to be able to serve and shepherd in line with Jesus' ways as the founder of her faith. That is:-**

- Care for individuals**
- Care for community**
- Care for tradition**
- Care for culture**

**In the contexts of the funeral and the burying of loved ones, the very clear description of the entire state of affairs in view of the above is:-**

**A funeral is a situation where the church helps the individuals coordinate their efforts and collaborations with their communities to exercise their traditional and cultural rites to bury their dead. By so saying, it is said to mean, that it is one scenario which touches all the quadrants of the quadrilateral schema of a human being as viewed by Gerkin, and referred to in chapter 1 above. As a matter of fact, everyone will agree that a funeral for the dead is inevitable, 'what kind and service is the content of that funeral' is another discussion. It is also practical that the funeral is central to our lives and all our institutions. Thus, resulting in the obligation to look closer into the funeral service.**

#### **4.2. Funeral service**

**The funeral service is mentioned quite often in this discussion, not as a way of deviating from talking about pastoral care, but as a realization that it is or should be one of the cardinal vehicles of pastoral care in the event of any**



death. This is a service where care has to be taken in its purpose and design, so that grief work is not inhibited. As alluded to the above and sequel to Gerkin's view of pastoral care, this is where rites and practices surrounding the process of mourning can help the bereaved engage all his/her feeling in the framework that makes them not only acceptable but also easily expressible. The group practices that make the person feel comfortable with his own deep feelings speed the normal work of mourning and help prevent those delayed reactions that are the product of unresolved grief feelings.

It is a ceremony, if well done, speaks of human needs, so that it becomes meaningful to the mourners. It has, however, to be noted, that this ceremony differs from culture to culture, from tradition to tradition and from one religion to another. South Africa as a country is growing by the day in its cultural and religious variety. But some people have retained a much richer set of responses and rituals to help them through the process of burying and caring for the grieving. Pastoral caregivers and Ministers must recognise both the value of all rituals and the range and variety of different rituals in the different groups of society. Charles- Edwards has a way of blaming the twentieth century population growth and technology for the unfamiliarity of death. He remembers clearly that:

“A funeral used to be held in local church, in the churchyard of which the body would then be buried. People went to the same place for rituals surrounding birth, marriage and death. Thus symbolically in the midst of life we encounter death and vice versa” (Charles-Edwards 2000:165). More shall be shared about rituals in the following sub-topic.

But the knowledge of Charles-Edwards needs to be complemented here with the reality that in the author's context and history, long before even the church became as it is today, kraals and alternative sites belonging to different clans were used for the same purposes. In such funerals basic needs were met namely:

- **Remove the dead body appropriately before it decomposes.**
- **Say farewell to the person or body in this life without mattering what death means.**
- **Honour the person who has died.**
- **Acknowledge and begin to come to terms with the reality of death.**
- **Provide a focal point for collective grieving and comfort for supporting those who are grieving the most.**

**For the sake and guidance, given the context of this research scope, this discussion shall be confined to the African Barolong and blacks of Ganyesa.**

**Of great importance, the ultimate unison of purpose is that in all these varieties of views from all foundations, is that the funeral serves a common function of bringing survivors into intimate contact with the dead, with important friends, and it helps survivors and friends to terminate their relationship with the dead and to move forward with life. The best function of a funeral is, therefore, served when it bring relatives and friends into the best possible functional contact with the harsh fact of death and with each other at this time of high emotionality. In the competence of shepherding as a method of pastoral care, the church must provide interpretive leadership during those moments when it provides pastoral care. It was explained in the first chapter above about the natural origins of the shepherding and the flock, and how even the flock cares for one another.**

**Campbell sees that as ‘Steadfastness and Oneness in Pastoral Care’. He says the following in explaining it: “the carer and the cared for are not two sides of a divide which must be bridged by some form of expertise on the part of the one who cares. Pastoral care is grounded in mutuality, not in expertise; it is possible because we share a common humanity with all the splendour and the fallibility which that implies” (Campbell1981:52).**

At its best, Campbell is right relative to the fact that all willing souls of the church is animated to put effort into lending a helping hand during the needy times of funerals, but right as he might captured pastoral care in its natural foundation, Campbell did not know or think that there was going to arise a picture to suggest an obligation on the side of the cared for then to accept anything no matter how unskilled and irrelevant to the situation it might be.

Thus, designed in all quadrants by Gerkin, the funeral contains in its purpose some or all of the following. It should lead mourners to:-

- ❖ Face the reality of death--- not avoid it.
- ❖ Provide a setting wherein the religious needs of the bereaved must be satisfied.
- ❖ Provide faith to sustain the spirit.
- ❖ Help them express their feelings.
- ❖ Free them from guilt or self condemnation.
- ❖ Direct them beyond the death of the loved one to responsibilities of life.
- ❖ Help them face the crisis with dignity and courage in personal ways.
- ❖ Provide an environment where loving friends and relatives can give the help needed to face the future with strength and courage.

All in all, the funeral service is, for the mourners and bereaved, a stepping stone towards the future. It is through pastoral care that all those affected should be helped to move on, and embrace their future.

#### **4.3. PASTORAL CARE AND PASTORAL COUSSELLING**

Historically, counselling within the Church has normally been an expression of the ministry of pastoral care. The emergence of a separate breed of specially trained pastoral counsellors is a comparatively recent phenomenon. An attempt has been made elsewhere to explore the differences and the relationship between these two ministries. But,

“Generally speaking, in pastoral care it is the pastor who makes the first approach, responding to perceived human need as part of an on-going ministry, while in counselling it is the parishioner or client who takes the initiative. Again, pastoral counselling is nearly always more structured with regards to both the place and the time compared to pastoral care. This means that pastoral counselling is characterized by the negotiation of an explicit contract, while in pastoral care any contract, if it exists at all, will be of a more implicit nature. Further, psychodynamic issues are handled somewhat differently. In a pastoral care relationship, the pastor hesitates before addressing the matter of resistance, while the more explicit contracts of pastoral counselling permit this to happen. Again, that transference and counter transference may affect the pastoral relationship; the pastoral counsellor should be much more skilled in dealing with these phenomena. It is comparatively easy to discuss this distinction in a theoretical way--much easier than to keep them separate in practice. What begins as pastoral care may soon develop into a counselling relationship (‘could we meet to talk about this at greater length?’). Then, the pastor needs to be aware of the changed dynamics of the relationship”. (Fosket and Lyall 1988: 108-112). This happens quite often in times of pastoral care to the bereaved through various deaths. The close of proximity of the entire church with those who mourn by pastoral caregivers from all walks of life leads to counselling of some kind. This, fortunately or unfortunately is where the mourners are either made or broken due to unskilled pastoral caregivers and counsellors the church has. It is the gap the church needs to fill to claim her stance and authority in the community the church operates.

In comparing pastoral care and pastoral counselling, it should not be thought that pastoral care is in any sense inferior or less important. Pastoral care has its own integrity. Patton, one of America’s leading authorities on pastoral counselling, in his ‘Pastoral Care in Context, An Introduction to Pastoral Care’, affirms the primacy of pastoral care as a ministry of the Church. He moves beyond ‘classical’ and ‘clinical pastoral’ paradigms to

what he describes as the 'communal contextual', emphasizing the caring community and the various contexts for care, rather than focussing upon pastoral care as the work of the ordained ministry. The emphasis in the classical model was based on the message of pastoral care, namely the love of God, and the focus on the clinical pastoral model upon the person involved in giving and receiving the message of care. The communal contextual model does not negate this emphasis but preserves the best feature of both in an approach which is less critically individualistic than previous models. It is truly arguable that one of the distinctive strength of pastoral counselling is that it takes place within the wider context of pastoral care with the potential support of the caring community. A good example of this is to found in the Bereavement care teams set up in some congregations. Few people depart this life without a funeral service conducted by a minister or priest. This can form a considerable proportion of the work for ministers especially in the Church of Scotland and the Church of England where people, even those with no involvement in the Church, look to their parish church at such a time. Most ministers would like to provide more support and follow-up their duties allow. Yet, it could be argued that the sensitive management of grief is one of the Church's main contribution to community' mental health. Increasingly, groups of lay people, appropriately chosen, trained and supported, provide support for the bereaved either concurrently with the pastoral care provided by the minister or in the following months. (Patton 1993: 4).

The African church and people do not differ much from the above mentioned people of Scotland because of the practical reality of having people who attends church and those who do not, yet all of them look to the church for support in all respects and burial of the deceased during the times of death.

The current load of work of pastoral care and counselling in the congregational context is an indirect cause to what is practically happening and creates conflict among a lot of people in as far as the two

are concerned. Given the schedules of ministers and the numerous deaths that happen in each individual congregation or community, churches and ministers are compelled to support and provide pastoral care with lay people concurrently. It has resulted from human nature that some of these caregivers engage in unhealthy competitions that make them perceive themselves as being better than others, an unfortunate circumstance that ends up forcing such people out of their congregations into either others, or even forming their own 'baby' congregations. They, therefore, continue without appropriate on-going training and support, and that brings the entire church message to a questionable nature which it sometimes finds itself in. In discussion of the current problem in question, the activity/activities and responsibility/responsibilities of the church in the context of sudden death, pastoral care will always go with pastoral counselling. These must be done with care and skill that protects the institution of the church today. It must be done with a critical focus on the comfort of the bereaved and grieving.

#### 4.4. COMFORT AND COMFORTING

It is factual that pain and suffering has been known to human society from time immemorial. It is also a belief that it is God who comforts God's people as it is a scriptural promise. But most of the healing of bereavement takes place in the warmth of family life and friendship. Comfort is said to be one of the most basic of human responses to those who are grief-stricken and distressed. Raphael observes that,

"the appearance and behaviour of the bereaved person is usually such as to evoke caring responses from others. The head lowered, the shoulders hunched, the weeping, the agony in all the body language---all this says "Hold me, help my pain, I have been hurt---comfort me." The natural response is to hold, touch, and murmur sympathy to this person. When holding him/her, the comforter may rock gently backward and forward.

Frequently he/she will pat the person gently and regularly with one hand while holding him/her". (Raphael 1989:353).

She goes on to compare how the facial expressions of grieving people are like those of distressed infants abandoned by their mothers. It may be that such comforting responses are automatic, and in some senses, representative of the comforting of the mother to the child. The comforter may murmur gentle, non-specific sounds or words of reassurance. "there, there", he/she might say. Such comforting is offered automatically in empathic response to distress. Such caring for the bereaved may in other instances feel hesitant, not able to touch, because they fear it would break some personal barrier, suggest some intimacy or even assault. In these cases, the caring person may best offer comfort with his/her quiet and continuing presence, indicating he/she is prepared to stay with the bereaved until shock has been absorbed and the bereaved can in some way reintegrate his/her defences to cope with the life tasks required at that moment. Often, the bereaved may then be supported by family members or the relevant others. This comforting is usually most necessary at the acute times of loss, when the bereaved receives the news of terminal illness or the death, mostly sudden death, or when the reality of death and loss finally breaks through the initial shocked denial.

It is always a problem to those people who have been professionally trained to other models, because they find it difficult to offer comfort. This is due to reason that it represents the human side of their response, something they may have learned to detach or dissociate themselves in some therapeutic frameworks. For the bereaved, even the simplest touch may convey much more than formal words: the very humanity and empathy of the caring person's involvement with his/her pain is something that is vitally important to the bereaved at such times.

It was noted once again by Raphael considering this subject, that in the phase of acute acknowledgement of the loss or threatened loss, the bereaved's obvious anguish may be very great. It calls out to the kin to offer comfort. In most societies they will come together with the bereaved for this purpose. This is also a fact with the community the author comes from and is serving as a minister. The fact that there are caring professionals on the subject that goes about the effects of stress and depression to the people in need of comfort in times of sudden death does not mean everything is done and/or is adequate; people also need care from individuals as well. It is at this time that attempts are often made to deal with his/her natural distress by the techniques familiar to that of professional system, which are perhaps the very techniques inappropriate to the natural pain. It is here that most ministers and caregivers needed, and is never too late to help by a way of empowerment of any kind.

#### **4.5. RITUALS**

Rituals are different kinds of formal procedures and acts of observing rites. There are variously defined rites and these are practiced in different ways. These rites differ from culture to culture, from religion to religion, and from context to context.

Their actions are performed both intentionally and spontaneously, and are directed towards the maintenance of the holistic community. Africans goes as far as dancing as a rite to celebrate every imaginable situation---joy, grief, love, hate, to bring prosperity and avert calamity.

Africans sing and dance, and even hold joyful conversations to minimise tensions involved in their grief. This had an ultimate goal of spontaneously expressing their emotions for the sake of healing.

People practise rites for several reasons. For instance, for Africans and possibly many are nations, birth is the first rhythm of a new generation, and



the rites of birth are performed in order to make the child a corporate and social being. Initiation rites continue that process, and make him a mature, responsible and active member of society. Marriage makes him a creative and reproductive being, linking him with both the departed and generations to come. Finally, comes death, that inevitable and, in many societies, the most disrupting phenomenon of all.

There are many, complicated ceremonies connected with death, burials, funerals, inheritance, the living-dead, and the world of the departed, the visit of the living-dead to their families, reincarnation and survival of the soul. It is really no wonder that rituals connected with death are usually elaborate because they are something that concerns everybody in different ways and bring sorrow to family and community.

“The rituals and ceremonies for the disposal of the dead make death a public thing. The affirmation of its reality, the altered state of the dead person, can no longer be denied. One level of denial is relinquished when the dead is worked on through basic rites of death. A further engagement of reality is required to arrange the funeral and participate in it. Many bereaved people find that this is as a turning point where the full reality of the death hits directly home. It is a time when the numbness fades and the person seems to come out of the dream to an intensely painful real world. This is not to suggest that earlier the bereaved is out of touch with reality, but rather he/she is in some way dissociated, isolating the affect involved, holding at the same time a knowledge of the death yet a denial of its affect and implications.” (Raphael 1989: 37).

In total agreement with the above, Lendrum and Syne bring the ease of fulfilling these rituals by the extended family living in close geographical proximity, which also offer emotional support required in times of need exemplified many times by sudden death. They note that:

**“many people nowadays are separated from their families, they may well not belong to the community where they live and may pay less heed to their own rituals. All this means that supportive networks and the concomitant rituals are frequently missing just when they need them most. Without the support of rituals and emotional connections we are much more prone to prolonged grieving if not breakdown. What is needed most of all is emotional support, for it enables us to talk. Where the expression of grief is not encouraged and where denial is given priority, then feelings is suppressed. This repression may well eventually manifest itself in physical or mental illness. The more a particular group in society is likely to repress or deny death, the more likely are its members to have difficulty with grieving.” (Lendrum & Syne 1992: 49).**

**The author takes the above as one of the observations that is spot-on in the general life of communities. Many people do practice rites because they are part of the heritage of their culture, tribe, or family. Religions, and with particular reference to Christianity here, give people a feeling of security because they believe that a divine power watches over them in situations they are faced with, whatever situation. These people often ask for the power for help and/or protection in their times of weaknesses during grief resulting through death, and they use these rites to usher this power in. In a way, rituals characterise people in their cultures and religions and give them the sense of individual fulfilment and meaning to their lives. This provides to many persons the answers to questions such as:-**

- What is the purpose of life?**
- What is the final destiny of any human being?**
- What is the difference between right and wrong?**
- What are the obligations to other people?**

**The funeral and funeral service are already discussed above. What it should be relative to the culture and custom of the deceased and the bereaved is**

spelt out there. The common and practical practice by churches and pastoral caregivers today, is in a commendable dispute with some families and their cultures. The author discovers on a personal note that the current church does not really understand what some of the rituals which are practiced mean, and why families have to indulge in the same. Whilst the church in its pastoral care should be overseeing what the mourners do and their general protection, the church should be careful in prohibiting rituals that may not make sense to her (the church) but making sense to the mourner at that time.

As a result, there is a development of latent conflict in the ministry of the church and questions about what pastoral care offers. Many ministers practice what they do around funeral and burials as 'just habits' in their ministry, not really attaching any meaning to it. Pastoral ministry of the Christian church is in a moment of intense frustration, where nothing seems to work out well. The church is at a period where it should give up her habituated forms of ministry and pastoral care, and open up space to find new ways of ministering. The church must welcome congregants to lead in the times where they are hurt to say no and to take what the bereaved say seriously. It is through particular well practiced rituals that pastoral care becomes more faithful and true, more fulfilling and church ministry more meaningful.

“Rituals often take the form of dramatic presentations among African people. By means of objectifying their inner fears and perplexities the people are enabled to deal with them in a more meaningful and constructive way. In relative recent times this approach has been utilised in Western cultures as well by psychiatrists working with people in therapy groups” (Thorpe 1991:121).

The above quotation is in a way affirming that churches and all pastoral care givers must take note of the usefulness of rituals. They (rituals) have a

potential of helping a lot in the pastoral care that the church plans for the person facing depression. In coherence to Gerkin and relative to death and total pastoral care, it has to be encouraged and reinforced now and then to all ministers and pastoral caregivers, the importance of rituals in practice of care. This in itself makes the knowledge of various rituals practiced in distinct cultures that characterizes the congregation one is serving enhance ritualistic leadership.

#### **4.6 A CLOSER LOOK AT AFRICAN VIEWS**

It is difficult and actually next to impossible to finish talking about the African rituals of death without recapping in anyway about the Africans views of death. This is mainly because rituals are founded by people on what their understanding is about a specific subject. The author would like to refer to views of death and rituals by a few African tribes, the Ndebele and Abaluyia as seen by Mbiti, and then explore what the Barolong of Ganyesa subscribe to, as rituals meaningful in closing the chapters of the lives of their beloved.

##### **4.6.1. DEATH AMONG THE NDEBELE**

When a person falls seriously ill, relatives watch by his bedside. These relatives must include at least one brother and the eldest son of the sick man, because the two are the ones who investigate the cause of the illness, which is generally magic and witchcraft, and take preventative measures against it. If the sick man lingers on in pain, his relatives kill what is known as 'the beast of the ancestors'. This is generally an ox or a goat (for a poor man), and its killing is believed to hasten death. Attempts, however, may be made to revive the sick through pouring cold water over his body and making him inhale smoke from certain herbs. The presence of the eldest son at the deathbed is a sign that the dying person is nevertheless alive in his

children, and this assures him also that there is someone to 'remember' him, to keep him in 'personal immortality', when he has disappeared physically. The slaughter of the so-called 'beast of the ancestors' is also a sign linking both departed and living members of the family, and an assurance that the dying person will not go into foreign hostile country, but will move into a friendly (even festal) community. The living-dead are present at the death of the human relative, and may be asked, through the slaughter of their animal, to hasten the death of the sick in order to terminate his pain or suffering more quickly.

Immediately after death, the brother starts digging a grave in an uncultivated ground where other men join and help him. The corpse is wrapped in an animal skin (formerly) or blanket. If the person is the head of the homestead, his body is taken out of the fence that surrounds the homestead. It must not be carried through the door of the house or the gate of the homestead. This probably symbolises the belief that the deceased person has not 'gone' away from, or completely left the homestead: he is in fact still present.

Then follows the funeral procession... the men first, carrying the corpse, and then the women following behind. It is unfortunate for people to encounter such a party on its way, and they must avoid funeral processions. The grave has an east-west shape, presumably capturing the 'movement' of the sun.

The oldest son strikes the grave with a spear, and then the body is laid down, facing south: the man is put on his right, the woman on her left. A few personal belongings are put into the grave to keep animals (and possibly witches) from digging up the grave. The party now returns home where an animal is killed, known as 'the beast to accompany (the deceased)'. This is an ox for a man or a goat for a woman. The meat is roasted and eaten without salt, and all the bones completely burned. Ashes from the burnt

bones are gathered, and with them the medicine-man makes 'medicine' which all the people drink. When drinking this 'medicine', a person swallows the first mouthful and spits out the second. Then all the people go to the river, wash themselves and disperse to their own homes.

The brother and eldest son remain on the homestead if or the night. Two or three women relatives or friends also remain there and participate in the formal wailing which takes place the day after the funeral. These women remain there for a week or so. Early the next morning the brother and son visit the grave to see if it has not been disturbed. If no disturbance has occurred then it is assumed that the man died from natural causes; but if the grave has been disturbed, then a diviner is called to investigate the causes of death and to take counter-measures.

One to three months later, the burial party is summoned together once more to observe the rite 'to wash the hoes'. For this rite, beer is brewed, all the implements used for the burial are washed with it, and medicine is dispensed to the children in the homestead. A year later, another ceremony is performed, which is known as 'the ceremony of calling back the soul of the departed, to his own people'. This is done only for men and women who were married before dying. At the ceremony, all the relatives and friends are gathered for a big festival and dancing. Beer is made from grain grown after the man's death, and from seeds obtained outside the homestead. At this ceremony, all the restrictions hitherto imposed on the normal life of the homestead following the death the death are lifted and normal life is resumed.

Thereafter, the widows are free to remarry; the property of the dead man is divided; and a new animal is chosen to be the new 'beast of the ancestors'. This animal is normally a black ox, but never a sheep, and is thereafter

cared for by the main heir who is usually the eldest son. The ceremony ritually puts to an end all the interruptions of life caused by death.

We see a number of meanings in these funeral procedures. The spear with which the eldest son strikes the grave is a weapon of defence and protection, and when used for this occasion it neutralizes all danger on the way to and in the new country where the dead man is going. Personal belongings are buried with the body to accompany the deceased man, so that he does not find himself poor in the hereafter: these things are part of him, and he must not be robbed by the surviving relatives (or else he will visit them and demand what is his own). The animal killed afterwards serves, as it is called, to 'accompany' the deceased, to provide him with food on the way and livestock in the next world. Drinking 'medicine' made from the ashes of the burnt bones is a rite whereby the departed is mythically united with the members of his family and community who are still alive.

Washing in the river is a ritual act of cleansing from the pollution caused by death; and the same applies to the rite performed a month or two later, when the implements are washed with beer. During that ceremony, children are given protective medicine to drink, as a counter-measure against death.

The final ceremony is partly a symbolic way of 'reviving', 'summoning back', 'inviting back' the departed, and thus renewing contact with him in the next world; and partly declaring a formal resumption of life. It is a ritual celebration of man's conquest over death: for death has only disrupted and not destroyed the rhythm of life. It indicates also that the departed is not really dead: he is a living-dead, and can be contacted, invited back and drawn into the human circles. The new 'beast of the ancestors' symbolizes the continuing presence of the living-dead in the family and among his people. These ceremonies also show us the great religious importance of

marriage and procreation in African societies: the son plays a leading and continuing role in the ceremonies of the father's funeral, in keeping up his memory and in caring for the ox which mystically links the human world with that of the departed. An unmarried person is not given the final ceremony which in many ways is the most important and most meaningful in man's attempts to symbolize his conquest over death. This would mean that the unmarried is in effect conquered by death, he is not recalled, nor is he ceremoniously invited back into the human family.

The author has to hasten to warn that the rituals talked about above are old and almost original rituals as seen by Mbiti about thirty years ago. The reality is that, given the natural shifts among cultures and traditions, this might have either drastically changed or amended in a way, and thus this should not be judged misinformed in anyway. The same goes for the following tribe following to be talked about here-under.

#### 4.6.2. DEATH AMONG THE ABALUYIA

When it seems fairly certain that death is coming, the sick man is placed in front or in the centre of his major wife's house and all the relatives are informed about the impending matter. Everyone must come, otherwise those who do not come will be suspected of having worked evil magic against the dying man; or the spirit of the man might later on revenge, as such absence is regarded as showing disrespect for the dying man. The brother or the son of the sick man kills a sheep or a goat at the family shrine (lusambwa) saying, 'all who have already died come and eat this meat! So and so, so and so ...' (mentioning the names of the departed). The meat is then eaten by the family, together with the dying man if he can. This animal is the final donation of the man to his living-dead, and the means of requesting them to receive him peacefully. He then bids farewell to the family and apologises for offences he and relatives may have committed unaware against the members of his family and have relatives. If the person



who used magic (bewitched) against him eats of this meat, it is believed that s/he would fall sick. The dying man gives instructions concerning the distribution of his property; and all the people sit around him, silently waiting, and he/she is joined by the sons, daughters and other men and women. The cry for a dead man is: 'ye, ye, ye-----; ye, ye, ye----! And for a dead woman: 'Wo'i, wo'i, wo'i-----; wo'i, wo'i, wo'i, -----! While wailing, the wife touches and rubs her husband's body. She then goes out, followed by other people, and continues to wail from homestead, from river, from bush to bush, as far as her natal home if it is near. The women put their hands on the back of the head, while the men beat grasses and bushes with sticks and clubs, and old men blow horns.

If the dead person is a young woman with up to two children or none, her body is returned to her parents' home and the marriage gifts are given back to her husband. Marriage is not considered complete until she has borne several children. Formerly, the body of a dead person would be kept inside the house for a day, but nowadays it is kept outside the house. The body is laid on an animal skin and covered with banana leaves; and if it is a distinguished man, a leopard skin is used. The body of a clan head is kept for two days, as a sign of respect to him and in order to please his spirit. The body of a child is kept for only a few hours before burial.

Since modern conditions send people to work in distant places bodies of the dead are kept for two days, to allow the relatives to come from afar. At night a vigil is kept over the dead, particularly, in order to look out for the witch or sorcerer who might come to see the result of his/her wicked doings. Neighbours and relatives bring beer and food; some play musical instruments, others sing funeral dirges and dance. This is intended partly to please the spirit of the dead person, and partly to comfort the bereaved family. If the widow has been a faithful wife, she dances with spears in her hands, singing the dirges; and if she has passed the childbearing age, she

puts on the garment of her dead husband, something which a young widow would not dare to do or else she would never bear more children.

On the day of the burial, the widow is led by an older widow to the river where she is painted with clay; and her children and relatives paint themselves with clay. The procession to the river is accompanied with crying, singing, wailing and dancing; and the clay is the symbol of mourning. On the way home, the party sings, jumps up, dances, brandishes spears and clubs and sticks and shields, and utters shrill cries. The widow praises her husband, saying, for example, 'My husband was very good to me; he gave me many children. He was a very brave warrior and he killed a lot of enemies'.

Meanwhile, four brothers or near clansmen dig the grave. No woman or uncircumcised person should dig the grave; and the father cannot dig a grave for his son or daughter, or husband for his wife. If a person has died through unusual causes such as lightning or suicide, then people fear to dig the grave for him as this would infect them with impurities; and his grave diggers must be paid a goat which they kill and wash the impurities with its blood. For the family head, the grave is dug inside his first wife's house; for a woman, unmarried son or daughter, or married man without children or with only up to two children, it is dug on the left-hand side behind the house; for the rainmaker, it is in the centre of his house; for a person who dies from an epidemic, it is dug at the riverside or in the bush so that he does not 'defile' the homestead; and for someone with a humped back or dying from suicide, the grave is in the back of the compound. The grave is rectangular; and grass or banana leaves are placed at the bottom, but for a clan head a cow skin is used instead.

The actual burial takes place in the early afternoon for woman or ordinary man, but towards sunset for a distinguished man. If the dead is a renowned

warrior, a clan or family head, or an elderly man, the burial is preceded by the ceremony of 'breaking the pot'. For this, a cooking or beer pot is ceremoniously broken by the grandson of the dead man, this symbolizing the loss incurred through death. The body is buried facing west, and completely naked just as the person was when he was born. This 'naked' state symbolizes birth in the hereafter. A deformed person or witch is buried without any ceremony; and if it is a barren woman, all unmarried person and those who have no children must keep away from the corpse lest they are infected by the same tragedy.

In some parts of the country, the grave now becomes the new shrine for the living-dead of the family. A goat is killed by the grave diggers, and its blood is sprinkled over the new shrine or the grave. The goat and the sprinkled blood are a token of returning thanks to the deceased man for the fame and wealth he has left to the family. For an elderly man or person of distinction, the ceremony of 'cattle drive' (shilembe) is performed on the day after burial. This is not, however, done for the one who has no son, even if other respects may be accorded him. For this ceremony, cattle are gathered and decorated with weed or grass; people paint their faces with white clay and wear war dresses of cow skin or leopard skin or of grasses, and bring spears, clubs, shields and sticks. Each clan drives, in turn, its cattle into the homestead, and sings and dances there. The songs include war songs, marriage songs, dirges, praises to the deceased man and appreciation of the contribution he made to his community. The people beat banana trees, bushes or the roof of the house; and the 'cattle drive drum' is beaten by two or three brothers of the deceased man. This ceremony is intended to drive away the spirit of the dead man, so that it does not linger around the homestead and cause misfortune.

The day following the cattle drive, the hair-shaving ceremony is performed. All those who came into contact with the deceased man, either in his death-bed or during burial, are shaved. It is believed that his breath causes impurities, and makes disease stick to the head of the one in contact with the dead body. The hair is hidden in case the witch gets hold of it, or a bird takes and uses it to build a nest. In the latter case, it is feared that the owner of the hair will thereafter have chronic headaches. The shaving of hair is done starting with the widow, then grave-diggers, sons, daughters and other people. A fowl or goat is killed, and those taking part in the ceremony share in eating the meat. Then people may leave the homestead.

Without going into a detailed interpretation of the coming of death and funeral rites among the Abaluyia, we may point out the underlying paradox that there must be continuing ties between the living and the departed. Relatives and neighbours come to bid farewell to the dying man and to mourn his departure, and yet there is continuity through his children and through the rituals which unite the two worlds. Death causes ritual impurity just as it interrupts normal life; but this is not permanent since it is cleaned and normal life is afterwards resumed. The grave is paradoxically the symbol of separation between the dead and the living, but turning it into the shrine for the living-dead converts it into the point of meeting between the two worlds. In these Abaluyia rites, we see also how the corporate group is involved in the death of the individual; and the whole community, including cattle, joins in 'sending off' the member who leaves for it is they who will receive the new comer. Stripping the corpse and burying it completely naked is a concrete externalization of the concept of death as birth into the hereafter. (Mbiti 1975: 149-155).

It came to the author's notice that Setioloane concurs with Mbiti, in fact, Setioloane is seen to have used Mbiti in his writing. Thorpe's ideas are also founded on Mbiti. Though Mbiti expresses what these African cultures did in

their indigenous customs and traditions, a lot has changed today. The author strongly feels that a lot of what has changed actually had to change when related to today's times and life. For instance, Mbiti keeps on referring everything he says to man. It is noteworthy that he is also baptized in patriarchal ideologies and this has made him also a patriarch, thus he subscribe to the same ideologies fully. However, the author is in total dispute with the way contemporary people neglect African rituals even those rituals which helped our people exercise pastoral care to those who were traumatised by various factors including death.

Moreover, Mbiti is only concerned about what these traditions did when they were faced with death in all the stages of this death. He is not really focussing on sudden death which is our subject at this point in time. He alluded to death through lightning and suicide, which are the only kinds of deaths that can fall within parameters of what we are discussing. But he goes on to speak about the rituals involved, which rituals are more concerned with the cleansing of the impurity of the dead and death itself, and not really concentrate on the bereaved in their grief on their loss. One may think that their healing sort of came co-incident with the knowledge that their dead is cleansed and therefore acceptable to the already departed.

#### **4.6.3. DEATH AMONG THE BAROLONG OF GANYESA**

The Barolong , with specific reference to those of Ganyesa, have the following views. There is a need at this point to indicate that Barolong is a clan of the Batswana people, maybe one of the biggest clans Batswana has. This follows that these Barolong differ here and there as one moves from place to place. Thus, the author refers to Barolong of Ganyesa.

They do not differ much with many African tribes and societies. They do have rituals for the sick in their sickness, and the various celebrations and

occasions. These include the birth of the child, the subsequent 'hibernation' of the mother and child for the time that differs from weeks to months, which is called 'botsetse' in Setswana language. This is a period when many rituals are done by the family regarding the mother and the newly born.

The weaning of this child, the initiation, 'dithari', marriage, etc all are different sorts of celebrations until, ultimately, death and the funeral.

With the dawn of new age and the change of generations as stated by Chief AS Letlhogile, one of the elders of the Barolong of Ganyesa and of the members of the Chief's kraal (one of the main branches belonging to the chieftaincy), the Barolong like many African tribes have lost their customs and traditional beliefs, and have either 'contaminated or improved' them many foreign beliefs. This includes the gradual dissociation from the original forms and ways of some rituals out of obvious despise that followed with generations. Many rituals have naturally been extinct and are even unknown by the current Barolong, and is so worthy to state the purity of the confusion they have today relating to their own rituals. All caring Batswana see and pronounce this fact.

Many conflicts are caused by the same confusion of views among children of the same families, and also between and among churches and church denominations. Clearly, many rituals are looked down at and even the few who do attempt to follow them here and there, they do not clearly understand the same rituals, or they harbour different views about what should be done.

Let me focus on death and its rituals which many of the Barolong today argue against as they feel they do not really practice them.

All the Batswana people view death as misfortune and sinful. This view and understanding guides and forms the foundation of almost everything that is

done by families and communities when they are struck by death of any kind.

For the Barolong, death especially when sudden, results from the evil works of the evil people (witches) either from same families or communities. These works may either be carried through by way of muti (African medicines and poisons), jealousy, or even evil wishes and thoughts about anything that refers to that person. Evil as death is for them; they also view it as contagious and should be protected from passing from one person to another. Thus, everything about death is represented by black. This is to signify the darkness of the misfortune of death.

Everybody who by anyway comes into contact with anything that makes any part of the funeral or its preparations of it, must wash before he/she does anything for him/herself outside the parameters of the home where death took place. This means that from the first recognition of the dead person, by accident; suicide of any kind; murder or anything what-so-ever, there has to be continuous washing of hands. They believe is that for one seeing a dead person for the first time, the person happens to be in the area of death and death situation, therefore the person is infected by death and should wash his/her hands before he/she touches anything out of that area. They believe that failure to do so will result in infecting others with death.

#### **4.7. CAN DEATH BE CULTURAL**

We certainly have to look on to the subject of death in the contexts of people and their culture because people believe in their own values, beliefs, norms, behaviours, and attitudes. At least for the Barolong of Ganyesa, the author knows about those who are rooted in their culture. This results in everything being evaluated against cultural basis, even if it is a

fact of life. For this purpose the author attempts a definition of culture by clinging to what was said by David Matsumoto that:

"Culture is a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours, shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time."(Matsumoto 2000: 24).

Death happens to be one of the facts of life that occurs to all people, all nations and traditions, but it is viewed through the eyes of culture as very often to ease the pain and impact of grief to the bereaved. The same can be drawn from the different cultures cited above. Though all are black and Africans, they perform various rituals for death in their different settings. Some even go to an extent of murdering other people, thereby increasing death, in the event of the death of Kings. All this is done by all those who affected by death as a kind of onslaught to death. This defines death by itself as an enemy rather than a friend.

Kubler-Ross and some of the dying persons especially those who were privileged to meet her wouldn't agree, given a host of experiences and some of the harsh realities they had to pass through. The author believes it to be there in every human being as a judgement. Whether death is an enemy or a friend depends on the situation people find themselves in, and deeply considering the situations of those who die. Very importantly, pastoral care and pastoral counselling have to be vehicles which should take such mourners from the devastation of sudden death which might either be seen as an enemy to the point of acceptance and closure by the bereaved. All this can be done through appropriate skill that guides appropriate and proper use of all resources at the disposal of the church.



## **4.8. Valuable Utilisation of Religious Resources**

### **4.8.1. The Scriptures and Religious Literature**

It is also kind of conventional that scripture or just the Bible is read and used during times of grief. There is continuous affirmation of this as a resource for ministers and pastoral caregivers to grief sufferers. However, the manner in which this is used is of critical concern.

It is also critical to note that religious literatures can be no substitute to offering oneself in compassion and concern. It is crystal clear, that some of our brothers and sisters in and out of the clergy have conducted so many funerals for so many years, such that the scripture and literature is kind of 'in their finger tips'. But the recitations and pronouncements of such words must be done with great care and evaluation of contents. The scripture should help the grieving persons face him/herself and God. Used pastorally, the scripture becomes a stabilising foundation upon which the mourner can attain perspective on ultimate issues of life, and more specifically, their own lives.

The scripture must at all costs be used pastorally. But what the pastoral use of scripture is, is a question needing guided answering. The pastoral usage of the scripture is the scripture that is used:

- **Prescriptively**
- **Contextually**
- **Sparingly**
- **Verbally**

#### **4.8.1.1. PRESCRIPTIVE**

The prescriptive use of scripture means the use of scriptural verses appropriately to the situation. These are those verses that offer comfort and assurance. For example:-

**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Ps 46:1)**

**The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, their departure was taken for misery and their going from us to be utter destruction: But they are in peace. (Wisdom 3:1-3).**

**He hath said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness.**

**Lo, I am with you always.**

**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**

**The pastoral care giver's own personal knowledge, experience and training should enable him/her to be fluent in giving some of these verses and many more with flair, but not limited to, the funeral. These and many more should be accompanied by the matured and resourceful ministry should have personal meaning to Christians in the time of crises of during bereavement.**

#### **4.8.1.2. CONTEXTUAL**

**Here the pastoral caregiver should learn about the context and the actual struggle which the bereaved are in as a family and relatives. It is in learning all this that the pastoral caregiver will be able to speak to the needs of the sufferer meaningfully. Ministers must refrain from exploiting funeral situations to meet their own needs thereby resorting to exhaustive recitations and readings. This shall be further discussed later in the research. This is in no way under mind the host of ways and points followed in preparations of sermons by preachers of different church traditions, but it is calling for**

sermons addressing or at least attempting to address deep issues that the grieving are grappling with at that time. There are various examples in the whole theology of Paul and his experience until he came to his great praise said with clear conviction that ‘nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus’. (Rom 8: 38; 39).

#### **4.8.1.3. SPARINGLY**

The time of grief should clearly be distinguished from time to demonstrate knowledge and height in qualifications in whatever sector of life. Pastoral scripture, used sparingly, is the scripture that is kept short and to the point. This is because the well chosen short passage of scripture carries, more spiritual and emotional impact upon grief-stricken sufferer than lengthy passages.

#### **4.8.1.4. VERBALLY**

As already stated earlier, words can comfort and words can destroy. Pastoral care givers in times of grief can skilfully use biblical words to remind the sufferers about the presence of God in their situation. This must be done through taking such a person seriously, whatever his/her religious orientation may be and whatever point he/she may spiritually be. This is one way of opening up doors to significant future experiences. To take a person seriously, or lack of it, is to move with the person from his/her own point of development or lack of it. This has always resulted in effective witness.

## **4.8.2. PREACHING AS FORM OF PASTORAL CARE**

### **4.8.2.1. The Minister'/Pastor's Role**

The role of a minister in any of our black communities and or congregations has always been seen from the role demonstrated by Jesus Christ, the founder and sustainer of responsibility and faith.

Isaiah brought an image of the servant as well. He describes this servant in his prophesy about Jesus Christ as 'someone acquainted with grief' (Isaiah 53).

He was despised and rejected by others;

A man of suffering and acquainted with grieve...

All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have all turned to our own way,

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:3, 6).

1. In the face of death, and particularly sudden death, the minister has to become someone really acquainted with grief. The minister pastors and functions from the faith that there is power that transcends human finiteness, and that is the power of God.
2. The minister's role in the time of grief should not be confined to institutional context, but should call forth a variety of religious responses.
3. I am, thus, in full agreement with Gerkin when he sees, amongst other images, the pastor as a ritualistic leader because at the time of grief, various rituals aiming at healing are to be performed and should be done with passion. A ritualistic leader as seen by Gerkin should not be like our ancestors of the Middle Ages who viewed themselves as controllers and the keys of the gate to salvation. The minister should

administer, carefully, the connections between liturgical practice and life experience. This in a way will preserve liturgical tradition.

4. It is true that religious rites, rituals and practices were long practiced in fortifying individuals against the stress of grief and during the work of mourning. But the minister should be in clear understanding of what he/she should do by any symbolic act in his/her administration at that crucial time.
5. The grief practice has developed out of the need to serve the full spectrum of mental life. Very often, the practices are interpreted as either racial or superstitious, especially given the fact that, not all congregations today have ministers and or pastors coming from their own race, culture, custom, tradition and so on. But it must be noted with importance that, at that time the service is to the bereaved and in their own context, and what is interpreted as racial and superstitious at the conscious level is often satisfying a deeper need of the being beyond the normal bounds of conscious mental activity. So, it is that the religious approach to the personality during the time of stress, due to bereavement is concerned with depth and heights as well as the breadth of understanding and dealing with the feelings of the individual. The minister or any pastoral care giver must give the above room and allowance.

Ministers today, are in times of serious dialogue with different institutions, formations and structures, and are often misconceived. Perceptions and misconceptions of people's ideas about a minister sometimes emanate from such people's relationship with the church. This can be a barrier between the ministers or pastoral caregiver's meaning to the bereaved and grief itself.

### 4.8.3. Preaching/the Sermon

The unique function of the minister in the eyes of the bereaved and grieving persons cannot be over-emphasized. Yet, it must be recognised that as unique as the minister's role and function might be, it does not guarantee that he/she will be entirely be adequate to the situation on every occasion. I need to state here that, no real minister feels completely comfortable or fully adequate in the face of grief of another person.

The real bereavement and the common grief especially that one which emanate from sudden death, leads one to ask a few questions relating to what current ministers are doing in such situations. The common expectation which they meet is, someone is dead; they have to prepare a sermon and preach.

The itchy questions at this point are:-

- ❖ Is it really necessary for the sermon?
- ❖ If it is, do our ministers do it with particular importance?
- ❖ What should this sermon say?
- ❖ If the sermon says it, do mourners really hear what it says?

On and on the questions keep surfacing as one considers all this.

The author has always confessed to have listened to too many of these sermons himself and really felt very much disturbed and mis-represented as a member of church first, and secondly as a member of the clergy. What is preaching in the first place, is the question to answer, and if that particular preaching should be used as pastoral care.

It is worth acknowledgement, at this point that, that sermon is words spoken to the minds and hearts of hearers choosing to. The preacher first speaks to the mind and allows this mind to maintain distance, speculate, rationalize and critique. Then also, this preacher' message, speaks either at the same time or thereafter to the heart and make the listener to individuate and spiritualize the message. Both the preacher and the listener subsequently

prepare themselves to respond to the message in concrete and actual life as responsible Disciples of Christ in the World.

Agreeing that these are words, I go on to remember how powerful. The Word of God can be. In the gospel of John it is said that the Word became flesh.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. (John 1:1).

Whilst talking about the word, one calls also to mind how the entire creation was called to being by the use of Word in the light of Gen. 1. The recurrent statement, 'then God said', only states the strength of the word that was there in the beginning, and the word that called the whole universe to being. The preacher in preaching is in many ways is animating the words of Thomas Swears saying:-

"Words are most important and sacred tools available to preachers for the accomplishment of this task. It is vitally important, both in preaching and in pastoral care, never to underestimate them. In the Bible, as in life, words are used to bless and to condemn, to wound and to heal, to delineate and to deceive, to loosen and to bind. They are deeds and they change lives. If words have no effect then how else, in this century alone do we explain the powerful influence of Adolph Hitler, Winston Churchill, or John F Kennedy?"

No, words are deeds and they do, in fact, change lives. Think for instance, at the first time you heard just these simple words, "I love you" spoken to you by someone you cared deeply about. Or imagine other simple words being spoken to you by someone you have cared deeply about for a long time and still do: "I don't love you anymore". How safe are simple words such as these? How powerful? How wounding? It simply isn't true that 'sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me'. Yes, they can, and often they do. Some of the deepest hurt and deepest joy both preacher and listener

will ever know, is experienced in the form of the spoken word and is rooted in its power to evoke response. (Swears 2000: 19).

It is the feeling of the author that Swears knew quite well how the preacher can be an instrument of building in an otherwise broken person. This is something a preacher should target in all pastoral attempts he/she gives on the words of preaching, yet if these are not correctly handled, the same preacher can be further wounding, hurting and completely destroying the listeners. It comes with clear diction to the remembrance of the author, and with deep lament how he was wounded and his faith actually challenged by the preacher who preached in the funeral of a child who drowned in the swimming pool--- a sudden death of such nature... Saying, to the young and promising family then, his theme being: 'God took your child so that you can accept Jesus as your Saviour'. Oh! As just an attendant of the funeral who had come to also pledge support to the 'wounded' and so deeply aggrieved, he found himself, in a way, also saying the same heretic words, something which was remote from him originally. An instant and sharp urge arose which compelled him to decide to leave the funeral immediately. But the questions kept coming to him as he left, asking as to what help does his departure give to family or the community? None, was the answer, but he kept on consoling himself by saying: "at least I am not in the company of what is said---so I am not 'a bird with the same feathers'". It is always a temporary answer and relieve.

But these are the kinds of messages that many preachers generally bring to the society and the grieving about deaths and one finds them to be critically unfortunate. Preaching in a funeral must strive to focus and refocus the bereaved into life. This has got to be done with absolute art. It is primarily a science, which through thorough hermeneutical and exegetical study, is bound to render a message that is accurate, meaningful and helpful.



It starts with the preacher him/herself commanding his/her role as the minister/pastor to the needy. The minister who presents him/herself as authentic as possible in his/her message and not presenting skill or his/her faith but the presence of Christ discerned by listeners to be present, active and communicated through skill and faith. This should be done with openness to mystery, to humility, and to humour. Batswana, including the Barolong of Ganyesa, have a saying: 'loso logolo ditshego' literally meaning 'a big or worst death yields laughter' but figuratively it means 'even in the midst of any great tragedy, laughter is still possible and this laughter heals'. This is so because the task of preaching is not the neat unassailable provision of answers but the opening of the hearts and minds and volitions of all those who are listening in order for them to form their own informed responses to the word and sermon delivered to them.

Matthew concludes his description of the Sermon on the Mount with this observation:

“now when Jesus had finished saying these things the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as the one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:28-29).

The authority in Jesus here must be well and correctly interpreted as was understood by Matthew, not the kind of misinterpretation our preachers have, which consists of the earthly power geared at personal gains on special ways which they focus on. It must be borne in mind, that the preaching in the face of grief is delicate, and should be done with a clear thought and matured handling that projects and clarifies--- acquaintance with grief.

The minister/pastor would have known the family and even the community, and thus, the preaching pastoral care intervention should be done with the value of the listener in mind, and the sermon must be founded in its own context i.e. the context in which it is done. The message of the sermon

therefore, should be hopeful to the traumatised and grieving family. It can only be hopeful that when they can understand it, they can relate it to their life challenges. The message will have nothing to do with them if they cannot understand it, cannot relate it to the burning issues of their lives and they are left overwhelmed, confused and not equipped to deal with such issues than they were before. This is the kind of preaching and teaching that:-

- Deals with life issues of interest to ordinary people,
- Uses words and concepts that even the 'unchurched' people can understand,
- Uses story and contemporary illustration to make the point(s),
- Proclaims a strong sense of "Thus says the LORD",
- Uses warm humour (as opposed to sarcasm),
- Paints a picture of the positive possibilities for our lives,
- Unfolds the truth of Scripture plainly,
- Invites people to concrete behaviours and responses.

The preacher who aims at giving pastoral care completely avoids the presence of even just one of the following which handicap communication:-

- Dealing at length with insider issues, exegetical issues, or theological issues not of immediate interest to the average listener
- Uses insider language without explanation,
- Has too much theory with too little concrete illustration or no story,
- Is either without humour or the humour is mean-spirited,
- Focuses on how bad we are,
- Is not clearly related to the Scripture, which may have been read without explanation several minutes prior to the actual message,
- Focuses on issues that are overwhelming or politically complex,

- Stops short of offering practical help for daily living,
- Is read from a manuscript

The pastor/minister in his/her sermon should never forget that he/she is a servant of good news no matter how different in view the world might see the situation of death and grieve.

One is tempted to make a personal statement here. It hurts badly and every time when one listens to any one in his/her platform as a Minister/Preacher exercising pastoral care to the bereaved to sound like they are claiming any power and/or righteousness over death or life in any form. Whether it is him/her or his/her Church denomination. It hurts because any truthful mind knows it that it cannot be true in any way. It is just one of those denial states and mechanisms of the same in fear of many things known to him/her, sometimes even unknown. So, such persons build many futures for themselves. These include symbolic concepts of immortality. This was also noted by Raphael as she stated her discovery on the extent to which this fear of death influence the personality structure of some people.

In the face of death, grieve or bereavement, true humanity suffers greatly in many respects. It is one among many goals of pastoral care to liberate the affected. The church must therefore strive to light a new dimension of life under the circumstances.

Jones in his conceptualization of God, Christology, Eschatology and Christian Ethics stresses the importance of this liberation to black Christians. He does so with all the strength and vigour that all black theologians against the then state of affairs when white Christians were treating and taking themselves to be different to the blacks until he concludes: "...life of black Christians is one of courage in suffering and hope, and hope in courage and suffering. Hope is born from the faith that 'trouble doesn't last always'..." (Young 1986: 44).

Though Jones refers his argument to black Christians and many of their sufferings, the author considers and actually opens Jones' eyes to the fact that suffering is just suffering, and does not really matter what the cause might be, and this has no racial divide. Suffering is pretty much the same, especially when the cause is the same. Thus, death and sudden death happens and affect all humanity. This results in loss, and loss induces suffering to all human races. The skilful pastoral caregiver must know these facts, and in his/her use of preaching should encourage and give hope which might be lost.

#### **4.9. POSSIBLE BEREAVEMENT MODEL**

Usually on hearing about death, loss, or threat of loss, the bereaved person or family passes into a state of what has 'traditionally' been called shock. This will be exemplified many times by numbness and disbelief. This initial shock period is the one in which the awful reality of the loss is avoided, so that it may be absorbed and come to terms with the ego more slowly. Although there is an intellectual awareness of the reality, the emotional awareness breaks through only intermittently, evidenced by the cries of anguish, or gradually over ensuing hours, days or weeks, or whatever period it may be dependent on the individual.

The awareness of absence of the dead or loss to any person comes in mourning waves. The emotional experience related to this is one of separation: the pain of the person's absence. The finality of the absence is acknowledged intellectually or intermittently, but the emotional experience entails a painful separation. There is an intense and angry protest---"Why have this happened to me/to my loved one?", and a sense of being deserted by the person who has died. All this can be gathered from or heard from different people who have, one way or the other, come out of the stresses of having suddenly lost their loved ones through death.

The reactions might be perceived irrational by many people, and experience, again, will remind them of how anger is occasionally displaced onto the self or others. It is a time of intense yearning, pinning, and longing for the person who has gone, that was mentioned in chapter two above. It is an emotional pain and emptiness that would be relieved by the presence of the lost person.

Just as the infant responds to separation from his/her mother, it seems as though these two very basic responses of the bereaved are aimed at bringing back the lost presence. There is a very intense preoccupation with the image of the lost person. All energy is focussed into this relationship, and other previously equally important relationships are set side at least temporarily. The image is held with great yearning and longing as the lost person. This may occur so strongly that the person is mistakenly perceived to be there, seen or heard in familiar places, or that a face in the crowd is mistaken for his/hers. Each time the image seeks the real person and fails to be reinforced it, each time there is no subsequent interaction, but only the empty image, the reality and the finality of the loss are experienced. This gradually leads to a degree of acceptance of the finality of the loss and the commencement of the giving up on the relationship, the psychological mourning process. It is most important to remember, however, that there are no fixed and sharp distinctions between separation and finality, that they may be partial, or that there may be switches back and forth over the following months.

The meaningful rituals, of course, that differ from culture to culture, religion to religion, and maybe, also family to family will then come in to usher into them a reality that will stay. It is so unfortunate today, to note, how young people including some young ministers do not articulate various rituals owing to their lack of knowledge of their meaning, either in church or home. Schoenberg views it from his psychiatric background and says:

**“When the bereaved has had an opportunity to see the body of the dead person, to gain a new image of him/her as a dead person---existing in a different state, not living and interacting---then this image can be brought forth to be held beside the image of the person as living and help in reinforcing the reality and finality of the loss. When this has not been possible or has been avoided, then there may be a very prolonged period of separation response, intense yearning, pining and longing that may become repressed and unconscious or continue unabated into chronic grief.”(Schoenberg 1980:145).**

**As there is growing awareness of this reality and finality of loss, the ego, faced by the needs of life, survival, and the future, must pass into the phase of giving up this lost relationship. Then its emotional energy must, again, be given to the outside world. As Freud has so vividly described it, the ego does not readily relinquish the lost one. It does not easily undertake the painful process of undoing those interactional bonds with their various associated images. The ties must be painfully taken away from each of the positive and negative bonds that bound the bereaved to the deceased and the affect associated with these must be released and dealt with. This process is associated with a very strong internalization of the complex image and an undoing of the bonds from it. It may be accompanied by an experience of memories of the person/relationship passing before the eyes like a moving picture. When the finality of the loss is realized, there may be an overwhelming feeling of despair and sadness, hopelessness, and helplessness. Life may seem totally disorganized without the deceased, who is now so much the focus for the bereaved person. Interactions, which were meaningful when the person was alive, now have no point. As the mourning process progresses, there is a great deal of diffuse inner, almost physical pain. From that, it may distil the whole spectrum of affect: anger, anxiety, guilt, despair, relief, sadness, joy, helplessness, elation over survival, hopelessness and depression. Although this wide range may appear, the**

sad, angry, helpless, and guilty feelings reinforce certain affects or lead to emphasise one at the expense of all others.

The idiosyncratic use of words to describe affects ought to be taken into account. The anger is often not recognized, but irritation, frustration, and annoyance may be the bereaved's way to describe intense and almost overpowering rage. Sadness has been a little-used and less-understood word in terms of affects. Depression has tended to replace it, so that the bereaved rarely perceives or verbalizes sadness, but claims instead that he/she is depressed. This has important implications for treatment, for clients are often mistakenly treated for depressive illness, while the sadness and the need to grieve go unrecognized." (Schoenberg 1980: 149-150).

The words of Schoenberg must be pronounced on the ears of many pastoral caregivers as education but also as a warning to those of us who keep treating depression on individuals hit by sudden death without carefully taking them across a journey of their mourning, where they can express their grief and come to terms with the reality. The author remembers how impossible it had turned out to be the following morning when the family was faced with the responsibility of breaking the news of the death of his sister's husband and children to her. This is with reference to that traumatic incidence mentioned in chapter one. The impossibility was evident until we all gave the same responsibility to the medical doctor who was in that ward where she was admitted after the tragedy, to do it for us. She agreed to do it and as I observed her (the doctor) do it, it was as well shocking to all of us because she just came to her bed, and we assembled there as well, and she simply said to her "Do you know what happen to you yesterday so that you resulted to be here?" She said, "No". "And she (the doctor) said, "let me tell you now. You and your family had an accident, and out of that, only you are alive. Sorry!" and she walked away. Sitting and trying to question her method of doing it all, I only came to one final word; the sooner one knows the truth, the better. After-all this, was what she was asked to do.

There was nothing all of us could blame her for at that point. Well, general mourning naturally ensued.

The mourning process is sometimes reflected in outer behaviour, such as a bereaved woman's sorting through the clothes and possessions of her dead husband or toys and room of the dead child. The well-meaning friends who take away all such possessions may prevent the painful sorting through and, thus, interfere with important mourning processes. The reverse includes a person who leaves everything totally untouched the room and possessions of the dead person for many years may be denying the loss, avoiding the mourning, and keeping an open door for the lost person who is, somehow, expected to return sometime, something which is impossible.

The outer behavioural manifestations of the bereavement process vary according to social, cultural and religious sanctions and prohibitions, as well as the accepted rituals of bereavement. Thus, social values may lead to attempts to repress external and even internal manifestations of grief and mourning. This can be qualified as true by men from the author's background and congregation, who are expected to be strong, unemotional, and silent in the face of loss and who are often seen to be relatively unaffected by it. Hence, the common saying; 'monna nku o lelela teng', literally meaning 'a man is sheep, he must cry inwardly/silently'. But this is just simply prohibiting men to cry or express their feelings of sadness openly in the public.

#### 4.10. A GOOD SHEPHERD IS A SKILLFUL COUNSELLOR

Drawing from the practical experience of what a shepherd of the flock is and does, one can relate with some good counselling sessions that some church denominations, ministers and pastors, have engaged in with families faced with sudden death and grief when they ushered-in healing to these affected members. One can state with certainty that one of the



characteristics of a good shepherd must be skilful pastoral counselling in the face of sudden death. Carl Rogers as studied by Aden, has a therapeutic approach which contains ingredients that can help the people traumatized and stressed by sudden death.

These are:

- Empathic understanding
- Unconditional positive regard and
- Congruence

Aden notes that:

First, each of Rogers' three ingredients tends to actualize a particular organismic attitude: empathic understanding tends to actualize increased awareness; unconditional positive regard, unconditional acceptance; and congruence and unconditional trust. In actuality, of course, the attitude and outcomes are an indivisible whole, but by analysis subject to correction by anybody. This helps to lift up and clarify the implicit value and potential significance of this Rogerian counselling for the ultimate concern of pastoral counselling. Since Rogers as a psychologist never developed the latent religious end points of his three ingredients, the formulations that follow emerge out of an attempt to conceptualize Aden's own experiential observation as a Rogerian-oriented pastoral counsellor.

The author believe that it can be a reasonable starting point and basis for many pastors and ministers who are serious about pastoral care in their interventions to the people stricken by sudden death. Used appropriately and reshaped to suit various contexts in which people find themselves often, pastoral care will be given an important boost in the right direction.

#### 4.10.1. EMPATIC UNDERSTANDING

Aden in Oglesby explains:

“One of the essential conditions of a healing relationship is empathic understanding. By empathic understanding Rogers means a sensitive

attentiveness to the inner world of the client or, more specifically, a genuine and accurate attempt on the part of the therapist to grasp and communicate the moment-to-moment feelings and experiences of the client as the client him/herself sees and feels them. It is a sensing of the client's inner world of private personal meanings 'as if' it were the therapist's, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality.

Empathic understanding is a direct antidote to man's basic malady. As Rogers sees it, human being does not affirm self unqualifiably. Instead he/she becomes immersed in a process of selective self-affirmation in which he/she owns or disowns particular segments of him/herself according to whether or not they are in accord with his/her self-concept. Experiences that are discordant are either denied or symbolized in a disguised and inaccurate way. In either case, the surface of him/her extends that he is estranged from the deeper dimensions of his/her own existence. Rogers calls this duplicity, this state of inner disruption, incongruence between the self and organismic experiencing.

Empathic understanding addresses itself to this radical self-alienation. As a serious attempt to grasp the contemporary experience of the client, it counters his/her inner world of feelings and meanings. Or as Rogers says, it seems 'crucially important in making it possible for a person to get close to him/herself, to experience his/her most inward feelings, to maintain contact with his/her inner self-experiences, thus allowing for the recognition and resolution of incongruence'. Clearly, then, the chief consequence of empathic understanding is to reverse the individual's defensive stance toward life, making him/her more open to the panoramic totality of his/her organismic experience and thus making his/her perceptual relation to self and the world more adequate and realistic. He becomes more fully aware of his/her own inner reality, his/her feelings, attitudes, and desires, and at the same

time, he becomes more accurately aware of the reality that exists outside him/her.” (Oglesby 1969: 264-265).

In the event of sudden death and the pastoral care given by churches, the appropriateness of pastoral care cannot come before there is some amount of the understanding of empathy, talked about above. When the trauma of loss attacks the lives of people, their life comes into disarray, and loses meaning to a great extent. When pastoral care enquires and explores the inner world and gets to sense the private and personal meaning to the bereaved, a skilful pastoral caregiver addresses the need in a more appropriate sense. The pastoral care shepherd comes closer and closer to the bereaved, not as a monster who can do all or any person actually abusing the situation for more fame attraction of members to his/her church denomination. In the event of proceedings there is increased awareness, which can be of decisive importance in the individual's relationship with God because it tends to deepen both the individual's perception and the individual's valuing. On a perceptual level, it represents an organismic plunge into the depth of oneself, a plunge in which the individual may gain a deeply existential knowledge of his/her predicament. During the early stages of counselling, the individual tends to have a shallow and rigid understanding of his/her plight. He/she denies or distorts the most undesirable aspects of his/her condition so that he/she tends to feel that his/her plight, and therefore his/her rescue, is connected with the doing or the realization that his/her estrangement and guilt are pervasive qualities having to do with the whole interior of his/her life.

In optimal pastoral counselling that is inherent in shepherding, the individual's recognition of this situation of sudden death may approach what is commonly called, theologically, an awareness of sin, even though the individual him/herself may not attach that label to it.

Increased awareness may serve a second purpose on the perceptual level of the human beings' spiritual life. It tends to make a person's perception of and response to God more adequate and realistic. In the early stages of

counselling, the person tends to have a vague and faulty notion of God. He/she may even create God in his/her own self-image, primarily by denying or distorting those aspects of God which are inconsistent with his/her own self-structure. The most common distortions of God is to experience God as a punitive judge who requires full restitution for all sins, but even during the less distorted perceptions, the person will tend to possess an inadequate notion of God's love and forgiveness. It is very unfortunate to note that there are many of our brothers and sisters in various church denominations who preach this to the people who happen to be struck by death of any kind.

Increased awareness helps to correct the situation primarily because the person begins to perceive in an extensional rather than in an intentional way. It is decisive in the individual's relationship with God in another and more basic way, for it has a salutary effect not only on what the person perceives but also on what he/she values. Rodgers gives psychological expression to this point when he says that 'man (sic) has two different valuing systems: the one, a function of his total being, evaluates experience in terms of whether or not it maintains and enhances his total life; the other, a function of his self-concept, is attuned to the individual's defensive need to gain a positive regard of self and others.' As pastoral counselling deepens the individual's openness to experience, the individual moves away from the parched desert of self-valuing, that is, he/she moves away from a narrow and inadequate fulfilment toward a genuine and expansive fulfilment. The persons who once was struck by sudden death in our communities and churches becomes resourceful and important enrichments to our societies because of their experiences because they are acquainted with grief and can better journey with the traumatized and the distressed.

#### 4.11. UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

Aden continued to note that the Rogerian fall into radical alienation through selective self-affirmation is a consequence of ‘a natural and tragic development in infancy’.

“As the infant develops, he (sic) gradually comes to recognize a portion of his (sic) total being and function as ‘I’ or ‘me’. In a word, he comes to possess a self or self-concept. Concomitantly, he develops what is called a ‘need for positive regard’, that is, he must feel that his presence and existence make a positive difference in the world of the significant other, that he is respected, cherished, and loved. Consequently, he becomes attentive to the response of others and begins to evaluate his feelings and desires according to their negative or positive reaction. Gradually, according to Rogers, this whole is internalized so that the individual takes on the values of the significant other and cannot regard himself positively unless his experience is in accord with these introjected values, these ‘conditions of worth’”. (Oglesby 1969: 267-268).

This is a psychological consideration of how far self worth can be developed in the life of some persons who happen to be destroyed by sudden death. Having developed from infancy, the concept that the one who happened to have died suddenly in an accident is the root of his/her worth, maybe because of their closeness, in their upbringing or he/she happens to be the bread winner, the person loses worth and inwardly the person dies in many aspects almost instantly. Unconditional acceptance can be of decisive importance in the person’s spiritual life because it tends to release the person from the bondage of self-justification. The person who lives by and measures self against what Rodgers calls conditions of worth is living a life in which he/she tries to make him/herself acceptable to self, others and God. The person happens to be in an endless and futile process of taking matters into his/her hands and attempting to be the source of own acceptance. The condition of this kind of bereavement handicaps the

person so much that he/she becomes even not acceptable to self. Therefore, the counselling will indicate that this person's attempt at self-justification can manifest itself in at least two interrelated ways. On the one hand, it can manifest itself on an interpersonal level as an insatiable attempt to win love and acceptance of significant others by living a life of ingratiating behaviour. It means the person lives and does things to fulfil the conditions of worth of others and thereby hopes to receive some genuine measure of their positive regard. On the other hand, it can manifest itself on an intrapsychic level as a constant attempt to deny or distort those feelings and experiences that are inconsistent with the self-concept and with the conditions under which the individual can maintain an undiluted measure of positive self-regard. In either case, the individual becomes ensnared in a tenacious bondage of self-justification. All these must be known and borne in the minds of skilful pastoral caregivers who are approaching a scenario of persons stricken by sudden death. As discussed by Aden, the concepts were not used in the context of stress and trauma through sudden death, but they (the concepts) happen to unpack the psychical standing of human beings and such reactions to conditions of life. Relative to the subject under investigation, like any condition that is regarded by self unworthy, in many ways, sudden death is and is a fact in our lives. It questions one's worth in the face of life challenges without the person who happen to have suddenly departed, and actually compel some self judgements in such conditions. All this yields stressful results needing grounded character to face and continue with life.

#### 4.12 CONGRUENCE

Empathic understanding without the warmth of unconditional acceptance can be a cold and ruthless instrument, while unconditional acceptance without the clear vision of empathic understanding can be a shallow and sentimental affair. Both ingredients are essential at any moment of Rogerian

therapy, and yet by themselves they are not sufficient to constitute an efficacious therapeutic relationship. Oglesby was spot on in detecting that, “They can become very hollow and artificial unless they are rooted in and proceed from a third ingredient, namely the integrity and authenticity of the therapist”. (Oglesby 1969: 270).

This third ingredient was named to be Congruence by Rogers, and he believed that to be the most basic of the three conditions.

The mature pastoral intervention by the any pastoral care giver to a person struck by sudden death can not simply be the pastoral care giver’s stance towards the bereaved alone, but it is also certain stance the pastor/minister takes towards him/herself and the deeper levels of his/her own organismic experience. It is a stance of openness and honesty, a willingness to tear down concealing facades in order to be a whole and more harmonious person. It is supposed to be an accurate matching of experiencing and awareness, not in an absolute fashion but in this particular moment of this immediate relationship with this specific person and situation. Efficacious congruence induces in the person being counselled, the feeling that the therapist is dependably real and trustworthy. In other words, genuineness, or unconditional authenticity, in the therapist or the pastor tends to elicit confidence, or unconditional trust, in the client so that the latter is able to place his/her life unqualifiably in the hands of the therapist. Also that the organismic assurance that the therapist is what he/she appears to be. It would make more sense if this is put once more in exact words of explanation by Oglesby, that:

“in optimal counselling, especially in optimal pastoral counselling, the individual’s increased relatedness may approach what Christian theology calls faith. That is, the individual moves out of himself (sic) and is able to relate more fully and to give himself more completely to the ultimate and underlying structures of life, to that Reality which ‘sets the bounds and (sic) infinitely at the same time that it fulfils him completely. In

theological terms he is drawn out of himself and empowered to trust in and accept God's love and forgiveness as a pivotal fact in his life. In other words, the gratuitous and unconditional acceptance of God becomes an organismic truth in the individual's experience, enabling him to affirm himself unqualifiable in spite of the extent to which is still an estranged and guilty person" (Oglesby 1969: 271-272).

The author understands Oglesby to be reiterating the basic grounds of pastoral care by regarding congruence as paramount to even the first two. It is a reshaping the pastoral care by all pastoral care givers into a holistic kind of intervention that refocusses the grieving into their own faith in an attempt to draw courage. When the current practice and pastoral care by the church is analysed side by side with this model, one picks up mistakes by some of those whom the church entrusts pastoral care. That very often, and in events of sudden death God has been presented as that punitive judge mentioned. This has been done with the unfortunate flaw of the lack of clear understanding of the bereaved inner world.

Put simply, the time of sudden death, more than anything is a time to take a journey to self by the grieving, and the time for the pastoral caregiver to listen attentively and sensitively to the expressions of their realities, feelings and attitudes in the midst of such a tragedy. It might not be a very easy thing to do especially with church schedules which are packed with activities and responsibilities but must be worked towards. At this time of grief, some values learned from history are important to be recalled to memories, and possibly to practice. This is one reason that authenticates pastoral care and compels the remembrance of the original and primitive pastoral care which is Christ-like, the kind of care that was seen in the eyes of Gerkin and Hiltner, and was discussed in chapter one above.



#### 4.13. SUMMARY

We have explained pastoral care and its need in the face of sudden death this chapter. We have time and again pointed out the openings which the church should be using to enter the world of the bereaved in any event of grief, and we have pronounced how the church has failed over a number of occasions. Accepting that grief and mourning may yield stresses of different kinds and responses; we have also enquired from the psychological world the actual situation of the psyche in different people in times and their responses to stress through sudden death. As much as it is the usual and common claims that some stresses are out of reach through pastoral care, it can be pronounced once more that such stresses are not impossible in the face of well aligned and grounded skilful pastoral care. In the next chapter, we shall relook into the church today and propose the model to reshape church as far as pastoral care is concerned, and apply pastoral care to a few victims.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5.1 INTROSPECTING THE CHURCH

When we commence with any introspection of the church it is important to first recall the calling of the church. Whilst the author shall be dealing with in this calling through a way of introspection of the same, it comes out of his interest to quickly highlight the brief history of the church denomination this whole work is based upon, the UCCSA. The challenges and pastoral care given by many givers happens to be given with the tone and prescripts of different church denominations. The way everything is handled and done is substantiated by a numbers of doctrines and constitutional phrases and clauses. It is the reason the introspection of the church is important. This is done because the church happens to be his background, and naturally where his experiences have found foundation.

#### 5.1.1 FROM OUR POSITION

The church is seen and known by the Congregationalists' as follows: They reckon that 'the word translated in the New Testament, but comes from a Greek word "ecclesia". It is a favourite word in the New Testament and is used hundred and fifteen times. But the idea it embodies appears far more frequently than that. The New Testament often speaks about 'the people who belong to the Lord', even when the word ecclesia is not used.

The above must always be borne in mind by everybody who acts in the name of the church. It forms a foundation of responsibility when any person commences with pastoral care from the church perspective. It is pronounced here to remind people who loose the church's intended purpose in the event of giving pastoral care to the bereaved during the time of sudden death. The loss of purpose results in people aiming at profiting only on church membership, or any

other way other than the real purpose that has got to be, not because people are converted but because they can pay their pledges. It is thus important that people are reminded now and then about the foundational basis of the church. They should be reminded that the church is not an instrument that serves them but a body that is there to worship God.

The meaning of this word is no longer a gathering of people summoned by the herald to meet in public place as it is supposed to be. The idea is a common one in African society, where the chief frequently calls a meeting of all the members of the tribe. In the Setswana tradition and language the word used to describe such a meeting is 'Pitso', which conveys the meaning of being called. The word *ecclesia* is used in a special way in the New Testament, and it seems to have come from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which speaks of the "ecclesia of God". This is a phrase which the New Testament writers took over from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and the word 'ecclesia' is used in exactly the same way to describe the people called out by the Lord. In the event of sadness and grief, it is these people who come to journey with fellow people. They come with the knowledge that sad and grieving human beings are seriously tested in faith. Some even lose the comprehension of the personality of God. As they are called by the same God, and proclaiming this loving God, they must really come together and share in the pain. The sharing of the pain yields and ushers condolences in various meaningful ways. This is known and has been felt by those who have ever grieved for something/someone very dear.

It is the kind of community that goes with what the church used to and should be, that enabled closeness with the bereaved at anytime

of need. Mourning in those times of church origin fell naturally inside the region where it would be practically impossible to miss to care for one another.

The Greek word then which is translated Church in English, links the calling of the old Israel with the calling of the New Israel as 'the people of God'. This connection between the Old Testament people of God is clearly stated when St Paul calls the church "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16).

To understand the relationship mentioned above better, we make an enquiry from the systematic theologians, and see how Lohfink and Zenger depart from a point where they remember the public discussion on religion between Martin Buber and Karl Ludwig Schmidt that took place in January 1933, at the Jewish Lehrhaus in Stuttgart. They quote the memorable words by Buber then, which have often been cited in recent decades as:

"I live a short distance from the city of Worms, to which I am also tied by ancestral tradition; and from time to time I visit there. When I do so, I always go first to the cathedral. It is a visible harmony of members, a whole in which no part deviates from the norm of perfection. I walk around the cathedral, gazing at it in perfect joy. Then I go to the Jewish cemetery. It consists of cracked and crooked stones without shape or direction. I enter the cemetery and look up from this disorder to the marvellous harmony of the cathedral, and it seems to me as if I was looking from Israel up to the Church. Here below there is no suggestion of form, only the stones and the ashes beneath the stones. The ashes are there, no matter how they have been scattered. The corporeality of human beings who have become ashes is there. It is there. It is there for me, not as corporeality within the space of this planet, but as corporeality deep in my own memories, back into the

depths of history, back as far as Sinai. I have stood there; I have been united with the ashes and through them with the patriarchs. That is a remembrance of the divine-human encounter which is granted to all Jews. There is perfection of the Christian God-space cannot divert me from this; nothing can divert me from the God-time of Israel.

I have stood there and I have experienced everything myself. I have experienced all the death that was before me; all the ashes, all the desolation, and all the noiseless wailings become mine. But the covenant has not been withdrawn for me. I lie on the ground, prostrate like these stones. But it has not been withdrawn for me. The cathedral is as it is. The cemetery is as it is. But nothing has been withdrawn for us.” (Lohfink and Zenger 2000: 1-2).

The author accepts the above as a way in which Buber was citing his experience at that particular day, something that connected him spiritually with the already departed then. This is one manner in which he viewed the current church as holistically connected to the early church, the people of God and/or Israel. The triangle in which he finds himself, where one vertex is the people he lived with, the other vertex the cathedral, and the other the cemetery which constitutes in him rich spiritually that still can be referred to by the current church as she crafts pastoral care surrounding sudden death, and the indelible meaning the graves of such people departed has on the living and grieving. Lohfink and Zenger continue to remember and randomly quote how the above statement by Buber has subsequently influenced the church. The reason of their remembrance comes to them as a healing tonic to their troubled mind. Commonly in many Christian denominations of churches, it is preached and known that the dying person becomes ashes at one stage of their death. This is always pronounced by the liturgy that we use at the committal that we do. To Lohfink and Zenger, it ushers to them a counter conviction

that, though the ones they so much loved has departed, there is a need to march on with life and embracing their (the departed) presence in their memories. It is one old method that is inherent with many rituals the church employs to this date. The same situation is replicated in our lives, and to some of us yields depression, in some way or another.

The situation with regard to pastoral care that is necessary, and is a responsibility of the church is not very much different today. The triangle as seen by Buber is still there, and can be seen and felt by many persons who are victims of grief and mourning the death of people who became prey to sudden accidental death. One may claim how Buber was superstitious about everything, something which many still claim today, and something that causes a discord to the church pastoral care when looked against various complements of human life such as culture and tradition.

They (Lohfink and Zenger) mention how Pope John Paul II, echoing the same sentiments on November 17, 1980, in Mainz by calling the Jews “the people of God of the old covenant that has never been revoked by God.”

The Pope continued to quote and base his speech on a number of documents such as the declaration ‘Nostra aetate’ that was passed at Vatican II on October 28, 1965, about the relationship of the church to non-Christian religions. It was here, that particular significance of some articles of the declaration was found such as article four, which relate the Catholic Church to Judaism and to individual Jews.

The dialogue of the church with the Jews and with Jewish tradition that had begun on many levels since the council and that had to continue, despite immense ‘problems over language’ was and still is, as constitutive element of the Church’s life, an act of return to the roots--- and a conscious search for companionship with contemporary Christians and other religions of this world all the way.

The same happens to be a missing link in the dialogue between and amongst Christians themselves, and among religions of the world in the event of stress and depression that comes as a result of sudden death. The church, in some ways or another, fails in the dialogue they must engage in with the traditions which happen to be hosting them. These ideas must be carried by the church and all her members today, so that they know the origins of this body in order to know what that church can and cannot do in times of sudden death to prevent unfortunate circumstances of stress yielding all undesirable responses such as depression.

It is important here for the author to remind the reader that a closer look on the church is made to re-assess whether the church is doing and/or answering to her calling as she is called to be in the face of stress inflicted by sudden death. The same is also viewed against what the church used to integrate herself with the civilisation and culture in the olden days where the current challenge was not known.

With due respect to the relationship of the Church to Judaism, all was standing before a new beginning: the 'rediscovery' of ongoing theological significance of Israel. This has never confronted the traditional teachings about the Church, yet at worst; it has confused contemporary Christians in terms of their own identity especially at the point of introducing their customs and traditions. It is a few Christians to date who have set to do their best in understanding the confusion of identity, which is somehow found to have characterised the church right from the beginning. Acts 15 is quoted a number of times as one of those texts exemplifies this. Any enquiring mind then asks about the origins of this church and her purpose, in order to judge whether the church is out of the way or not. In the face of depression, all who give pastoral care in the name of Christ the Head

**of the church must know and understand this body. For purposes of this understanding we need to revisit our meaning of the church.**

### **5.1.2 UCCSA ORIGINS IN A NUTSHELL**

**The congregational church hand book, Pilgrimage of Faith, has the following account on the origins of the Church.**

**The Christian Church began as one of the smallest religions in the Roman Empire. For three centuries, followers of Christ were persecuted by the imperial authorities and, while they met in secret, deep fellowship among themselves and courageous witness to Jesus as Lord were the distinctive features of their gathered churches. Whilst fixing all our minds and thoughts on the depression that results as a by-effect of sudden death, and which the current church happens to be proving to be more on the losing side than the winning in terms of her pastoral care, we need to revisit the historical roots of this church. As it was alluded to in the chapter one, the author will trace the roots of the Congregational Church. This is done with the goal of checking the contextual situation of this church in those years, and later comparing that with the current. It is significant to do so because it is in this comparison that we shall be able to see what the distinction is, something that will possibly inform us about what we lack that our fore-fathers had, and that made the church functional in the face of all her challenges. The reason for this is a personal notice that the cases of depression were not as many during earlier years as there are in the current years. This will clear a suspicion that the problem of the strength of the muscle of the church against depression might be located in the contextual situation of the current church.**

**Right from the Emperor Constantine's time and visions of a cross of light inscribed conquer, the church through her leaders went through mistakes and victories. The church has witnessed support from different walks of life and has gone through serious divisions in some countries and places.**



Differences were based on various issues some which did not to relate to the church but such are historically factual. Europe has befallen a host to the church being formed on strong foundations and also shaken by challenges to the church and faith communities, doctrinal strife and internal tensions.

Some of these still exist between and amongst churches today. In some cases it has yielded various tensions even in the kind of pastoral care that is appropriate to people bereaved through sudden death. Sometimes this is out of the unhealthy competition that the church is immersed in due to differences and strife by various powers. It aches to note that some conflicts in the church are of very old roots, and these caused wounds which happen to be unhealed up to this day. Some new ones are based in many ways on old wounds and has confused the current Christian community right through the world.

This spiritual desolation and political despotism ushered in a number of things including the, so called, Dark Ages, variation in the wealth of the church, corruption in the church and enormous suppression of the truth.

At times, the light of faith burned very low and the truth was under huge suppression, yet the church was able to produce saints, apostles, prophets and martyrs---of whom St Bernard, St Francis, St Theresa and Mother Julian of Norwich are just but few. These emerged during the time when hope was very minimal. This bit of history can in itself fuel new energy and commitment on people who give themselves to pastoral care giving, and fresh courage to those who are at the brink of giving up their congregants and fellow worshippers due to loss over stresses caused by sudden deaths of all kinds.

The repudiation of many Roman practices by Wycliffe in England, and the later emergence of names such as Huss, Luther, and others led to a new way of studying scriptures and a new understanding.

Following all names of reformers, the author has come across in the book as far as the historical account of the church is concerned, that more content to say their base has ever been the Bible and their faith. In everything they challenged they based themselves on the Bible. It could not be different to them to shift from this base if they were to face any pastoral responsibility including depression during their times. It is noteworthy to remember the difficulties of the said times, and encouraging to remember that they ultimately emerged victorious over such and through, amongst others, their faith basis and the Bible. The problem question now is depression that troubles the church and her people. This depression might be resulting from shallowness of the roots of pastoral caregivers delegated by the church, or the loss of focus of leaders of the church in circumstances of depression. It might also be right to infer that the current church has forgotten where the church comes from, and thus easy for the church to loose focus and direction. The author sees the need to bring important landmarks by some persons who made research strides in guiding the church and faith communities. In particular, the congregational church must practically keep this history as a heritage. Thus, when all seems not to be working, we enquire from the past. Coupled with all the names which church denomination members mention with pride are Zwingli, Calvin, Henry V111, and Wesley, all of them coming from different places and directions in the world, yet with a common purpose.

It is just by the end of nineteenth century, that there were Black Christians, who were not happy with the White, dominated structures in the mainline churches and founded parallel independent churches. This fuelled unhealthy competitions and a scramble for membership, and a lot was compromised by the church. A huge neglect of needy people resulted. With a few years, these independent churches had grown in numbers and

in influence. In more recent times churches, like the Zion Christian Church, which place a greater emphasis on African traditional modes of worship, have been on the increase and today they account for more than one-third of all Black Christians in Southern Africa.

With all this background, the Christian church and her scramble for membership became the key issue for individual denomination. A gross compromisation of the church herself, and her mission became evident. During needy times of grief, the church failed to know what to do or say. Even when at times the said scramble was healthy and informed by doctrinal-basic stands and theological insight, it was contaminated by self centric thoughts that became incumbent of individuals in the whole ecumenical church, and the central figure who is Christ, was in a way lost by many. The church as an institution that was so powerful over various human needs became weaker and weaker in handling stress and depression as her head Jesus Christ would. Remembering the reformation that occurred on the church and all doctrines that in some ways founded the way Christians handled their troubles and concerns, one would agree with any body who pronounce today that 'in the context of stress and depression the church has grown weaker and is in dire need of reformation of stances in the way she functions under such conditions'. It is crucially important to refer to the unison purpose of all the Christians and reformers known to us and used as examples, and consider how far they all were from one another; yet how common they were in the mission of the church and understanding of the Bible. By uniting in purpose with one another, we shall be able to share in good faith and develop common ways of dealing with serious problems that challenge us during our times of having to deal with families during bereavement through sudden death.

Sudden death surfaces as one of the first challenges to the Church today given the contextual circumstances. This is exemplified by the church

shortfalls in its pastoral care in general, but it is more conspicuous in the way the church handles many funerals. This has seriously necessitated self introspection by the church, and that the church claims her rightful stage among the communities she serves.

While there are many problems that the people have with the church today, several are widespread and deep-seated. These include the fact that the church is:

- Individualized,
- Privatized,
- Bureaucratic,
- Invalid in practice.

#### 5.1.2.1. Individualized

A great deal of misunderstanding and even hostility to the church results from the individualism that saturates cultures. Some of the most powerful cultural myths and images, for instance of the American cultures, center on the self-made and independent individual who achieves success in life without assistance from others. Independence rather than interdependence is their cultural bias, and this has an impact on the prevailing understandings of Christian life. The author has observed that in the South African societies and communities, this problem that has even gone against African cultures. A sense of importance to the community is, of course, not entirely absent from modern Western societies, but characteristically, however, the groups or denominations to which the self-sufficient individual or private person belongs are 'voluntary societies', the groups one chooses to join and in which one remains a member for as long as they meet one's needs and serve one's purposes. This somehow translates into a self-centred piety in which the church is quite secondary and frankly speaking, unnecessary. The church sits with the problem of striving to grow numerically, and in this event she confirms Christians who believes being a

Christian is an individual matter and is not essentially bound to life with others. This individualism hides the profound hunger for companionship and community that runs beneath the surface of life in South Africa, or any country.

#### 5.1.2.2. The Church is privatized

Very many church denominations operate as private structures serving private people. The world of work and public affairs is separated from the world of 'domesticity', leisure, personal nurture and religion. The process of privatization severs the message and mission of the church from the larger questions and struggles of life. If any purpose of the church is recognized, it is to serve the needs of private individuals and small homogenous groups. This is hampering the institution called the church, and has painted a different picture of this institution from the one our fore-fathers had, the one from whom we derived our faith.

#### 5.1.2.3. Bureaucratic organisation

Another obstacle to a proper understanding of the church is its accommodation to bureaucratic organisation. Bureaucracy is a system of administration marked by anonymity, adherence to fixed rules, hierarchy of authority, and the proliferation of officials. The ultimate in modern bureaucracy is the reduction of relationships between people to communication with a 'machine'. The church is subject, like all organisations, to bureaucratic pressures. Out of forgetfulness of its own essence, the church attempts to mimic the organizational structures and managerial techniques of profitable corporations. When the church succumbs to these pressures, it loses its true identity and its distinctive mission in the world. One of the results is the fact of new loss of authority over challenges, sudden death as an example. The UCCSA speaks of

congregationalism and do practice the model, at best, when everything is working well in the church, but there are those times where in any organisation misunderstandings happen, and this is a time when words and terms such as 'Theocratic' are sounded sometimes without the consciousness of the practical meaning of the same to needy circumstances such as sudden death. It is unfortunate that in various instances, many ministers abuse the term to equate it to bureaucracy.

#### **5.1.2.4. Invalid Practice.**

It is very disturbing to find the church having a conspicuous discrepancy between her expressed faith and her actual practice. Nietzsche write in Migliore, "They would have to sing better songs to make me believe in their Redeemer: his disciples would have to look more redeemed!" He continues to motivate that resultant from the above, the language about the community called church sounds shamelessly triumphalistic and unreal. The same is exemplified by cracks in pastoral care of the church in times of need due to the failure to practice what the church preaches. This sounds like a stern message to the church to practice a pastoral care with all pastoral interventions which are equal to their faith. The following phrases will be pronounced with better care:

##### **5.1.2.4.1. *The church is one.***

It only appears to be broken into countless racial, national, and class factions.

##### **5.1.2.4.2. *The church is holy.***

It is only a community of the very fallible and sinful people.

##### **5.1.2.4.3. *The church is catholic.***

It is only an illusion that the church is often provincial and hypocritically self-interested.

##### **5.1.2.4.4. *The church is apostolic.***

**It only appears frequently to have set itself above the apostles.**

**The holy church which is one, catholic and apostolic will understand care in a better way. This church will be Christ-like, so much so that community in the face of challenges, including death of all kinds, will empower sufferers.**

**Migliore continues to recall to mind the statement by Joseph Haroutunian pointing out how embarrassing and upsetting it becomes every time the statements like the four above are mentioned, because it is known that the church is different from what it is said to be. To the extent that Israel and the early church were a people up against the wall---poor, weak, and in peril--their language about the reality of the people of God had a dignity. It was intended to comfort and to support God's little, marginal, often persecuted people. But when the same language is used to describe the church as we know it today, the language becomes false on us. We know that the language is only cosmetic, and we become embarrassed or angry. This is because of their sensitivity to this predicament, a favourite motto of ecumenical church leaders in this century has been 'Let the church be the church'. Let the church live and act like the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the servant of God. The life of the church then will help complement pastoral care in different ways in various times of need.**

**This is a summons to the church to stop preening itself with all sorts of metaphysical complements without any corresponding social reality and praxis. (Migliore 1991: 187-188).**

**The words by Migliore and Haroutunian as they observed what the church is as opposed to what it has to be, challenges every Christian who today still harbours true aspirations of being the Christian, and really has faith and knowledge of the beginner of the Christian faith and subsequently the church. Christian faith will be in a position to claim her authority over death, and grieving will be more meaningful to all the bereaved.**

Missing in the individualized, privatized, bureaucratic and cosmetic forms of Christianity today is any real understanding of the inter-connectedness of life that is expressed in all the basic doctrines and symbols of classical Christian faith. Christians confess their faith in the triune God, whose reality is constituted by the welcoming love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christians believe in God the creator, who wills not to be alone but to have a covenant partner; in God the liberator and reconciler, whose costly grace in Jesus Christ inaugurates a new freedom for relationship with God and with others; and in God the Holy Spirit, who is the power of new community-in-freedom that anticipates the redemption of all creation. The Christian understanding of God as Trinitarian communion and of salvation as the free participation of creatures in God's society of love, highlights the importance of the church for Christian faith and theology. The same will be acted and made to be seen during the times of sudden death handling, both by those who are stricken and bereaved, and those who give pastoral care.

Thus, the call for the reform and renewal of the church today does not derive from a 'craze for modernity' but from a fresh apprehension of the gospel that gave the church life. When we honestly admit the problems of the church--- which have their roots in our forgetfulness of profoundly social meanings of all the articles of the faith as well as in our failure to hold together faith and praxis---we may begin to catch sight of the mystery of the church. The mystery is that through the free grace of God in Jesus Christ at work in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is breaking down all walls of separation and making 'one new humanity' (Eph. 2: 15). The mystery of the church who gives existence to others, shares life and power, and lives in the mutual giving and receiving of love. During grief inflicted by sudden death, the bereaved lose sight of this mystery, and can only find it through skilful pastoral care. The church is called to be the beginning of new human life in relationship, solidarity, and friendship beyond all privatism, classism, racism,



and sexism. It is this kind of the church that can conquer over current challenges by anything including the monster of inability to handle by-responses of stresses inflicted in various ways in our lives.

## 5.2. THE BIBLE AS THE NECESSARY POINT OF DEPARTURE

In the New Testament the *ecclesia*, or the church, refers to the new community of believers gathered to praise and serve God in response to the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The word church can designate either local assemblies of Christians or the universal Christian community.

If one goes on to probe deeper, one finds that the *ecclesia* as described in the New Testament refers to a unique and transformed way of being human in relationship with God and with other persons. It designates a distinctive form of human community characterized by mutuality, interdependence, forgiveness, and friendship in their true sense. In *ecclesia* power and responsibility are shared and there is always a special concern for the poor, the weak, and the despised. Ecclesial life is a new community of free persons centred on God's love in Jesus Christ and empowered to service by the Holy Spirit.

Frequent revisits to the Bible must be done to clear the foundation of pastoral care given by the church. The reasons for doing this include the affirmation of knowledge of the mess that is done to the bereaved during the period of mourning their dead through the use or misuse of the same Bible. The author has alluded to this in chapter 1, and has gone on to articulate the resultant feelings in many people when this happens. The being and calling of the church can thus not be felt, and therefore the meaninglessness of any form of care from the church that cannot be effective, especially in her own main text.

In the New Testament the church and its ecclesial form of life are related to but never identified with the coming reign of God. The Church is a sign and provisional manifestation of the reign of God. The triumphalistic identification of the church with the reign of God has been the source of a lot of arrogance and destructiveness in the church history. The church anticipates and serves the coming reign of God but does not fully realize it. The New Testament describes the church, or ecclesia (literally, those called out) in many different images and metaphors.

“In his book, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Paul Minear lists some ninety-six different images or analogies of the church found in the New Testament. Clearly, there is a surplus of Biblical images in regard to God and the person and work of Jesus Christ. Among the many images of the church are:

‘the body of Christ’ (Cor. 12: 27), ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matt. 5: 13), ‘a letter of Christ’ (2Cor. 3: 2-3), ‘fishers for people’ (Mark 1: 17), ‘branches of vine’ (John 15: 5), ‘the field of God’, ‘the building of God’ (1 Cor. 3: 9), a building on the rock, (Matt. 16: 18), ‘the bride of Christ’ (Eph. 5: 23-32), ‘God’s own people’ (1 Pet. 2: 9), a ‘new Jerusalem’ (Rev. 21: 2), ‘the household of God’ (Eph. 2: 19), ‘strangers and foreigners’ (Heb. 11: 13), and ‘the poor’ (Luke 6: 20). (Migliore 1991:189-190).

The minister/pastor who knows the above images and has fair command of theology can be guided accordingly when trodding into a situation where he/she has to represent the church in counselling the troubled hearts that are in grief. From this rich inventory of New Testament imagery of the church, four major clusters may be identified. These are:

- The people of God
- The servant people
- The body of Christ

➤ **The community of the spirit**

The pain that is experienced as result of sudden death by the people who needs the church to animate these imageries in their care. When they see and feel fellow Christians communing with them, they will beat stress disorders in numerous ways. It might be useful here to elaborate of the said imageries.

**5.2.1. The people of God**

One of image centres in the description of the church as the people of God, and especially the exodus people of God. The theme of the covenant between God and God's elect people is deeply embedded in both the Old and New Testaments. 'I ..... will be your God, and you shall be my people' (Lev 26: 12). 'You are ..... God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called out of darkness into his marvellous light'. (Pet. 2: 9). According to this cluster of images, the church is not primarily a building or organization but a people, a community, and specifically the people of God who have been called by God. Relating to this image of the church as the people of God are images such as the chosen race, holy nation, sons and daughters of Abraham, remnant and the elect. A basic function of this constellation of images is to connect the Christian community to historic Israelite community of God based on the covenant promises and to describe these people as an exodus, pilgrim community, a people called out for a special task achievements of the Second Vatican Council was to give renewed prominence to this image of the church as the people of God. The family that is broken hearted and has lost meaning through grief has to be reminded all this with care and skill, to enable them development of meaning as they wrestle with the realities of sudden death.

### 5.2.2 The Servant People

The second set of images describes these people of God as a servant people. This is a very prominent motif of the Old Testament. Repeatedly, Yahweh calls for the liberation of the people of Israel 'that they may serve me' (Exod. 8: 1; 9: 1; 10: 3). The theme of a servant people is no less important in the New Testament. Just as the Lord of this community is a servant Lord, so the community called by God is to be a community of servants. 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10: 45). Christians are likewise to be servants---'servants for Jesus' sake' (2Cor. 4: 5). Called to serve God and others, the church is not to exercise power in a self-cantered way or to lord it over others but to be ready for costly service (Matt. 20: 25-26). There are many images that cluster around this service image. The people of God are co-workers, helpers, ambassadors, and witnesses. All of these images suggest that this particular community has its reason for being not in itself but in its task, which is to serve God and the world created by God. The church's service of God finds expression in its worship, prayer, and praise; the church's service to the world takes the form of witness in the world and in deed to God's grace and God's call for justice. These two aspects are of the service of God and our neighbours.

### 5.2.3. The Body of Christ

The third set of images focuses on the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ. This description of the church occurs in the Pauline letters, above all, 1 Cor. 12: 12-31. The community participates in one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism, and thus becomes 'one body'. This organic image of the church as a body whose head is Christ has been enormously influential in Christian theology and in the history of the church. The

image conveys the mutual dependence of all members of the community on one another, their variety of gifts, which are for the enrichment and edification of the whole community, and the common dependence of all members of the body on the one head who is Christ. The unity of the church as one body is indispensable if it is to be effective in carrying out its mission in the world.

#### **5.2.4. The Community of the Spirit.**

The final set of image portrays the activity of God in creating a community of the end-time, a community of the Spirit, filled by the gifts of the Spirit. In the renewing experience of the Spirit of God, the New Testament church sees the important evidence of the fulfilment of the promises made by the prophets (Acts 2:17ff). Racial, gender, and class divisions are broken down (Gal. 3:28); strangers are welcomed; the sharing of power replaces domination. Empowered and guided by the Spirit, the community is God's 'new creation', the first signs of God's new humanity, the first fruits of a glorious new age. This cluster of eschatological symbols of the church all point to the racial new beginning of life realized in the coming of Christ and his Spirit and the promise of still more comprehensive renewal and transformation still to come. The church serves and suffers but also celebrates and hopes, because it already experiences a foretaste of new life and joy in the koinonia and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The church is thus a sign of the kingdom of God. As an 'alternative community' in which a new Spirit of freedom reigns and in which the most wretched are included and even enemies are welcomed, the church gives the world a reason to hope.

### **5.3. THE CURRENT CHURCH MODEL AND ITS FAILURE**

Looking into what the church and our ministry do to all people today, in the church itself, in families, in communities and generally in our lives, it necessitates the importance of review the church. Instructed by the above stated New Testament images of the church, it is possible to review critically some models of our church both past and present. Whereas images and symbols constitute the more immediate language of faith, the term model refers to a theoretical construct that is employed to deepen our understanding of a complex reality.

Avery Dulles has identified several models of the church. These are as follows:

- Institution
- Mystical communion
- Sacrament
- Herald and
- Servant. ( Migliore 1991: 192).

In the following paragraphs, the author will tease more meaning into the models mentioned above and explain their understanding in secular world which unfortunately happens to be their conception by most members of the church. This is where the failure of the church in pastoral care in many angles including during these times when people are in grief is based.

#### **5.3.1 The church as an Institution.**

Among the most influential models of the church is an institution of salvation. This view defines the church primarily in terms of divinely authorized structures, officers, procedures, and traditions. As institutions, the church has a definite form and organization. The chain of power

and authority is precisely determined. Some organizational features--- structures of leadership, patterns of worship, authoritative writings--- are, of course, already evident in the church of the New Testament period. Within a century or two, the structures of canon, bishop, and doctrine had become well developed and provided stability and coherence to community. But an institutional view of the church was characteristic neither by the patristic period nor by the Middle Ages; as it achieved dominance only in the nineteenth century. (Migliore 1991:192).

Institutional structure belongs to the humanity of the church. Some kind of structure and order is a necessity in any historical community. It is sheer romanticism to suggest otherwise. But the institutionalist view of the church, especially when it has entered into alliance with state power, has done more harm than good.

An example of how this institution has harmed the concept the church was seen when Mr Brown (not his real name), a well known public figure and high ranking official in the government because of his ruling party, Developing Assembly Party (not real name) died of car accident yet did not know the church or any of his family members. The church acted and painted a wrong picture in everything they did in the form of pastoral care because the church went against a lot of what the church preached before. This was done to impress the state powers and not really to care for the bereaved, never mind the whole church. The reader must not construe the author here to be advocating care for the church members as many churches feel today, including even the said church, but is concerned about the lack of consistency in the message of the church depending on who is involved. This is harmful to the church that is called to being by Christ, and robs the church of her credibility a great deal, something that adversely affects the care by the church in rightful ways.

It stands to reason that this institution has not resisted the temptation to see the purpose of the church as institutional survival and domination rather than costly service. One might describe the characteristics of the church according to the institutional model as being rather like those of an imperial state. Typically, order in this church is hierarchical rather than representative or interactional. Power always flows from the top to the bottom. Furthermore, power is centralized in the hands of the few who are supposedly ordained by God to rule over the silent and powerless masses of believers. Above all, there is the mentality of maintenance of the institution and, if possible, extension of its power.

While all this is portrayed in Protestant polemics as the typically Roman Catholic version of the church, the truth is that the tendency of the institutional structure of the church to grow and harden into institutionalism has proved to be very real in both Catholic and Protestant ecclesial life. When this happens, hierarchy triumphs over community, and the mentality of survival supplants the spirit of service. In the Reformed churches, there has been a lot of emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, and on ordained ministry as functional rather than metaphysical, and on the stirring motto 'ecclesia reformata semper reformanda' meaning (The church reformed, always in need of being reformed). Such principles fight against the tendency toward institutional sclerosis, but they have often been honoured more in the word than in practice. Whereas Roman Catholic institutionalism identifies the church with the hierarchy, Protestant institutionalism identifies the church with its own patterns of organization and tests of orthodoxy.

The strongest criticism of the over-institutionalized church comes today neither from liberal Catholic nor classical Protestant sources but from Latin American liberation theology. We do not rightly understand this theology unless we recognize that one of its important concerns is critique and



reformation of a hierarchical, over-centralized, and anxious institutional church. In the judgement of liberation theologians, the institutional church all too often exercises power in a manner resembling that of totalitarian governments and exploitative corporations. It disappoints anyone trying to view this kind of church and find it to be just like a business enterprise with the elite in charge of the capital, which in this case would be the sacraments, and with the masses who would be the members of the church and the entire community reduced to mere consumers. Because the church is not immune to the temptation to seize and abuse power, the structures of the church must be continuously challenged and converted by the gospel and its summons to risk-taking service.

### 5.3.2. The Church as the Intimate Community of the Spirit.

Another model of the church portrayed is noted to be an Intimate Community of the Spirit. According to this view, the church is not so much a formal organization as it is a closely knit group whose members share a common experience of God's revivifying Spirit. Whereas the church in its traditional form is large, hierarchically organized, impersonal, and often insensitive to the needs of individuals, the typical spiritual community is small, personal, loosely organized, and develops a strong sense of belonging and mutual support among its members.

The principal task of the church so conceived becomes the facilitation of spiritual experiences and the promotion of interpersonal relationships. The church as intimate community takes different forms. In Catholicism, an ecclesiology of mystical communion, developed partly in reaction to deadening institutional hierarchical structures, has encouraged a more personalistic understanding of the church and has recognised the importance of the gifts of the Spirit to all the people of God. Protestantism

has produced a variety of understandings of the church as a spiritual community.

One appears in the charismatic movement, which emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit and special experiences of spiritual healing and renewal. Individuals who have had these experiences often form close, mutually supportive groups. The model of the church as an intimate community undoubtedly addresses real human needs. Many people in modern society are desperately lonely and battle-scarred. They seek a safe refuge and community where they can feel at home. Some are physically and spiritually broken by their efforts to survive in a depersonalized and indifferent social order, and they cry out for spiritual healing and new meaning for their lives. With its emphasis on prayer, meditation, spiritual exercises, and exchange of personal and experiences, the church as intimate community cultivates a more personal and egalitarian experience of life in community than the institutional model of the church does. Whatever its limitations, such ministry to individuals in need is an essential element of the mission of healing of the sick in body and spirit (Mark 1: 32-34).

But there are some weaknesses in this model as well. These become especially evident when the understanding of Christian community is uncritically borrowed from movements in contemporary culture and ecclesial life become indistinguishable from encounter sessions, sensitivity groups, and other kinds of therapeutic-religious communities that are so popular today. It is not always clear what distinguishes such communities as specifically Christian. An ecstatic experience of the holy or an experience of intimacy and bonding with another does not necessarily constitute an experience of Christian faith. Moreover, therapy-oriented communities tend to concentrate on the individual's growth at the expense of larger social responsibilities of the community. Currently popular New Age spirituality proves evidence of this fact. A church that copies such patterns of

spirituality and intimate community becomes simply a haven from an insensitive and bureaucratic society and its depersonalizing effects. It becomes, in other words, an escape from, rather than a renewing critique of, the larger society that is in need of transformation. While the church is indeed the community of the Spirit in which all gifts and in which power is shared, the New Testament views this new Spirit-guided community as called to serve God's purpose of both personal and world transformation.

### 5.3.3. The Church as Sacrament of Salvation.

Another known model of the church yet not very commonly referred to is that 'a church is a sacrament of salvation'. This model is increasingly prominent in the Roman Catholic Church theology since Vatican 11. It emphasizes that in its worship, witness, and service, the church is the sign of the continuing presence of grace of God in Jesus Christ in history. As interpreted by some theologians, the model draws attention primarily to the church's own sacramental life, and particularly to participation in the Eucharist. In the community nourished and renewed by Eucharist action, the redemptive work of Christ is extended to all humanity. One of the strengths of the sacramental model is its combination of the objective and subjective aspects of the life of the church, which tend to be separated in the institutional and mystical models. This understanding of this imagery of the church can energize the church better in her exercise of pastoral care during needy times of sudden death.

But the model of the church as sacramental also has its weaknesses. It can lean toward ecclesiocentrism, often in the form of liturgism. Christ and the Spirit are thought to be at work primary in the rites of the church. This may result in a decline of emphasis on the social responsibility of the faith community. While some Latin American liberation theologians have adopted the model of the church as

sacrament, they use the phrase to refer to the church's embodiment of God's redemptive activity in history through the praxis of solidarity with the poor. (See Gutierrez 1988: 143). As a sacramental community, the church should signify both in its internal structures and in its social praxis as the liberation of life that it announces.

#### 5.3.4. The Church as The Herald of Good News.

The fourth prominent model of the church is that of the 'herald of good news'. This is the understanding of the church that has been primarily in the Protestant traditions. It is based on the conviction that the church's mission is above all to proclaim the Word of God and to all the nations to repentance and new life. Men and women are to be summoned to put their faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. All matters of institutional structure and satisfaction of personal needs are to be subordinated to the task of proclamation and evangelization.

An evaluation of this model of the church as the herald of good news must begin with the acknowledgement that the proclamation of the gospel is indeed a primary task of the community of faith. However, this task has often been construed in rather narrow terms. When this model dominates or even excludes other models, it is easy for the church to take a patronizing and self-righteous attitude toward people and cultures and never listens. If the church as herald is not to be an instrument of domination, it must be willing to be instructed by others on how it might best be of service to them and, equally important, what they may have to give as well as receive. Moreover, a holistic understanding of service is often missing from this model. Preoccupation with the delivery of the message may override the concern to meet concrete human needs for food, shelter, medical care, education, and other basics of dignified life.

### **5.3.5. The Church as the Servant of the Servant Lord.**

**This is one model of the Church that can be regarded as a diaconal model. According to this view, the Church is not primarily an institution whose purpose is survival and expansion, nor an intimate community designed to foster the personal growth of individuals who feel neglected and depersonalised by modern society, nor merely the herald of a message. The church is a servant community called to minister in God's name on behalf of the fullness of life for all of God's creatures.**

**Having gone through all the above mentioned models the reader will virtually conceive in his/her mind on some denominations of churches that we have today for each model. In other instances when a particular church comes against these models, one sees either a combination or a confusion of a number of models. As a result, churches spend time and money in organising and sometimes indoctrinating members to a particular model. Sight has thus been lost on pastoral care which is a key to church under hurting moments such as times of bereavement.**

**Migliore points out that the church serves God by serving the world in its struggle for emancipation, justice, and peace. (Migliore 1991: 196-197)**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the other hand defines the church as the community that exists for others. He says that the church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating but helping and serving. This model of the church for others, a church that is a servant rather than a master of the world, has been influenced in many modern ecclesiologies. It plays an important role both in the emphasis on the church's mission of reconciliation in the midst of conflict and in the call to the church to participate in the struggle for the liberation on the oppressed. (See Bonhoeffer 1967: 204)**

The servant model of the church has a lot to contribute to the life of the people today. It can contribute to the pastoral care of pastoral caregivers holistically. This will embrace the much needed support to church representatives during times of need such as when pastoral care is to be given to the bereaved and grieving. At its best, it helps to overcome the split between the spiritual and the mundane, between concern for evangelization and the struggle for justice, a split all too frequent in other models of the church. Like Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth insists that the church exists for the world, because God first and supremely exists for the world, the church is to exist not for itself but for others. The missionary character of the church is not incidental but quite essential to its being as the people of God.

One must as well be careful of the dangers posed by this model. The church may forget what the basis and the goal of its service is, with the result that ecclesiology is reduced to social function. Further, the church that understands itself as a servant of the world may tend to subordinate nurture of the spiritual life to zeal for political action. Closely related to this is the ever-present danger of an uncritical identification of the reign of God with a particular program of social and political change. This is frequently accompanied by a loss of self-criticism and openness to reform. Social activism may overlook the many forms of bondage from which human beings need to be liberated: the sins of pride, greed, apathy, presumption, self-indulgence, no less than structural forms of sin as economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and domestic and state-sponsored violence. It makes little sense to set these various liberation concerns against each other.

#### 5.4 The Possible Turning Point

Acknowledging the enormous amount of work that has to be done if the church really want to be of better service to her congregants and the communities, the church must re-look on to herself and her directions in what she does as far as pastoral care is concerned. Lyall remembers Freud's notes of 1927 (see Lyall 1995: 131) when he refers to the religion as an allusion and asserted it had no future. Religion has survived as potent phenomenon in contemporary culture many years after this. Freud would have perhaps been surprised by the fact that religion is frequently inextricably bound up with psychotherapeutic endeavours that are rooted in his concepts and professional practice. Some religions did truly find realities in his work, and the work of the therapists who have built on his ideas, which have transformed their understanding of those caring relationships that belongs within communities of faith. He discovered that this was also noted in the 1960s, that the future of the religious illusion looked decidedly problematic. This was a decade of secularization and a further marginalization of the institutional church. This argument was such that, if Christianity as a religion is to survive, the Gospel requires a secular meaning for secular locations in which God is 'dead'. The decade also saw the proliferation of the humanistic therapies and the offer of salvation through self realization. It has been suggested, with reasons, that these humanistic therapies sometimes felt like new expressions of an optimistic faith.

The quest for meaning continues unabated as the life of faith continued which in Miglore's eyes was interpreted as living faith, when faith seeks meaning and understanding. It is by this reason that the contemporary context of every form of counselling is characterized by a religious pluralism. The mainstream Christian denominations, with some congregations exhibiting signs of excitement and vitality amidst apparent institutional decline, continue to function alongside charismatic and

independent churches for which church growth is a reality. It is perhaps not entirely accidental that the emergence of a more pluralistic society and the disappearance of these commonly held stores, beliefs and values have been accompanied by the growth of the counselling movement. In the age and era when shared stories seem to be losing their potency, it becomes more important than ever that people should make sense of their own personal stories. The pastoral care disciplines above, have shown how meaning is found in people's own personal stories, than meaning that is imposed by either the church in some way or the pastoral caregiver. This is stressed by Gerkin's perception of the pastoral counsellor as 'not only a listener to stories, he/she is also a bearer of stories and of a story. This raises volumes of importance of the awareness by the pastoral counsellor of the stories present in any counselling situation. These include:

- The client's own story
- The counsellor's story and
- The stories and myths that may be part of a shared culture or community of faith.

The author can say with a level confidence that the task that the church must examine from time to time when evaluating how the church gives service to the community is being done is 'how and how far are their ministers trained in the specifics of pastoral care'. I make stern reference to ministers here because they become the custodians of pastoral care in any angle where the church is serving. It is pathetic to date to live with the reality that some ministers of church denominations are being 'ordained' into their ministry without any training but their dreams. This is to the church what Paul referred to as 'a thorn in the flesh' in 2Cor.12:7.

#### **5.4.1 The Education of Ministers.**

The Universities and theological colleges where men and women are trained for full-time ministry are undeniably doing good work in equipping



ministers with their pastoral studies of high profile today than years ago. Priority is given to classroom in the area of pastoral studies, together with supervised field education in local church settings and secular agencies. In the local church setting as a focal point in this work, the supervisory duty of the minister is very high and crucial; and there are indications that such theological colleges are taking seriously the training in the appropriate skills of those with hands on responsibility for the field education of ordinands. Surely, the system is expected to produce clergy with a degree of self-awareness and competence as pastoral carers.

There is a bigger room for development as one looks into the system against its production of skilful pastoral counsellors. Pastoral care is not given adequate time when it is treated as a one brief module to satisfy the work of ordained ministry. Given today's need of pastoral counselling under the complex situation, some of which sudden death is one, ministers who are not well founded in their development of:

- The pastoral task
- Knowing something of the relevance of human growth and development task
- Realizing the need for active listening as opposed to giving of advice
- Gaining some understanding of the dynamics of loss and
- Becoming aware of pervasiveness of transference and counter transference in the pastoral relationship;

These ministers may be found wanting under the said circumstances. The other aspect of consideration in the preparation of ministers for their work was correctly picked up by Bradbury, the Director of Pastoral Studies at an Anglican theological college, as 'not so much of aptitude as of attitude', (Bradbury 1992: 10).

It is taken for granted in the culture of psychotherapy that ministers will be enabled to get in touch with those needs of their own which have brought

them onto training. Lyall believes these needs are wrapped up in piety. Bradbury's concern was that 'it had not yet dawned on candidates that in order to train as a pastor they would be training to use their selves as a tool for their work'. The author locates the same to be generalised as one the inherent attributes of one's CALL to ministry by many churches.

“There is much to be said for ministers training in secular settings. It is more theological insights that they need at such a point, but a thorough grounding in counselling theory and practice, with the kind of supervision that challenges their presuppositions. Unless they are determined to live in two worlds, good supervision also helps them to integrate new theoretical insights and practical skills with their personal theologies, both explicit and implicit.” (Lyall 1995: 138).

Noting the same, David Tracy described it as 'beginning to make mutually critical correlations'. (Tracy 1983: 65).

Practically speaking, the setting says it all that, the encounter with human suffering causes new questions to be addressed to their academic theologies; their own appropriation of the Christian story becomes part of their pastoral understanding; theology becomes alive and relevant; practice is deepened and perfected, clearly, a minister is being made a minister.

#### **5.4.2 Ministers/Pastors---The Rightful Bereavement Counsellors.**

Today many ministers and pastors hesitate to engage in anything that might be viewed as professional counselling or psychotherapy, something that is a crucial need in the practice of theology today. This professional counselling and/or psychotherapy happen to be a skill that is appropriate during the pastoral care at a time of death, and in many instances when it is

sudden. Sometimes this is due to the fact is mentioned in the chapter one of this research, congested programme, just delegation that is everywhere in the sectors of our current life or just a beyond my scope syndrome mentioned. It must be noted by churches and her leaders that bereavement counselling is one of the very important and inescapable part of their work. Whilst remembering all that, it is natural that the Church will be represented in the form of personalities/human beings to do all that the church is expected to do. From a congregational understanding of the church responsibilities including pastoral care, the minister/pastor may either attend to the responsibility or send laity for the same. The main function must be borne in mind by anybody whose direct task it comes to be, and the identity the church attains through that person(s).

It is simple logic to assume that all ministers are aware of their identity in the event of counselling the bereaved through sudden death, and to locate this awareness in their education as pastoral care practitioners. Inferring from what the understanding of death is to people, and what all responses of families and communities when such deaths strike, skilful pastoral caregivers know that they counsel:

- ✓ Believers
- ✓ Nonbelievers
- ✓ People of other faiths

Believers--- the minister's task is different when faith is present and when it is not. Let us assume that we are dealing with the loss of someone for whom the bereaved had real love and affection, (it is always the case). Such people must be approached with absolute respect for their privacy, though with knowledge that a skilful pastoral caregiver can discreetly trespass here and there yet with prudence for him/her to be of any help to them. While such grief is in some measure our common lot as human beings, whose personal fulfilment has its necessary condition in intimate relationships, each person's experience is uniquely personal. Given these considerations, a

**'standardized approach' would be clearly inappropriate, and a researched pattern of comforting words would be an insult. The pastoral caregiver should make an approach as the one who comes first of all to learn what this loss means to the mourner in his/her own words and then to share some truths and perspectives from our common faith. The objective in sharing this time of sorrow with those who have known God's presence at work in their lives is to discover God in the present. If for some reason God seems hidden, then the objective is to work through their immediate reactions in a way that will facilitate their rediscovery of the foundation faith that is in them. It is this faith in God's love and goodwill that enables them, first, to entrust the beloved dead to God's care and, second, to find peace and purpose in picking up the threads of daily life again. Both of these aspects are well expressed in the following short prayer:**

**Oh Heavenly Father, help us to trust our loved ones to thy care. When sorrow darkens our lives, help us to look up to thee, remembering the cloud of witness by which we are encompassed about. And grant that we on earth, rejoicing ever in thy presence, may share with them the rest and peace which thy presence gives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**  
**(Schoenberg 1980: 185).**

**It is one of the wonderful short prayers that believers can keep in their hearts to strengthen themselves in times of sudden sorrow. The pastoral caregiver must assess with prudence the situation around the bereaved, because at times, guilt over real or fancied shortcomings in past relationships with the deceased functions a high attention-getter that distract the bereaved for the underlying sources of faith and hope. Such problems have to be identified and be resolved. In this sort of counselling, the minister often has an advantage over the secular counsellor because the minister can go beyond merely clarifying the problem and can indicate**

the way to forgiveness provided by Jesus Christ in the shedding of His blood. The minister, however, sometimes has the disadvantage that congregants are hesitant to reveal their shortcomings to him/her. It must be remembered by the pastoral caregiver here that:

“Death has now made it impossible to ask directly for the forgiveness of the departed; but, properly understood, the divine forgiveness and the possibility of meeting again in the divine presence can provide closure of this unfinished business. It is, on the other hand, also impossible now to express forgiveness directly to the deceased for hurts and insults that have produced lingering resentments.”(Schoenberg 1980: 185-186).

The above can become a source of grave concern, and paradoxically, of fresh guilt for the bereaved. It is an opening the pastoral caregiver has to sort to close through counselling that is directed toward the understanding of these feelings, so that they can be seen in proper perspective and left behind to proceed with life that is otherwise inevitably proceeding.

Nonbelievers---the task of the minister is quite different when working with nonbeliever. Just as listening is important to one who shares faith with the counsellor, it is important to one who does not. It is actually one main requirement in any counselling session. If the Church is to fulfil its task, the goal for the nonbeliever must include a concern for this person's long-term relationship with God. This will not imply a lack of sympathy or concern for the immediate experience of grief or for any of the other personal and emotional problems that may trouble the bereaved; it means therefore that the minister or any pastoral caregiver must be conscious of a wider perspective to work with these problems effectively. Therefore, it might be necessary to first lay the ground work in order to deal with the bereaved with effect, preparing them for the encounter with God. It follows logically then that listening and understanding can ensue, followed by appropriate sharing of

ideas and/or experiences, and also sharing own faith and hope. This ushers some measure of hope and comfort to the bereaved. There might be some theological problems, such as anger at God for taking away the loved one, but it is for the minister/pastoral care giver to sort divine wisdom to deal with such in attempting to respond through his/her skilful counselling. There is also no need for the minister/pastor to force discussions with people who do not want to share any conversation with him/her. Thus, the focus of the church through her ministers/pastors must be kept on to the death that has stricken the family so sudden and its effects, rather than any other thing that might spark any misunderstandings which are un-necessary, and more importantly at this particular point of the family vulnerability.

#### **5.5. LIFE WHEN DEATH IS THE CONTEXT**

In all the literature on bereavement, mourning, and grief, there is never any doubt that the person(s) has lost in some way or another. Attachment, separation, search and remembering the relationship, all these make sense to anybody looking at life and animating the context as death due to how death is common in all shapes it comes to us today. How we get affected by all kinds of death is discussed above already, and it can be noted as one inevitable path that we mourn when that time comes.

Bregman remembers Worden's declaration saying:

“in my view, mourning is finished when the task of mourning is accomplished”. (Bregman 1999: 108).

The statement should give better light that mourning does not have any stipulated time. This must preserve the bereaved from unwarranted pressure to move through stages of mourning quickly so that they meet conventional expectations. The same knowledge challenges secular life

seriously in that all persons are expected back to work few days after burying their beloved, no matter how they died. However, knowing how reasonable all are given the importance of general economy, this does not really fall on to this discussion; but should be known and worked on by the caring church.

Rando in Bregman favours what she calls “the six R processes of mourning”. These are:

- Recognize the loss.
- React to the separation.
- Recollect and re-experience the deceased and the relationship
- Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world.
- Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old.
- Reinvest. (Bregman 1999:108).

The above processes are also mentioned to be occurring and experienced by a person who is dying like Kubler-Ross’ noted in her stages, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. They all became favourite ideals for several decades of thinking and practical care, even as almost everyone agreed that the stages did not appear in sequence, and that the model worked as a moral ideal more than as a psychological description. From personal experience and also acceptably broad conference with bereaved people through sudden death, the same stages do apply in various events of bereavement, grieving and mourning. This was evident in the case of the author’s entire family during the sudden death that was mentioned in chapter 1, and it went on to occur at intervals in the various other deaths (which were also sudden) that followed. No matter how often and insistently Kubler-Ross and other familiar with the model claimed their purpose was to meet each dying person where that person was,

emotionally, socially, spiritually, the sequential structure encouraged the aim of moving through the stages as quickly as possible.

Bregman notes that:

“this model rests on a presumed parallel with the process of mourning. There is a gradual, orderly process of recognizing the anticipated end of one’s life, recollecting and re-experiencing the important relationship and ties of that life, and relinquishing one’s attachment to it. The R-process seem to correspond closely to the denial, reactive depression, and acceptance stages of Kubler-Ross’ scheme. It stands to reason that, when Kubler-Ross proposed her scheme, she seemed happy to see it applied to the soon-to-bereaved families, so that their anticipatory grief parallels the stages of the dying person herself. Yet by now, the multiple problems with this assumed parallel should be obvious. The death of the self is simply not the same as the death of another. “Search”, in Parkes’ sense of an intense urge to re-find the missing person, is an alleged biologically based adaptive young primate. That is its origin in our remote proto-human past. Search in this sense cannot be applied to oneself. The struggle for identity in the face of impending death cannot be modelled on this behaviour pattern. Notice how different the possible meaning and application of this term might be in the two situations, and the whole parallel becomes filled with dubious equivalences.

Another obvious misfit between the death of another and the impending death of oneself, is the role of denial in the two situations. Denial in the context of one’s own anticipatory death is found universally, although it is rarely total. It is exemplified by statements such as, “When I get out of hospital..., I’m only a bit run-down.... They mixed my X-rays with someone else’s....” A frantic search for miracle cures, refusal to follow dietary restrictions and false claims of physical improvement are considered behavioural signs of denial. Denial not only shields the self, but has an adaptive function in maintaining



relationships that would end without it. Defined this broadly, it certainly seems to be present in virtually all dying persons to some extent. By contrast, true denial in the context of bereavement is rarely the problem. When Rando lists “Recognize the loss” as the first R-process, she does not imply that many people flatly refuse to accept that a loss has occurred. They do not pretend that the person who has died is still alive; they plan funerals; they behave realistically on the surface. They may need to recognize the loss at the deeper emotional levels that clinicians find important, but it is a rare case of bereavement where denial is truly the pervasive problem as it is among the dying.” (Bregman 1999:113-114).

Considering all this R-processes by Rando, it surfaces and clarifies a basis for the necessity of some stress during grief times. This is not in dispute by any person especially the one who has gone through pain of losing the beloved person through any means. The Batswana have a poetic expression saying: ‘pelo e senang phufa, selo ga se sa yone’, literally meaning, ‘a heart that does not have a single grain of jealousy for something, that does not belong to that person’. This says, and has always been used by many to ‘judge’ the relationship with the departed. The consideration of all this by the bereaved brings all the processes mentioned above into vigorous application. It is and must challenge the church when the situation, due to its context, becomes out of control and unbearable.

A third difference between the two situations is how the time works in each. One of them recalls that Lindemann originally thought that a year was sufficient to complete grief work. Many dying persons have at least this much forewarning of their deaths, and so clinicians imagined a parallel of intense anticipated grief work for oneself, lasting a finite

period of time. Within this picture, sudden death is a problem insofar as no anticipation on anyone's part will have occurred.

The dying person will have avoided the whole process, and the family will be unprepared, will not have experienced any anticipatory grief. This is a breeding ground for problems of stress that sometimes is under no control. However, as we have seen the notion of a set time frame for mourning is now believed to be misleading and unhelpful. Mourning in the sense Attig and Rando understands it is a lifelong accommodation to loss. If so, no parallel with the situation of dying can be relieved upon. Or rather, specific factors in the prognosis, the progression of the illness, and its medical treatment need to be acknowledged as directly relevant to the scheme of coming to terms with death, as they were not in the original Kubler-Ross model. In the case of illness known to be fatal but where a very long period of time is given between the initial prognosis and the time of death, there will be too much time to devote entirely to the psychological tasks of the R-processes. For instance, cystic fibrosis has its own trajectory, as anthropologist Myra Blueblood-Langer's study of afflicted children and families shows. After the initial diagnosis, some of the processes of coping with impending loss were experienced, but the families then focussed on daily living and care for the sick child, and adapted to a steady situation medically by bracketing off all concern with the eventual anticipated death. Only when the illness started to assert itself dramatically and catastrophically did the children's families' attention turn back to the impending death. The changed experience of living with AIDS is an ever clearer case of how a model of constant anticipation of one's own death shifts to an assumed period of relative health prior to the final onset of a cascade of illness. Once these aspects of dying, particularized to the individual illnesses and disease processes, are noticed, the weakness of the parallel between death of the other and the anticipated death of self is plain.

Yet, surely there are some similarities, some truly parallel features of the two situations. The parallel assumes that both call on the self's resources for coping with the massive threat and disruption. The mourner and the one who is dying must struggle to "relearn the world" and question their own assumptions about it. They must reflect on the meanings of the past and attempt to form a life story that will ring true. In this, the parallel still makes intuitive sense. Most of what Kubler-Ross discussed under the category of 'reactive depression' (unfinished emotional business) correspond to the third and fourth R-processes (recollect and re-experience, relinquish). If so, then to speak of a life review is more appropriate than a global label such as 'depression', which is easy to confuse with the psychiatric condition. This is where the medical and psychiatric worlds will prescribe a host of drugs mentioned in chapter 3 and more than that. The reality is that, not all dying persons engage in this, like as well, not all mourners who are stricken by sudden death do this. But the parallel works when it is confined to R-processes that focus on reviewing and reassessing the past, rather than on any other dimensions of the situations.

"These specific processes are the fundamental material for stories of anticipated death. The protagonist must struggle with recollecting, re-experiencing, and relinquishing the past, just as Ivan Ilych did.

Normally this yield more sense of the past's inner worth, its secret treasures, its living heritage. Stewart Alsop's autobiography, *Stay of Execution*, starts when he is sick from a blood disease. He recollects his life as a journalist, a father, and finally as a soldier who escaped wartime death in France. All the while he knows he will not escape this time and will soon die. This focus on questioning, recollecting, and re-experiencing the past and its relationships is what the situation of anticipating one's own death and mourning that of another seem to share." (Bregman 1999:116).

The problem with what Bregman shares above here is not that it cannot be of any use to the church and pastoral care today, but the impossibility of telling the stories of unanticipated death/sudden death. Such stories are all untold, and the livings have to face with the mourning that most of the times does not make sense to them. Beyond this, the parallel fails completely. Recall how the thrust of all contemporary studies of mourning as a process assume that its ultimate outcome is to reinvest, to return to new life. 'To move adaptively into the new world'. Rando's fifth R-process is a sensible goal insofar as there is a 'new world' out there for the bereaved. Even when stages of mourning are discarded, the process of grief work presupposes recovery as a desirable consummation. In the case of the dying, acceptance and relinquishing attachments to life are the aim. Death is an ending, insofar as it is a natural event as the death awareness movement advocates. Whether one is fully alive right up until the moment of death, as the hospice philosophy insists, or whether the dying moves into a borderland where special states of consciousness and unusual experiences are normal, there are no equivalents to Rando's fifth and sixth R-processes for the dying. In this sense, dying is loss and purely loss.

But is one's own death "loss"? is it only ending? The model examined focuses attention exclusively on this, while insisting that such a loss is appropriate, ultimately acceptable. One of the ironies of Kubler-Ross' initial presentation of acceptance is that her example of an accepting patient, holds a thoroughly different view of what his death means: 'I do look forward to meeting the Lord, but at the same time I would like to stay around on earth as long as possible. The thing I feel most deeply is parting of the family.' This is clearly not the same as pure letting go or loss, although separation is indeed an aspect of dying. The more traditional understanding held by the dentist mentioned above (Dr. G.), treats death as a transition, a process of letting go but also anticipating

what lies ahead. Bunyan's pilgrims could not have used a loss model at all, for however dangerous the river crossing might be, on the other side lay their long-anticipated destination, the Celestial City. They will, one assumes, readjust to move adaptively into that world and be eager to forget the old world through which they have travelled so painfully. They have already reinvested their energies into that future by leaving home in the first place.

Thus, Rando's fifth and sixth R-processes cannot truly be made to fit into a model of dying. To the best of my knowledge, no one among contemporary spiritual writers has tried to construct such connections between the 'readjust' and 'reinvest' of mourning, and transition to a transcendent, eternal existence after this life. In the contemporary literature of the death awareness movement, there is an openness to spirituality, but not---in the psychological literature---a thorough and theoretically grounded renunciation of the loss model as a way to image death. As a fact, even to imagine taking R-processes 5 and 6 and applying them to preparation for a life everlasting seems thoroughly bizarre, well outside the range of possibilities available through the death awareness movement. The appropriation of the death awareness movement's language and imagery by Christians has not taken this pathway. It is a crucial need today.

Returning to our focal point, the difference between the death of the other, for which mourning is the appropriate response, and the death of the self. Death as loss directly fits the former, and the best of the contemporary empirical research confines itself to this situation. There are many more problems assimilating the death of the self into a model of grief work. Even with the image of loss, the parallel is strained. Without stages, what remains are some parallels with regard to third and fourth R-processes (recollect and re-experience, relinquish). The experience of denial in the dying does not parallel the first two R-processes, but is far more pervasive. Finally, there is the overall aim

inherent in all contemporary studies of bereavement: the assumption that the goal is to move into new relationships, new ties within the world. This is a goal that cannot apply the dying, unless one moves outside the model of loss and dying as natural. Important and obvious as these differences are, in the last thirty years at least, it has been common to conflate the two situations. If loss is the major contributions of the death awareness movement, it can well address the experience of mourning, but flounder in comprehending the experience of dying. If this is recognized, the exact shape of the death awareness movement and its interactions with Christian faith will become clearer.

## 5.6 A GLANCE THROUGH THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUNERAL

Death, sudden death and the funeral in some ways image, one another in current practice. Thomas in Rogers et al, notes that:

“Though death is clearly the focus of the funeral, the funeral is performed by the living for the dead. A funeral also reveals how death is related to various issues of life in this world and to notions about time and reality that are theologically interrelated. It celebrates a life and so involves the notion of the meaning of life---a specific life and life in general. The minister proclaims the message of life’s meaning which is a word of hope at the time of despair and a word of comfort to mourners. In the funeral the deceased passes out of the context of our daily business and into history so that at the very heart of the funeral service there is the theological issue of the new status of the person remembered and commended. Finally, in the message to the bereaved there is the proposal of policy of behaviour: we are encouraged to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom” (Rogers 1997: 56).

One feels to consider the theology of the funeral because exclusively different from all the messages from fellow family members, neighbours, friends and all relatives in various forms of life, the Church has to present the message which is theologically based to comfort the bereaved, yet in many instances this is lacking and as a broader ecumenical church, that is where we are failing. It becomes worse when the message we (the church) give is completely out of relative to what it should be, as it happens many times. One speaks here of the theology of the funeral because the minister's message, at least, is expected to be different from normal message. A vital part of preaching must be the Christian message about death or sudden death in such circumstances. If death has become something about which we no longer speak, it is all the more important that the minister should continually expound the message of hope to the congregation. In the society I am living in death is shuffled with many things, sometimes not even making sense. But the funeral service is something which has become much neater and more efficient. Unfortunately consequence of this is that all too often the funeral service is anonymous. Rarely do the bereaved protest against this. Sometimes this is due to the fact that families gave everything about the funeral to the funeral companies. They are more likely to thank the parson for the 'nice funeral service' not mattering whether it was appropriate. All too often death is for many both comfortless and without fear, a non-event. Besides the psychological effects of such as the ignoring of death, there is the more important ethical consequence that we neither properly cliché that the subject of death is loaded with taboo; but, like many clichés, it is strangely illuminating. It illuminates our embarrassment which has something to do with metaphysics, ethics and theology. Taboo was always in abundance in my childhood experience of death---the tiptoe approach to the house of the dead or dying, the almost macabre interest in the coffin-cart, the funeral bier or

the funeral carriage with its magnificent black horses, the particularity of the dresses for both men and women, all the exclusivity of the rituals at every step of the way. Part of the taboo was the respect which, as far as I can remember, was never taught. It was so much part of my way of life that to this day that I cannot witness a funeral procession without showing respect. In contemporary reactions to an impending funeral, I see something of a polarization of attitudes. On the other hand, there is the extreme logical development of the quest for efficiency in those guides to funeral services, reminding us that neither a parson nor even an undertaker is legally required. On the other, there is the very different aesthetic development witnessed by the popularity of the revival of funeral processions --- and of the horse-drawn carriages. While there are many interesting philosophical problems involved in undertaking the meaning of sudden death, I feel like turning at once to the theological issues and take the traditional doctrine which Milton encapsulated in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost* with his reference to 'man's disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into our world' in many phases. On and on the original sin and the fall of Adam in the garden is discussed in many inputs, but it is interesting to see that Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* rejects original sin and argues that Christ redeems mankind not from original sin but from loss of immortality. "Death then entered, shrewd his face which before was shut out and not known" (Locke 1958: 26). For Locke it was perfectly clear that there is no sense in which sin can be culpable if it is not one's own. This fact is remote from many of our brothers and sisters in ministry, particularly the lay-preachers we are bound to deploy to serve the various bereaved who are mourning their beloved through any form of death. We can consider the traditional view in both Protestant and Catholic theology. Of the former, two examples can be mentioned namely: 'the entire penalty of the law including all the spiritual, physical and eternal



penal consequences of sin is called death in Scripture' (Hodge 1972: 548). For Litton death 'is the consequence of that primal prevarication by which man fell' (Litton 1960: 545). The Catholic position, likewise, is that death is a consequence of original sin. But having made clear in his essay, *The Theology of Death*, that he dissociates the possibility of death from Adam's sin, Rahner has clarified the complexity of the scriptural basis to theology of death in his *Foundation of Christian Faith* thus:

"The biblical story about the sin of the first persons in no way to be understood as an historical, eyewitness report. The portrayal of the sin of the first man (sic) is rather an aetiological inference from the experience of man's (sic) existential situation in the history of salvation to freedom actually is the way it is experienced and if is accepted as it is." (Rahner 1987: 114). This comment necessitates critical analysis of Genesis to allow understanding of historical flaws and evidence of various kinds. It shall then ring awareness to anybody who has to handle a funeral service to do the same with caution that will guide him/her to being appropriate in responding to the needs of the same funeral.

## 5.7. SHARING WITH VICTIMS OF SUDDEN DEATH

### 5.7.1. Mancwe's Story.

Mrs Mancwe is a young woman who became widowed at the age of 23 through a road accident that took her entire family of 4, husband and three children. They were then a young family that was promising to succeed in life. They had marvellous dreams for themselves and for the entire extended family.

She agrees that there is this thing called sudden death given her situation. She even continue to argue that the 'suddenness' of the

death may vary relative to how many people you lose. For her situation, the death was very-very given the four people nearest to heart she lost at once. She finds the whole incident very unfair to her yet having no one to blame.

Responding to the church activity during hurting period of time, Mrs Mancwe said: “the church did nothing different from what I had seen happening in all the funerals I attended before. There was nothing to acknowledge the loss that happened and hurt I personally was. I found myself wanting with regards to support that I needed, but thank my family for being there for me in all respects. At least, the church should have concentrated in supporting the family that supported me. I might have been demanding too much from them but, really, there was nothing that as different.

It is very difficult, if possible, to change some things, it must actually be accepted that there are some of those things that cannot be changed. It was really more beneficial to me to do everything to accept things as they were and still are, so that I can move on. However, I was privileged enough to be able to attend some counselling sessions with a professional, and I survived. I call it survival because at that time I had no meaning attached to life and suicide ever crossed my mind. So, it was survival indeed.

In the confusion state of my mind then, I could not really judge what was right or wrong for the particular funeral. To be honest, this funeral had come at the time that I never thought of a befitting funeral of any kind. I was just there and had to rely on what was planned and done by families (mine and my in-laws). But finally, I find them to have done the best for me. There was nothing I looked down at.

I think given the difference of people's personalities, people are vulnerable in the situation of bereavement through sudden death of this magnitude. I can attribute my help to the psychological counsellor, but believe strongly that one must be willing to take the first step to counselling him/herself. There must be usage of every thing at one's disposal that is believed to help in way, whether traditional or otherwise. The church will only be active during that time of the funeral and will disappear forgetting that there are still people left behind who need on-going support".

As the lady was talking about the incidence, one can actually see signs of relieve and feelings of victory in her face, yet there are still marks of sadness as she remembers what happened. She continued to tell that she find herself having to compare her times, the times then and now. She still gauges all her successes with what they would be had the incident not happen in her life. "It is hurting a lot to remember". She said.

Mrs Mancwe happened to have been in the accident herself and survived. So, at the time of the funeral there was also confusion on how she felt. Whether it was pains of the loss of the family or the injuries in the accident it was unclear. But she only remembers that in being taken to the doctor for consultation she was handled and treated as if she was complaining of simple influenza. "These doctors don't care how you feel, they just give you the medication they have" she said with contempt.

She affirms that sometimes one finds oneself in a situation that warrants him/her to expect too much from professionals, only to find that they are either not equipped for the same or they do not have the said skills. The corner stone and the point of departure in everything in this matter

of bereavement is to accept and move on. But counselling in any form must be given to the affected families in case of sudden death, and supporting them through cannot be over emphasised. She describes the situation as just bad, people wanting to help yet not knowing how given their inexperience of the situation, and others just bothering one by feeling sorry thereby intentionally or otherwise clouding the bereaved person's time and hindering him/her in dealing with the hurt. She cannot thank her family enough in all that it did at the time of her sorrow.

#### 5.7.2 Mrs Mahlatsi Story.

Mrs Mahlatsi happens to be one of the relatively young, very mobile progress-wise and constructively initiative ladies the author came to work with. At the time of the interview, the lady was also newly divorced. She was married to one of the conservatively traditional men living in one the outside villages of Ganyesa known to be Cassel. She lost her second born son, the only child born in her marriage about two years ago through suicide. This is one child, according to Mrs Mahlatsi, who had founded her marriage. "It pronounce itself" she said in a sad voice, "immediately after his tragic death the peace of my home which was had always been shaky, and was stabilised by his presence in a way, was completely lost. I finally lost marriage." She couldn't compare that particular situation with any other, all she kept sounding is that is very sad.

She remembers vividly, the difference of interpretation of many aspects surrounding death, and this particular death, with the church then due to the fact that she was not even a member of the said church denomination, only her ex-husband was then. It is, as it has always been the case that the church denomination belonging to the man

(husband) takes precedence over the issues of death or any tradition in a home. As a result, she was literally forgotten in the whole process, pastoral care was focussed on to her husband then. More seriously, she never even took cognisance of any rituals because she did not know or understand anything about such.

To her, this death was a perfect cold-hearted thief and still is due to her continuous grief for her beloved son.

In terms of the organisation of the funeral, she did everything she had thought to do, and here, at least she was at liberty to follow her heart.

Mrs Mahlatsi strongly feels she cannot be of any help to any body stricken by this kind of death because she is still not healed from her pain. She can still remember that due to their differences of beliefs, she and her husband, much she was ready to accept spiritual healing from sermons and pastoral calls they all received, she had to reason with a number of rituals from the husband's church and family. All this has left the chapter of the life of her son still open in her, which she believes cannot be closed. She still stresses, "He will always be my son as long as I live, and I have chosen to live that way, I have made peace with it".

She cannot exactly pronounce the amount of trauma that she was engulfed in, her nights were sleepless, and she was 'travelling through unending voyages' of thought. In visiting the medical doctor, she had done that with some level of conviction that she will be helped. All she received were drugs which led her to sleep up to time long enough for them to work in her body.

MaMahlatsi, as she is commonly known to the author and to many, "you do not look very much a full blown case in the trauma you talk about, at least you can sleep now, can't you? What happened? What was done for you? By who? Tell us. She was asked.

There is no price she can put to what her mother did to her, yet she fails as well to compare whatever her mother did to anything. She made her

accept what had happened to her, and encouraged her to move on with her life. The divorce then followed but it is another discussion. It is something that can put thrust on to the inherent importance of some people to our lives. The child lost had another bearing on holding the marriage and family together, and at his departure by death, moreover suddenly, all was lost. For now what she still cannot thank enough is the support her mother gave to her.

She could not exactly pick up a singular 'thing' her mother did other than just being general in it by saying, she gave her support she describe as massive. She spoke, putting it in her own words, 'sense to her', more than any other person. Though she still continues with a life she define as empty until today, and all feelings of defeat and failure in many aspects, she at least has some courage to soldier on with her life and all challenges.

### 5.7.3 Mrs Veronica Malepa's Story

Mrs Malepa is commonly known as sis Vera and she really had a very short story to tell about everything that occurred to her about the husband she lost through suicide. She sadly remembered how in those days there was some miss-understandings between the two of them, as it was something common thing in their family. It was not anything that could have, by anyway, driven him to limits of suicide.

She is to this day very certain that their lack of understanding cannot be anything that has contributed to the action, but struggled to get the real object that triggered the same. What is like a pain that seems would be carried to death is the fact that her in-laws suspected her so strongly that in specific corners it was gossiped that she is the one who caused her husband to commit suicide---this is untrue---yet it was withheld as a new gospel.

“In reality”, she said, “I have never allowed myself to care what was happening or who did what during my husband’s death and funeral, I only focussed on the body being buried and I had to enter into mourning ‘alone’ after all that. The reason is that we were not in very good working terms with almost everyone, and I was somehow operating a little remote from reality. So, I buried and gave myself in to every after effect then. But what I can say to you is that our relationships got so strained that I feel all is irreparable. I remember that I left the church I worshipped at during our marriage and joined another church. But that does not really mean I had any particular reason pertaining to how they handled my sorrow. But I feel I have healed adequately now with all the time that has passed”. Sis. Vera is still very confident that the church today can be of great help to those who are trapped in this kind of a problem of sudden death, but also asserts that the relationship between the church and the same person or persons must be sound. Asked why about the statement she pronounced her view that, it is the only way the church can be of any influence to such person(s). She encouraged all churches and ministers to put effort into help given her experience of how lost one can feel in such times and conditions.

With treasure to seeing how happy she looks today, I must admit that she has healed in her own self, but was left with crucial questions about her relationships, but this ended our talk.

Looking into all who shared their experiences of sudden death, and scrutinizing what the church did then and as well considering the usual practices by the church, one finds it important to take a look into the church’s reasoning and grounding about what they do. It is a reason enough to mention that the church with all the church denominations is grounded by and in their liturgy to give meaning to all what they perform at every service they do. It might be questioned and rightfully

so 'what is in this liturgy?', and what good is it to people especially when they are in grief.

## 5.8. LITURGY AND ITS CONTEXT

One point that is a paradox to the situation of sudden death and all its implications to people today is the area of liturgy. It is a paradox because it happens to be crux in characterising any pastoral care in some important ways, yet by way of its form, it is the very point that fails to bring distinction between particular deaths and how various people mourn their grief. Unfortunately, this is one aspect which, given experiences drawn from this same work, the minister has to be both initiative and theological, but at point that is open for laziness either influenced by the church doctrines or regulations, or just the minister him/herself. This is so because liturgy is kind of prescribed by different churches for different services. Thus, for the church today, death has been death ever over the course of time, and therefore sudden death has got no provision.

The root of the contemporary problem is that with theological framework that has a much weaker view of the eschaton and where in any case seems delayed indefinitely, does the individual come to the judgement seat of God at the moment of his or her own death or is there a provisionality about everything until the end. Interestingly, both Catholic and Reformed theology have tended to go with the former yet, to be truthful, Scripture, inasmuch as it has a single and systematic view, tends to the latter. Classic Protestant theology within Anglicanism believes that prayer for the dead is improper because at the moment of death eternal destiny, for better or worse, has been decided.

Contrary to that, Classic Catholic theology permits prayer for the dead, because the departed one, judged at death worthy of salvation but in need of purgation to be fit for heaven, may properly be supported by



the prayers of those on earth. (see Rutherford 1980, 111-113). But both are working from a model that sees death as the key moment and both play down that corporate consummation to which the New Testament writers looked forward.

The traditional words and one of the most said statements about the departed---'grant them rest', have mercy on their souls', give them refreshments, light and peace' are pronounced many times and have specific meaning at the time of pronouncement. Nothing is said of the dead that is not said of the living. In some way, during such sudden death incident which is very tragic, the prayers are said in the liturgy which say what many want to say yet say a lot less than what many want to say.

There remains a basic difficulty with the official rites, the difficulty that alongside the theological poverty of the texts, has contributed to the abandonment of legal forms. This difficulty lies not in the rites themselves, which stand full square within the historic tradition. It resides in the radical change in the kind of community, if 'community' be the word, which gathers for a funeral. There are occasions, of course, when the funeral is that of a committed Christian, with church-going family, an articulate Christian faith among the congregation, and all set within the church and perhaps the Eucharist. Such funerals are most attended by the church members, but the content of pastoral care during the whole funeral proceedings is sometimes questionable. A funeral service is a worship service, and in any such service the usage of liturgy is prominently important. Tripp has the following combination of beliefs:

- Without the practice of worship there would be no theology at all.
- Without the liturgical assembly there would be no Scripture.
- Worship is the only corporate activity in which all Christians profess, verbally or otherwise, what they claim to believe.

- Education in liturgy is needed by the whole church, and by ministers who serves it. (cf Jones et al 1997: 565-570).

Pastoral care during grief and mourning due to sudden death cannot only be the verbal words said by caregivers as many churches believe, especially when care is in the hands of laity. It was mentioned how faith comes under test during times of sudden death in chapter 4, it happen to be the time when sound theology has to be complemented by well grounded liturgy to stabilise faith that is under test.

In the past the mourners, more often than not, saw the funeral service as but one stage in a series of (mainly shared) experiences that took them through the grieving process. Sudden death in not a new phenomenon, but in the past more people died surrounded by family, visited in illness by friends. Fewer people arrived at a funeral protected from any involvement with the dying and the mourning until that moment. Today, the funeral has to carry so much more of their shock or grief. Sometimes there is the guilt felt by family members who lived too far away. Sometimes the death is not real for them until they enter the building and see the coffin. The funeral has to ritualize for them so much more of the taking leave than in the past. Mourners were also a greater support to one another in the past. They knew one another and talked to one another, and knew how to comfort one another. Today, very often they are strangers to one another, even within families. All they have in common is that in different departments of his or her life they knew the deceased.

All these factors put more emphasis on the fact that today 'much more is demanded of the minister and of the liturgy', resultantly meaning it is not enough for ministers to only follow or do what they found their former ministers and predecessors doing, it is not enough as well to only depend on the liturgy that is found in our prayer books in the event of various tragic deaths we come across. It is noteworthy that often

there is no community that gathers to mourn but individuals who need to be drawn into community for a short time to mourn together. There is no longer much of shared expectation, faith or culture. This is a result of our many beliefs and cultural origins we share in families, some due to in-marriages and other reasons. The minister needs a liturgy that can provide all these.

Thus, the minister, first of all, needs a liturgy that binds people together, that gives them some sense of direction and a common cause, so that he/she can instil some hope of responding specifically to their grief.

When one sits to meditate on what kind of liturgy to use for which funeral, there can be a long list but it is prominent that in every liturgy the following needs are catered for:

- Confident and sensitive proclamation of the Christian faith;
- Provision of space to remember;
- Articulation of sense of sin, guilt and failure;
- Recognition that actions speak louder than words;
- Identification of a moment of farewell or committal.

Skilful and pastoral good sense is needed by ministers and all pastoral caregivers in the selection of their texts, and grounded theology allows the person in the leadership freedom of saying even more than what prescribed liturgy propounds without knocking anything out of its purpose.

Perham in Rogers et al, *Interpreting Death*, asserts that:

“the need for space to remember is more fundamental than the need to be told a life history. A funeral service has to have the proper blend of the universal and the objective with the personal and subjective, but there is an art to be communicated to those who lead funerals that will enable them to say just enough to create an atmosphere in which each can remember in the silence. It does not all have to be told, and the funeral address or prayers that read like a biography will hardly ever create that atmosphere as telling as a very few carefully chosen

words that set the memory free, followed by silence to let that process develop”( Rogers 1997: 164-165).

Looking at our current form of pastoral care to the mourners, who are bereaved in so many common ways today against the above statement, it becomes both clear and saddening to notice the disservice that we are doing to our congregants and communities. The need for calling the church back to her responsibility has never been more crucial than this. And striving to be spot-on onto the needs of the family during their bereavement, one has to really be a shepherd that is portrayed in chapter 1 through the eyes of Gerkin who insists on how knowledgeable the pastor has to be on his/her rituals, Hiltner and Campbell who can be said to be founders of ‘modern’ pastoral care. Having enquired closer into what pastoral care is or should be in the event of sudden death and the rituals that form various services by the church, one notes a lot that might have fallen deficiency in the side of the church during the handling of our victims of sudden death above. This, however, is said from inference from the fact that nothing really was done in the eyes of the victims or that involved them consciously.

## 5.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter much was dealt with in revising the real being of the church and what it should be or should have been. The chapter has more than anything reminders to ministers and pastors about their responsibilities especially on counselling the bereaved. It cannot in anyway be over-emphasised the importance the calling of ministers into ministry and their education. It is still encouraging to hear even from victims, the belief that there can be turning points in attempts to rescue the church in her means and ways of the proclamation of the gospels, especially during times of bereavement, grieve and mourning.

**The urgency of care with and in mourning is critical, and must be noted as such by any element that consciously constitutes the church for credibility of the same here-to-fore.**

**The following chapter will close the whole work by looking into lessons that have been learned from the exercise, and will continue to suggest those that can make further research about the subject.**

## CHAPTER 6

### 6.1 LESSONS THAT I HAVE LEARNED

I must hasten to confess right from the outset that I never thought I would go as far as this with this work. This was not based on looking down at self in anyway or any kind of laziness, but based on conviction that death happens to be a natural course. The common statements--- Death is natural; it is a part of life---are pronounced by almost everybody. We should accept death as a natural part of life. Like birth, death is a natural event. This has been heard quiet frequently by many in my ears, and as far as I can remember, I have also pronounced the same to some. As a result they are repeated with literature of dying and death quite often. With this, I had to ask questions like, what can one do to a natural thing such as death and more over if it is sudden. It became a rhetoric that challenged me and my grounds of ministering to the bereaved and grieving seriously.

But the best lesson I can be bold anywhere to have learned is how pastoral care is continuing to be rediscovered, and the new ways it can be applied to better the life of the church through the common and almost primitive Psalm 23.

With a little bid of exegesis, this psalm came alive, with new understanding, especially because it paints the image of the Lord as the shepherd, a model against which this whole work is done. The psalm became a necessary screen against which ministers have to view their ministry for better pastoral care. Having gone through a re-study of the shepherd and shepherding as explained by the likes of Hiltner, Gerkin and Campbell in chapter one, the shepherd leadership of ministry by the church is found wanting in the instances mentioned above as it did in the case of my own sister, and continuing in other people who are struck with grief of beloved person through sudden

and accidental death. This is a grey area in the entire church ministry. The reader will now naturally ask the new understanding of this Psalm, given the primitiveness of it in all Christian circles and homes. Secular class provides what it provides but shepherd is:

**A LEADER.** First of all, shepherd leadership is a way of thinking. During the field, sheep are not famous for their strategic planning. As far as we know, animals do not have the capacity to visualize the future. The shepherd's first job in the field is to think and to think ahead. In the time of sudden death even human being sometimes are not proper in thought due to all psychological and philosophical terms mentioned, and it is here that they need a shepherd minister to be somewhat a good travel guide for them in this unfamiliar territory. The mind of a shepherd leader must always be ahead envisioning the next destination and the best way to reach there, anticipating the green fields and the dangerous valleys. This leadership is a way of being with the follower. By 'being with' I mean going beyond doing, things for the follower. This should not be abused to think short-sighted that sheep-shepherd relationship means only sheep benefit as noted cautiously by Hiltner. The various benefits of the shepherd should not be overlooked. Shepherding is not a remote form of leadership, it is instead high touch. Therefore, such leaders are there with the sheep and they correctly discover the various needs. They listen primarily to understand, to hear between the lines, and not to be understood.

The psychological profiling David used, known as the Birkman method, shows in several categories how people act in their normal, everyday strength; what needs they have; and how they respond if their needs are not met. When particular needs are met, one becomes strong and performs at top levels. When they not, one moves into stress, exhibiting behaviours one can come to recognize sometimes and not sometimes. This is an area the qualities of a shepherd are really quite different from just any leader. The shepherd is not a driving, pushing kind of a leader

but rather is characterized more by patience, insight, persistence, diligence, and care. These are precisely attributes needed by the shepherd leader who will assess the needs of the people. This leader then will lead his/her people in the right path. The understanding of traditional shepherding of leadership of sheep is a question as always here, whether from the front or herded from behind, but human beings prefer to be 'drawn' not driven. Obviously, the leadership into the right path means that the shepherd would be in the right path him/herself. This is the reason why the congregation is looking critically on to the life of their minister, until they sometime become unreasonably critical. I have noticed as well that life in practice, has exemplified the various valleys and the mountain tops that we come across in our ministry, and at time when we are challenged by having to give pastoral care to the bereaved through sudden death of so many kinds that we face in our life. The comforting role of the shepherd is never forgotten by David. "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." (Psalm 23). This often is quoted in many funerals and memorial services noting the spiritual notion that lies at the heart of this remarkable statement as the comforter and protector. Until today, my walking around the various cemeteries of our land one find this psalm still inscribed on the majority of tombstones and messages of comfort to the bereaved.

## 6.2 BEREAVEMENT RELATES WITH FAITH

Christian faith is life-affirming. It accords to our human existence meaning, purpose and worth. This sense that human life is supremely precious is expressed in scripture in a variety of ways. Our people, the church that we serve currently agree with this assertion. We are made in the image of God, while the price that was paid for us is really



awesome; it was paid in precious blood...the blood of Christ. So, the value of our human life is affirmed. But the experience of intimate bereavement through sudden death would seem to be the ultimate challenge to any such affirmation. Here faith falls under test. The experience raises, with inescapable sharpness, the spectre of meaninglessness. Feelings and statements such as 'someone of such potential, such vitality, someone apparently so precious for me' arise and the moment is broken and destroyed, thus meaning and worth is affected.

The pain of grief through sudden death can seem unbearable. It was mentioned in chapter 1 of the cry of King David learning of the death of his son. A lament for eternal loss echoes recurrent and haunt in its hopelessness. He went up to the room over the gate and burst into tears weeping and calling "My son Absalom! My son! My son Absalom! Would I have died in your place! Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam 18: 33).

Even after so many years working as a minister and caring for congregations pastorally, hearing such words still makes one the intruder, blundering where he/she has no right to be, in the overwhelming anguish of people who are stricken by sudden death. The voice of grief is particular and must be listened to with the ear that hears. Sudden death bereavement commonly brings, mingled with the numbness, the aimlessness, the exhaustion; times of such searing pain when we are confronted, inescapably, by the enormity of our loss. That sense of loss is devastating. It has been likened many times to an amputation, the tearing away of part of oneself, leaving you maimed, crippled, stumbling and empty, drained of life and purpose. And the loss is absolute. During these times balance is regained slowly but surely in the faith that one has. And faith here, enhance the total believe structure that one way or another makes part of the person. Thus rituals become helpful and purposeful. This was noted in chapter 4

to be forming one common spots in the view of various fields including psychology, medicine, psychiatry and theology, and one we can all build from in avoidance of unfortunate disorders that comes with stresses inflicted by all such feelings.

We all struggle with our whole being when we are confused by this mystery of sudden death. Lewis in trying to cope with his wife's sudden death wrote:

"I look up at the night sky. Is anything more certain than that in all those vast times and spaces, if I were allowed to search them. I should nowhere find her face, her voice, her touch? She died. She is dead. Is the word so difficult to learn?" (Lewis 1966: 16).

This is the deepest fear, that the dissolution death brings is total, that sudden death is an abyss of nothingness into which everything falls. When the ear listens and hears the sadness of death that says everything that people say when death strikes, one would understand that the choice of such images such as 'the pit', 'the abyss' etc is not accidental and that is very closely aim at expressing what the person truly feels. Expressing a stark and terrible vision of death as the ultimate loss and deprivation, it is deeply rooted in the Old Testament when we look at it against the Christian faith. The psalmist talks of death as a fearsome thing. During such times questions are asked.

"Do you perform miracles for the dead? Do they rise up and praise you? Is your constant love spoken of in the grave, or your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Are your miracles seen in the place of darkness, or your goodness in the land of the forgotten?" (Ps. 88: 10-11).

To every question the context demands the answer, no. Death robs us of those we love, and sudden death does so brutally and disrespectfully. But it still has a more awesome power; it can also destroy our world. Let me hurry to explain this. Though not everyone may or can articulate it, the experience of ultimate bereavement, the

destruction by sudden death of a close, deep and crucial relationship, can seem to strike a deadly blow against the very idea that human existence has meaning. Through one's faith, though unbearably painful, a bit of meaning is regained very slowly. The importance of a pastoral caregiver to be sensitive of the believe structure and faith of the bereaved and grieving person is thus made explicitly crucial. When we draw from our experiences, we find that life is so intimately interwoven as it is, we have invested so much of ourselves, our love, our hopes, our dreams, in relationships. This is truly what makes a living person live, it is also a sad paradox to note that again it is relationships that heal. This was evidenced by feelings and statements by all victims interviewed, how family members came in at all vacuums created in the offered pastoral care. But then the shattering of that relationship knocks away one of the foundation pillars on which our world stands, and we are left all at sea, adrift on the waters of chaos. Stress results, and unfortunate circumstances are borne. A lot is demanded out of pastoral care, including the cooperation between and amongst the fields of science.

Whilst Christian faith does speak of life and living until the end, death reminds us of mortality. It threatens to break through the brisk and brittle facade of our own self-assurance. As long as we can hold it at bay, as long as we can maintain our denials, we will. But our own grief is inescapable. Attempts to evade our own pain bring, not peace, but deep-rooted psychological and emotional disturbance. The church must learn to teach this fact, and while also attending to the church's exclusive responsibilities in all events of sudden death.

### **6.3 GROUNDING ON CHRISTIAN GROUNDS**

The fact that pastoral care has been there very long supplies every investigation with what has been done in the olden days, very long before we were born. The use of shepherding method has also informed this work with information that shepherding was done in many ways by our fore-fathers/mothers without consciously using and doing it in Christian grounds. The natural location of our parents that happens to be Africa suggests many times that one is confusing Christian grounds with African. Having enquired so much into the church and her calling, and her relationship with the people the church serves, the author must reiterate that the study is done and based on Christian grounds of the church. This might be viewed as loyalty to the Christian religion but animating the practical value and African context to make the church credible.

The study has done a lot to remove the church from the sky to bring her to level of the people she serves. The invitation of opinion from psychologists has breathed a lot of life in the message we preach as church, and has enlightened caring care givers.

### **6.4. THE USE OF TOOLS**

Working through this piece of work has also tapped on the use/misuse of the tools that we have as the church. The big questions would be whether there are tools to be used in pastoral care to people bereaved through sudden death or not, and whether there is any particularity in those tools if they are there. But the quick answer is paradoxical because it is, 'yes there is', and 'no there is not'. But clearly it all depends on how good/skilful a pastoral care giver is in using the same. The Bible was examined as a point of departure, the selection of texts, the actual preaching, the contexts varying from family to family in

terms of rituals of closure, all these are tools adequate enough to help all people to mourn meaningfully, and to ultimately close the chapters of life of their beloved with psychological side-effects that may cause stresses of various kinds and levels. In the view of David and his psalm, shepherd leader who is with the sheep knows the valley, and in times of any kind of conflict just as there is trouble in the field, the shepherd transform conflicts, create healthy space for this conflict and also space for reconciliation. This coincided with my own knowledge and understanding of the shepherd and his/her duty.

It is was also critically noteworthy for me that the present Christian and Christianity are relatively just static, bounded collections of doctrines and images, focussed on traditional thinking about Jesus' death, salvation and eternal life. For many people and especially in the event of sudden death, this is a problem. I notice the importance of Christianity to become more tolerant and interactive with particular life stories and ideas of individuals. In that way, the church can be more meaningful in times of sudden death as a source of pastoral care.

As a way of responding to questions pronounced in chapter one about the appropriateness of pastoral care in the event of death, the author learned through the study that, pastoral care cannot be prescribed for any situation due to differences in individuals' life stories, but pastoral caregivers can be better skilled to be able to know what they should do and say in any situation. That is, real pastoral care is both Pro-Active and Re-Active at the same time.

Pro-Active because the church has to embark is a huge teaching mission about pastoral care to all caregivers, and possibly the community the church serves. Also, that the church and caregivers can be in a position to anticipate what will happen to and by the people during incidents of sudden death judging , for example by their

actions and statements, and what should be done to save such situations. Re-Active because sudden death is unfortunately as it is--- sudden and stimulates in various ways--- and the entire system of affairs, the network of relationships have to react to it.

This charges the entire church with a huge responsibility of being an answer to evident questions asked by natural situations in the event of sudden death.

It has also become clear in knowledge structure that the church, in a way, suffers from a syndrome kind of problem of robbing the bereaved and grieving families and friends of their opportunity to mourn meaningfully. This result due to occasional invasions we do in their territories in the event of any tragedy, and most unfortunately, we do this in the name of pastoral care. The same questions our skill as the pastoral caregivers and the entire church. I emerge out of this study as the one who would advocate the church to remember herself and her position in the journey with people who are grieving and mourning. I discover as well that between and amongst sciences, i.e. medicine, psychiatry and theology, there can be cooperation that would benefit the church and the people more than harm them if all were used with care and skill. But it is unfortunate that the church is found lacking and unreliable to all the other sciences because reading from the education of various ministers, pastors and pastoral caregivers, some of them are really not worthy to entrust any person to for pastoral care especially in the event of stresses due to sudden death. This is one painful reality we have to live with until there is something that can be done about it.

## **6.5. PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY USE**

**I am bold to say that the study gave me a better understanding on African pastoral care rituals and practices. This necessitated new ways of interpreting Christ's work here on earth. I realised the need for initiative in the development and modification of funeral liturgies, and where possible compound the liturgy of closure by bereaved families and the church in the event of sudden accidental death.**

## **6.6. VALIDITY OF THE STUDY**

**While studying about sudden, accidental death and pastoral care, I have discovered the richness that faith offers to Christians and the church, and that if all are done well, the church can grow into another resource that can be used to effectively counter act the unfortunate circumstances that are found in families especially those families that are not very privileged to afford psychologists and all other sciences due to practical reasons.**

## **6.7. FURTHER POSSIBLE RESEARCH AREAS**

**One has first to acknowledge with satisfaction that the intention and aim of dealing with and taking care of the grieving and the mourning through pastoral care in the congregational context was really done, however, also sadly note the challenges that go with it. A mention of a fact may be made here that ministry is seen by many as just one career where people can make life. This has brought a strong wing of economy and economical impurities into it, and as a result pastoral care by the entire church has received very negative effects. The following are realities in church and in life:**

- There is a serious challenge to reach the grieving people by pastors and ministers (who have theological education), given the number of fatal accidents today against that of ministers.
- Many churches in rural areas are not financially viable and cannot afford a minister, and these are dependent on laity.
- The credibility of the message of the church, during sudden death and in general remains a question due to (1) lack of theological basis and (2) disintegrated and 'lost' practice as alluded to in chapter 5, (where ministers and pastors has lost sight of the need of pastoral care and only concentrates on gaining more members or scoring personal glory).

The author also notes with humility some areas which this work has not covered, which can be pronounced as further possible areas that can be followed in research. Those are:

- ✓ The common ground, if any, of the church which can be the foundation of credibility in the lives of secular world.
- ✓ The 'taboo-ness' of general death then (in the olden days) and the romanticism of it today (in the current years).
- ✓ The relationship between the rituals and the belief system, and how all this generate courage and power.

I feel the research in these topics can make a lot of difference in the church and her pastoral care giving, and can also claim the stage the church and theology is or should be if the church really has to be viewed as a product of the mission of Jesus Christ, and the church herself being missionary.

The topics are given as they come with thought through the process of this work, but can be reshaped to suit research as reflection is done into them and better thoughts and ideas flow through.

But at the end of it all, pastoral care is still a tool that can be used to shepherd and care for those people who are stricken by sudden death.



**Used properly and with skill, with the cooperation with other sciences, human race can grieve, and mourn their beloved ones meaningfully, and will emerge out of such situations not as losers but as experienced victors. The church is still the basis of all this.**

## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 Informed Questionnaire

University of Pretoria  
Faculty of Theology  
Department of Practical Theology  
Student Name: Gabobonwe OH  
Student No: 22241443  
Contact No. 053 998 3246 (H)  
                  053 998 3525 (W)  
Cell.          082 209 0317 and 082 827 0502  
Supervisor: Prof. Masango M J

**TOPIC: The challenges to Pastoral Caregivers in the even of sudden and accidental death.**

1. **Purpose:** The study is intended to educate and empower young and up-coming ministers to deal appropriately with the stresses that are yielded by sudden death in the families and members of the church. It will further be an instrument through which the participating persons shall use to externalise their pain through this subject and so become open to healing. They shall subsequent to all that be of help to the church and fellow congregants who are struck by this kind of death and possibly any kind of death.
2. **Procedures:** The participants will be interviewed through the questions as set in the questionnaire. They will also be given liberty to share more light and their experiences at any point where they feel like into the subject. They shall be given space and time to respond as far as they are comfortable and where they need assistance, they shall so indicate and they shall be assisted.
3. **Risks and Discomforts:** there is no obvious risk to the exercise, but at any point where the participant shall feel uncomfortable they shall indicate and appropriate response will be given.
4. **Benefits:** The benefit will be of the entire church and society in that they all shall be better equipped to deal with the subject of sudden death and the depressions that it yields to the society.
5. **Rights:** Participation is completely voluntary and all participants remain with their full right of withdrawing from their participation in the study at any time. This will have no negative consequences to them in anyway. They are all assured of absolute confidentiality of all the information they shall give. The research will not mention anybody throughout, only pseudo name shall be used.
6. **Access:** The participants shall clarify the way and means of his/her access to the researcher.

I .....the undersigned, am aware of the research being done as stipulated above.

I hereby acknowledge my volition to participate after my consent was duly sort.

I am accessible to the researcher in the following times and days of the week:

.....  
.....

SIGNED: ..... Date.....

Contact No. ....

Researcher: ..... Date.....

7.2

**University of Pretoria  
Faculty of Theology (Practical Theology)  
Student No. 22241443  
Research Questionnaire**

**Name:**.....

1. Is there anything like sudden death? What is the best way of giving or receiving the news about this death? What would you compare that situation with in general life?

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2. During this most hurting period, what do you remember that was done by the Church that was very meaningful to you? In what way do you think this can be improved?

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3. In what way did you either change or remain unchanged in your view of death? Why?

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4. Was the funeral what you wished it to be? Why?

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5. How can you be of help to anybody who is stricken by sudden death today?

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6. Do you view your lost loved one's funeral as more traditional or more religious or vice versa? Why?

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7. Did you freely do what you planned to do to close the deceased's chapter of life? What were the obstacles?

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8. In this hurting time, did you feel ill? Have you by anyway consulted the medical doctor? What was your complaint?

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9. How did the doctor go about treating you? Did it really help in your own view?

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10. What advice can you give to the Church in addressing this problem in the families during these current times?

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11. How would you define your life and condition during that time of bereavement?

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