



DET TEOLOGISKE
MENIGHETSFAKULTET

NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

**THE PRACTICE OF EASTER MORNING SERVICE AND ITS THEOLOGICAL
IMPLICATION INTO CHRISTIAN FAITH: IN NORTH-EASTERN DIOCESE OF
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TANZANIA.**

BY

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AVH502 MASTER'S THESIS

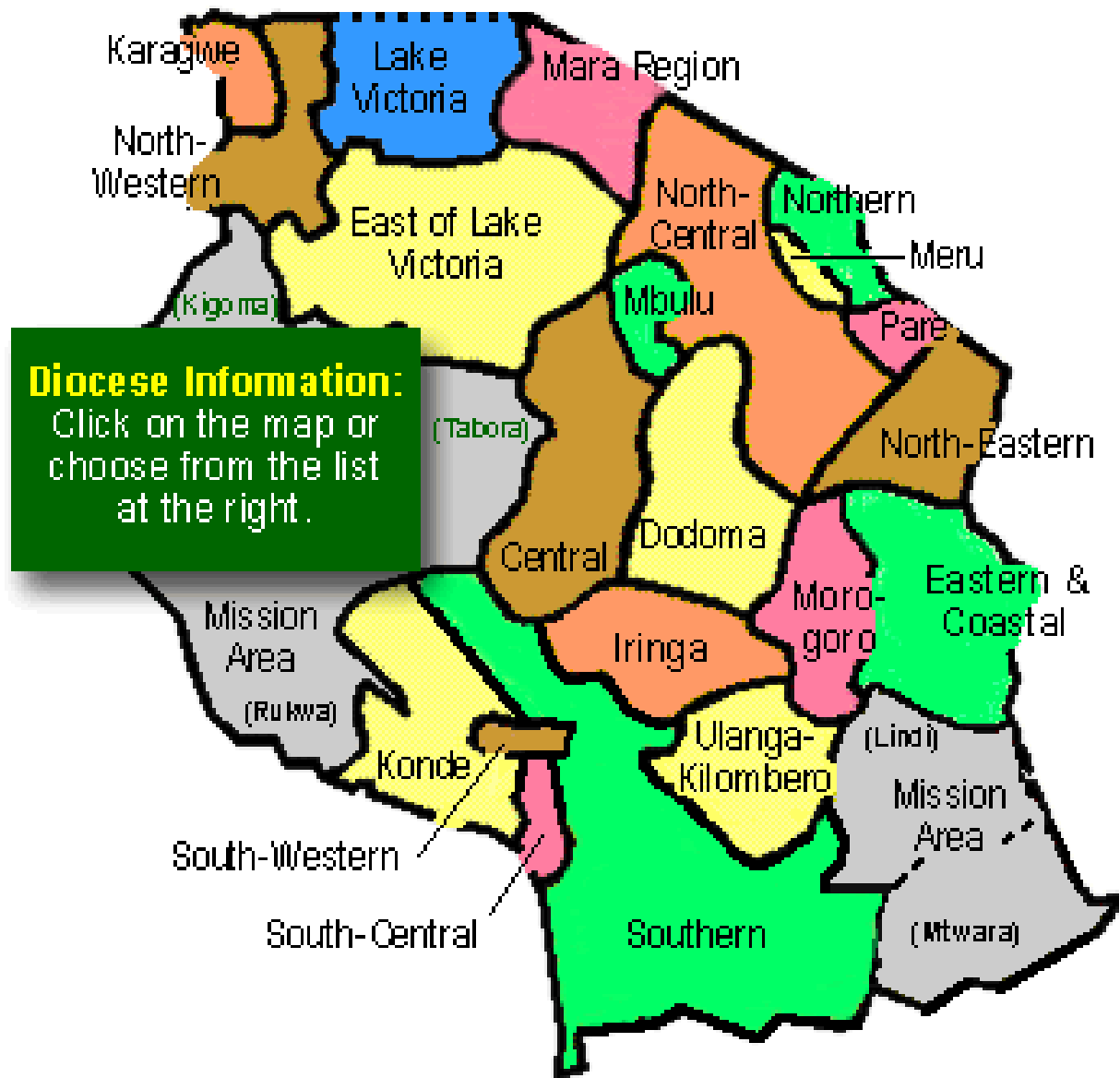
A thesis to be submitted to the School of Theology in Partial Fulfillment of requirements for
the master of Theology

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Oslo Norway

May 2011

THE DIOCESES OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TANZANIA



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents whom always lead us to live in a Christian faith, and believing that, through our prayers God will answer our needs and solve our problems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people who deserve to be acknowledged for the completion of this thesis, although, it is not easy to mention all of them by their names. To begin with, I would like to express my special gratitude to the Almighty God for His care and guidance throughout my period of study in Norway and during my research work.

I am grateful to express my heartfelt thanks to the Royal Norwegian government (Norwegian State Loan Fund) through Quota Programme for granting me a scholarship which enables me to pursue this study. I believe that without this scholarship, it could be a long and impracticable dream to study this Master of Theology in Norway.

I am further indebted to convey my special thanks to my supervisor Associate Professor Rev. Dr. Roar .G. Fotland for his constructive criticism and encouragement in writing this paper. Without his guidance I could not be able to accomplish the work. I am also indebted to acknowledge all Professors, Lecturers and Master of Theology students during the two year course (2009/2011) for their teachings, enriching discussions, and their mutual cooperation in shaping and challenging ideas to this work.

Special thanks should go to the Evangelical church of Tanzania North-Eastern diocese for granting me a two years leave to study. I would not forget my parents and my daughter Miriam for their prayers and encouragement with love throughout the study and for coping – up with my absence.

Last but not least, I am indebted to express my special thanks to my husband to be Rev Charles Kakai, who always make me to feel loved. His encouragement, advices and prayers stregthen me during my studies and in fulfilling this thesis.

What I can say to all: Thank you very much. May the Almighty God bless you and sustain you all in peace and prosperity.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Cf Compare with

Cor Corinthians (Paul's Letter)

Ed(s) Editor(s)

ELCT Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania

ELCT-NED Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania NorthEastern Diocese

Jn John(The Gospel of)

Matt Mathew(The Gospel of)

MF Det Teologiske Menighets Facultet-Norwegian School of Theology

NED North Eastern Diocese

Rev Reverend

Rom Romans (Paul's Letter)

RSV Revised Standard Version

ABSTACT

Many questions can arise when talking about worshipping. Some can ask which a proper way to worship is and how to worship and even where a proper place for worshipping God is. All of these questions lead the believer to find out an appropriate and true worship of God.

Generally throughout this study, the Easter morning service at graveyards has been seen as a great and an important worship service among the Christians in North-eastern Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania. It has been used as a spiritual tool to convey the resurrection message among the believers and non believers. It confesses by practice that, Jesus is a real Savior who has risen from the dead and that; the salvation and the grace of God are given to everybody through Jesus' death.

Nevertheless, there are many other ideas and criticism on the Easter morning service which shows the doubt of its spiritual validity among the believers, with the consequence that, they divide the believers among the church. All of these have been contributed by the misunderstanding and the ignorance on the service.

Hence, this paper has been trying to show the significance of the Easter morning service at graveyard and its foundation, together with how should the church do to make it intelligible and have spiritual legitimately. The Anthropological model of contextual theology has been suggested to be used as a theological tool to interpret the service, with the consideration of all bases of, traditional practices and Biblical practices to come out with a suitable meaning which fulfills both cultural, social and spiritual needs.

Thus, from there the axiom of the study is to show that, there are different meaning and significances in our ways of worshipping God, but we cannot understand them easily without experiencing contextually.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Easter Morning service is a service conducted early in the morning before sunrise at graveyards on the Easter Sunday in some part of the Lutheran Church North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania. This is a service of the resurrection of Jesus where the bell rings, people gather at the church ground and start singing led by trumpets, shouts with joy and marching to the graveyard. Most of the parishes conducting this service are located on Usambara Mountains where people speak *Shambala* language and the service in that language is called *Mviko wa Ufufuki*.

The fourth year of pastoral study in the level of bachelor in Tanzania, is the year of field study. In this year I was assigned to do my field study at our diocese Cathedral. During preparation of Easter service, a pastor whom was supervising assigned me to conduct the service on the morning day of Easter Sunday. This service was to be done at the cemetery of our late Bishop which is situated alongside of the Cathedral. The bell rung early at 5:00am and people living nearby the church gathered at the cemetery. Those who are living near the graveyard went there also for the service.

It was not the first time for me to hear about this service (*Mviko wa Ufufuki*). Since when I was young we used to go to our home village with my parents for Easter and Christmas vacations. But during this field study it was not easy for me to remember what they were doing there since I did not grow up there and had not lived there for a long time. However, it seems that this was a service conducted by a minister with short preaching session and prayers.

Thus, in preparing that service some questions arouse in my mind like; what am I going to preach about at the cemetery and how am I going to conduct such a service, since I did not have a liturgy for the service. I tried to recall back how it was done and managed to do it in a very short way. Starting with a song from our hymn book then a prayer of thanks to our Lord Jesus for dying for us and His resurrection followed by the word of God using the resurrection text.

From that time many question arouse about Sunday Easter morning service, *Mviko wa Ufufuki*. The difficulty I see is on the understanding among Christians on the service. It is not very clear that people went there only for the celebrations of the resurrection of Christ. But, they also use that service as a time for them to greet their dead relatives venerating them, talk

to them and tell them their needs or problems. Talking with one of the parish pastor he told me that he also have doubt about the meaning and understanding of Easter morning service to Christians. For the reason that in one of the mornings he saw a man kneeling and laying his head on the grave for more than thirty minutes, and the pastor was asking himself, is he praying or crying?

In the discussion about the service with different people, I found that there are different views, confusions and challenges regarding the service among Christians. However, the service seems to have important implications in their lives.

1.1 Statement of The Problem

In theological studies we find many African theologians talking about ancestors and their relationship to the living human beings. And Africans are seen time to time visiting grave sites of their departed relatives to talk with them. As Felix Chukwudi Nwaeke mentioned in his thesis that, “These practices have been there in the African religions and have psychological significance in that people they are in harmony with their ancestors”¹. What is a problem with Easter morning service is a misconception among Christians. Some of them feel like worshiping ancestors and doubt spiritual validity of the service and its role to their faith,.Others feel it as a right place for them to visit their relatives and as a matter of maintaining good relationship, communication, and venerating.

Thus the main question this study intends to address is **what is the significance of Easter morning service held at graveyards?** Other questions that lead to answer the main question of the research are as follows: What is the practical understanding of people about the service? What should be the contextual meaning of Easter morning service and its relationship with the ancestral worship? What is the importance of the service, and why do we practice this as the church? Where does this service originate from? And what are the stands of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania and particularly North-Eastern Diocese(NED)² concerning the issue?

¹Nwaeke 2008,3

² In some parts I will be using NED with the meaning of North-Eastern Diocese as a common way used to shorten the name.

1.2 The Aim of the Paper

The aim of this study is to find out the contextual and theological significance of Easter morning services to the individual Christians and the Church. Apart from the main aim, the study intends to find out the meaning and role of this service and its theological implications to Christian's life. Also the study endeavor to see if there is a shift from traditional practices to Christian worship. It is my hope that the right understanding of the service will reduce the dilemmas or misconceptions of the service among Christians in the diocese and the Church in general.

1.3 Scope and Limitation

This theological paper, particularly deals with issues of dialogue between Christian worship and traditional practices. However, in some cases, it appears to touch different theological fields due to its origin and historical approaches.

Geographically the research limits itself in the North Eastern Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania which consists of four zones which are called deaneries.³ Among them we find the Northern deanery which is located on the Usambara Mountains. This is a place where I did my research study, since it is the part of the Diocese where the service is mostly conducted. The five among the eleven parishes in the deanery were used for the research. In these five parishes, two of them are supervised by the pastors and three served by the evangelist. The parishes differ in size, the two with pastors are big with many congregants and the others are small.

1.4 Research Methods

The method of collecting data for this study will include both field and library research. To fulfill the need of this study, in the part of the field study, I interview different groups of people as pastors and lay members of the Church. The methods of doing interview based much on Kvale's techniques, and understanding of qualitative research. As Kvale explains:

³ ELCT-NED currently they use the term deanery as an administrative structure which contains many parishes and under the supervision of dean.

The qualitative research is as an attempt to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.⁴

That means, the interviews in this study, will seek qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language and does not aim at quantification. The evaluation will be critical evaluation of NED's handling of the Easter Morning service at graveyard both negatively and positively.

a) Field Research: As I have said above the empirical investigation was be done in the form of interview. The methods used of doing interviews was base much on the Kvale techniques of research in which he considers qualitative research as a form of conversation.⁵In his clarification on the qualitative research he defines interview as a dialogue between two partners about the topic of mutual interest and the outcome of it is core product of interviewer and the subject.⁶

However there are multiple forms of conversations in everyday life, in literature and in the professions. For Kvale

In everyday life the conversations may range from chat and small talk, through exchange of news, disputes, or formal negotiations, to deep personal interchanges. And Professional conversations include journalist interview, legal interrogations, academic oral examinations, religions confessions, therapeutic dialogues, and the research interviews.⁷

Kvale wants to show that, the research interview is illustrated by a practical awareness of question forms, and focusing on the dynamics of interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and a critical attention to what is said.⁸

The research interview itself is divided into two ways which are: specific professional form of conversation and a basic model of knowing.⁹

⁴ Kvale 1996,1

⁵ Kvale 1996,19

⁶ Kvale 1996,42

⁷ Kvale 1996,5

⁸ Kvale 1996,20

⁹ Kvale 1996,37,39

A specific professional form of conversation is a technique in which knowledge is constructed through the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. In this way the interviewer as a professional asks and the interviewee answers. This is a formal interview in which the researcher asks the questions either individually or in groups. The research interview as a *basic model of knowing*, constitute on getting knowledge through informal conversation.¹⁰

According to the quotation, a specific form of conversation is a kind of structured way of doing interview. It has the structured questions, where the interviewer asks and the interviewees respond either orally or by writing. For the basic model of knowing, it is unstructured way of getting information, in which, researcher got information by listening on the conversations, when meeting with different people and discussing different matters. The idea here is to be quick in picking up the thought of people when they are chatting or talking by themselves.

Hence, in this study the basic model of knowing was used in the informal conversation, where I met other people different from the intended group, and discuss about Easter morning service at graveyard, also in the group discussion with the revival group as I will mention below. However the group discussion sometimes could be intentionally as Bernard asserts that, “Group discussion may be intentional, that is, arranged prior to the session or sometimes spontaneous.”¹¹ For me, the group discussion happened spontaneous because I did not plan it before, but I found it useful for my paper as I talked with Christians who attended the revival session, famously known as fellowships. In this method Christians were free to give their views about the practice. Therefore the research gained information on the perceptions of revival Christians about the practice.

Both methods above were used in studying Easter morning service. In a specific professional conversation a group of 20 people was interviewed individually. This includes two pastors, three evangelists and the rest are lay congregants whereby seven people from the big congregations, five people from a medium size congregation and three people from the small congregation. This was to see how they value and what they understand the Easter morning services.

¹⁰ Kvale 1996,36-37

¹¹ Bernard 2006,232

In order to get more information about the Easter Morning service I was forced to talk with other pastors whom I met during my field study within the diocese. In doing so the Kvale's basic *model of knowing* method, was used to get their ideas concerning the Easter morning service at graveyard. Also I tried to find those who worked on the vernacular liturgy, and those worked on the ELCT liturgy which is used now to get their view on the service. These pastors and theologians here are different to those two pastors interviewed, among the group of twenty interviewers above. It was my thought that, in order to get enough information concerning the service, I should add more informants even from outside the diocese that may be or have the same traditions in their dioceses. Their information's was used to see if there are any comparisons on the significance and understanding of the service or if they have different ideas with those within the diocese.

b) Library Research: This is the important part through which I find the views of different writers on African Tradition and practices. Also read African theologians who described on how to relate the Christian theology and African traditional Religions. All those material gave me to know how the Africans did before Christianity on the issue of spirituality and its relationship to human life. Both unpublished and published materials will be used. Published materials include books and journals, unpublished include liturgy, hymn books, theses and dissertations.

1.5 Model of Doing Contextual Theology

Considering the context of the research I felt better to have a model of contextual theology as a base for my study. Doing so, it gives a way of doing contextualization of Christian message along the traditional practices of Shambala people. Stephen Bevans in his book titled *Models of Contextual Theology* defines the contextualization as an attempt to understand the Christian faith in terms of a particular context. For him theology contextually takes into account the faith experience of the past that is recorded in scriptures and kept alive, preserved, defended and perhaps even neglected or suppressed.¹² From Bevans

the contextual theology recognizes the signal importance of human experience as a source for reflection on Christian faith and morals. Also since it is rooted in concrete human experience

¹² Bevans 2002, 3-5

in a particular culture and society, it speaks primarily to that context. Thus studying scripture and tradition we have to read and interpret them within our own context as well.¹³

After Bevans' discussions on the meaning of contextual theology he came up with six models of contextual theology. These are the Translation model, which concern with adaptation or accommodation of the unchanging message of the gospel to the particular culture.¹⁴The praxis model primarily concerned with discerning the meaning and contributing to the social change taking its inspiration from neither classic texts nor classic behavior but from current realities and future possibilities.¹⁵The synthetic model keeps the integrity of good news at the same time acknowledging the significance if taking all the aspects of contexts seriously.¹⁶The transcending model maintain the complete change of mind so as to understand the gospel while provide a room for conversation that radically shifts from one individual to another.¹⁷The countercultural model, which does not only take the context with utmost seriousness but also warns the context that always needs to be treated with good deal of suspicion. Also put out clearly that if the gospel is truly take root within peoples contexts it needs to challenge and purify the context,¹⁸and anthropological model, which aims at establishment or safeguarding of cultural distinctiveness by a person of Christian faith.¹⁹

Bevans' anthropological model of contextual theology is a model which attempts to establish or preserve a cultural identity by a person of Christian faith. It is concerned with the culture of people, their daily lives to see God's revelation and self manifestation hidden within the values.²⁰ The aim of an anthropological model of contextual theology is to make a person Christian within the culture. As Bevans quoted M.A.C Warren in his famous passage saying:

When we approach the man of another faith than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understandings of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter. Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are

¹³ Bevans 2002,5

¹⁴ Bevans 2002,37

¹⁵ Bevans 2002,70

¹⁶ Bevans 2002,89

¹⁷ Bevans 2002,103

¹⁸ Bevans 2002, 117

¹⁹ Bevans 2002,54

²⁰ Bevans 2002, 56

approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.²¹

Anthropological model of contextual theology shows that, in order to acquire a good knowledge of a certain society there is a need to listen and observe what is in that society. Since this study deals with the experience and life style of a certain society, the anthropological model will be useful in studying the meaning of the Easter Morning service and how it affects the faith of people in the ELCT-NED. This model will be used to interpret theologically the Easter morning service at graveyard. By using this model it will be easier to learn and understand the practice and the Gospel message within it. In view of the fact that every culture has theological implication through anthropological model, I will come up with something which can be adapted or accommodated from this particular culture and give a good theological and spiritual meaning for the Church.

1.6 Procedure of the Field Research

When I was back home for the data collections, I went to the field area, where I found the pastors and told them about my intention of doing research in their parish areas. The pastors were very cooperative that, they also help me to find some elders whom I interviewed. I decided to use oral interviews, since most of the interviewees were not ready to have the questioners. Though in those oral conversations, the questions were involuntarily used. Therefore, I had to listen to them and write their ideas. Since the sessions were conducted in Kiswahili and Shambala, the dictations were translated into English. In this method, similar themes were collected together for analysis. From the identified themes I created my outlines of the research presentation.

1.6.1 Problems Encountered in the Research

In doing this research the following problems were encountered: Timing of the practice. Since Easter morning service is a seasonal service I could not perform observations in the entire service. Hence, I had to generalize the experience of own and of the interviewees I met.

²¹ Bevans 2002,56

The research was done during the cultivation period, where many of the interviewees were busy with farm work. Therefore many the interviewees were available mainly on Sunday. Furthermore, for the time I was doing my research I realized that, there is a need to meet with the higher leaders of the diocese like a Bishop and his assistance to get their views on the Easter morning service. Unfortunately, I did not manage to meet with them, due to their busy schedule of work. However, for those other pastors whom I met, they tried to give me a good cooperation to what they know about the Easter morning service at graveyards.

Nevertheless, apart from all the above-mentioned problems and stress factor, I managed to obtain the required information for this study. Hence, it is appropriate for the data obtained to be generalized for the whole of the research.

The three major techniques of qualitative method were used to collect data as follows; **Individual conversation:** Here I got a chance to talk with individual pastors, evangelist and lay people. Structured and unstructured questions were used in conversation and discussion with interviewees.

Informal Conversation: Due to the nature of the study I was forced to expand the way of getting information by having conversation with different people concerning the issue.

Group discussion: During the research time I attended Sunday service in one of the congregation where they practice Easter Sunday service after the service. In the end of the service, when I was greeting some of the congregants, we started talking about the practice in this discussion, and I managed to get the views of the people about the practice.

2.0BACKGROUND

This chapter intends to explore the background of Easter morning service at graveyard in the ELCT-NED. In fulfilling that intention, the general understanding of the African Traditional religion is considered as a source of the Shambala tradition. A source where the relationship between the living and the dead is explained, and how the ancestors function to the living, and the vice versa. The local Shambala tradition, which seems to be one of the sources in the service, is explained. Traditional practices done before the coming of Christianity, related to Easter morning service have also been considered. How the service was influenced by the Jewish biblical traditions as the other source, is also taken into account. Accordingly, the short history of missionary is also included. Lastly, it is a chapter conclusion.

2.1 The Basis of Easter Morning Service in NED

In studying this service, it was not easy to find out its origin since it seems to come from different traditions. In one way it is from local Shambala traditions, and in the other way it is from Jewish biblical (Christian traditions). For this reason, I will start to explain the understanding of the African Traditional religion first. Because, the Shambala traditions are among the African traditions which have different ways of believing and practicing, but in which in some way they all share. This part of African Traditions endeavor to see how the Africans relate with their departed relatives and in the end how it was done in Shambala tribe.

2.1.1 The relation Between the Living and Dead

This part is a presentation of the general understanding of Africans on the relationship between the dead and the living according to different writers and from different cultures. Hence, how the Africans perceive the ancestors as their spiritual elders and the function of the ancestors to the living human beings.

Mbiti shows that it is not possible to have one definition of the African Religion except by looking at the different parts in which African Religion is found. In his explanations he summarized the African religion by considering three major parts which are Beliefs, Practices and Ceremony festivals and Religious objects and places.²² In the part of Beliefs, Africans Religious beliefs are very concerned with issues like God, Spirit, human life, and magic. In

²²Mbiti 1991 ,11-12

their practices and ceremonies the Religious African are very careful in praying, making sacrifices and offering, performing ceremonies and rituals and observing various customs.²³ Together with beliefs and practices, the things and places set apart as sacred and holy are also important in African Religions. That, in worshipping there are proper places which are considered to be good for the communication with the spirits, who through them, they present the living to God.

From those beliefs and practices, things and places of African Religious, is where the matter of relationship between the living and the dead arise. The African Religious believe that, after death the human being changed to the Spirit form, and as a Spirit there some ways of communication with the living and vice versa. Moreover, there are also special places and things to use in order to fulfill that communication. In all those beliefs the whole community is involved so as to maintain the culture. Since African religion is based on a communal rather than individual, it belongs to people, and no individual member can stand and reject the whole relation of his people's lives. "Religion influences cover all of life, from birth of a person to long after he has died."²⁴ Thus, the human relationship does not end after death. It is descending from generation to generation. The question of the living and the dead cannot be separated in the minds of Africans. Since being dead in Africa is the matter of transforming from one stage of life to another. Hence, religious practices and beliefs are also founded in the two kinds of life status. From that understanding, the issue of believing in ancestors arises, which has brought a big debate among the scholars.

In support of that kind of relation, Parrinder enlightens that, it is impossible to grasp the meaning of the religious foundations of Africa without going through the "thought area" occupied by the ancestors.²⁵ In African understanding life does not end after death. The dead are still valid as fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters among the family. It is believed that there are communication among the living and dead through many ways.²⁶ The ancestors are said to come in dreams talk to their relatives and others prescribe certain medicines to sick people.

²³Mbiti 1991,11

²⁴Mbiti 1991,11

²⁵Parrinder 1954,57

²⁶Cf: Omari C.K 1990,178 Mbiti 1990,80

The same in Sawyerr when he was talking with students in West Africa. One of them surprised him to note that they believe ancestors come by their bed-side and talk to them during their sleep. The ancestor in fact appears to their descendants in dreams and expresses their feelings accordingly.²⁷ This is to show that just as in real life, the ancestors take actions to their living relatives.

Since the departed believed to continue to live and show interest in their surviving families, the families also show their belief by building the shrines for their departed. They put bits of food and drinks there or on the graves and sometimes mention them in their prayers. This does not mean that they are worshipping them but it is a way of venerating, and making sure that the departed up to the fourth and fifth generation should not be forgotten.²⁸ Sacrifices and offering to the living dead are given as gifts.

The practice of praying for the dead and to the dead is quite vivid in the African religion. For instance, the service has a parallel custom in West Africa. According to Sawyerr, the Krio have an amazing custom by which, while the spokesman is calling out the names of the dead, others present at the ceremony freely interject additional names so the list becomes as complete as possible.²⁹ This practice relates exactly with Easter morning service in NED. As we will see later in the data presentation in the service liturgy, there is a part in which the names of the dead people in the year are mentioned.

In the African context the relationship between the living and the dead is so strong that one feels that the dead need to be remembered all the time. Death as Mbiti puts it “does not annihilate life and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter”.³⁰ Since life continues even though in a different status, the relationship also exists and may be in a very higher response than it was. The Africans feel that the dead have great influence over the living people. Therefore, the living have the obligation to live on good terms with them. Reverence of the dead is important so as to create a good relationship between the two communities. One way is to revere the dead by visiting graves for performing some rituals to appease them.

²⁷Sawyerr 1996,43 cf: Mbiti 1990,80 cf: Gehman 1993,156

²⁸Mbiti 1991,18

²⁹ Sawyerr 1996,62

³⁰ Mbiti 1970,139

Boe talks about the Mbughu, an ethnic group whose culture is in many ways similar to their neighbours, the Shambala, saying that;

they pray and give sacrifice to the dead because they believe that through the dead they can be blessed. They remember their deceased people by killing animals, by sacrificing in the graveyard and by celebrating by eating together all over the night.³¹

All those African practices in regard to the ancestors seem to maintain the good relationship, dependence on each other and the importance of each other's life.

2.1.2 Function of Ancestors in African mind

As we have observed above, many of the African minds, in writings and thinking, believe that after the death a person is transformed into spiritual existence and transferred to another land where the ancestors were living.³² Having been into spiritual existence, the living dead acquire special power and more responsibilities from the society they were physically living in. Ancestors were believed to be near to God and could communicate with God more easily than before their death. In that sense the ancestors act as mediators between God and living human being and vice-versa.³³ They know the needs of men, they have recently been here with men, and at the same time they have full access to the channels of communicating with God directly or, according to some societies, indirectly through their own fore bearers.³⁴ They are guardians of family affairs, and may even warn of impending danger or rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instruction, Mbiti said.³⁵

This is to say that in African life the ancestors are very important since the surviving of the living depends much on the dead. The dead leads the living, protect them and are maintaining the social relationship. Nevertheless, in all those practices done by the African Traditionalists, he does not intend to worship the ancestors but to venerate them. Hence, ancestors are not venerated because they have more life than the living, but because they are entitled to their

³¹ Boe pp28-30

³² Omari C.K 1990,178 Cf: Mbiti 1990,68-70

³³ Omari C.K 1990,179 Cf: Mbiti 1990, 68-70

³⁴ Mbiti 1990,82

³⁵ Mbiti,1990,82

position in the family hierarchy.³⁶ In other words, the ancestors also depend on recognition of their offspring for their continued authority and belonging.

2.2 The Local Shambala and their Relationship to Ancestors

According to the culture every African has a set of beliefs, customs and practices. Similarly, the Shambala also have interdependence between the living and their ancestor. And both parties have their role toward each other. The living dead serve in various ways as senior elders of the clan. They function as the guardians of the family and the life. They receive the needs of the living and are believed to assist them. In Shambala the ancestors or living dead seem to be feared and respected due to their reactions to the community. In one part they are respected because they are helpers but on the other side they are feared because they can cause disaster among the society.

However, no one can cut off the relationship and communication with the living dead. As from other Africans they also act as intermediaries between the living and God. The living human being can not directly have contact with God but the communication is done through the ancestors, who believed to be near to God. This does not mean that the ancestors have the same power with God; rather they got the ability to do things from the almighty God. The communication appears in form of dreams, and sometimes a strange life situation can make people to think that the ancestors are reacting. One of the old woman said her father had a dream in which her grandfather came and told him that he don't have some where to live, because his house was broken down by a tree. In the morning he (the father of a woman) went to check and found a big tree nearby the grave was fallen over the grave.³⁷ This shows how the living and the dead communicate.

To maintain that communication in Shambala, there must be a good order, each clan had their leader whom they called *Zumbe* who was communicating with spirits on behalf of the clan members. When it happens that there was no rain, or any other circumstances like illness and death, calamity or unresolved conflict and other life crisis, *Zumbe* was asked to pray to speak to the fathers (spirits) concerning the problems.³⁸

³⁶ Nürnberger 2007, 25

³⁷ Interview with Member I 11.July 2010;cf Gehman 1993,142

³⁸ Interview with Member II 11,july 2010

Similarly, to that point Harvey asserts Africans employ divination through the diviner, medicine man, and healer. The diviner or medicine man is a pivotal force for order and rapprochement between humanity and the spirit world.³⁹ Those rituals were conducted on special places which mostly were shrines and graveyards. Each *Zumbe* has its own shrines situated in the big caves⁴⁰ nearby their houses. These are special places and they have also special time for those practices, which mostly were in the midnight or early in the morning before sunrise.

Together with all those kinds of rituals, the Shambala believed in God as the creator of the world and everything.⁴¹ He is the Almighty and Supreme Being and they call Him *Mulungu*. Also they believed in spirits (*mizimu*), and both God and spirits had authority over them. Therefore the relationship between God, spirits and human being was so important. In the sense that, doing against these two powerful beings could be the source of disasters, diseases, illness and of course death.⁴² However, on the other side God and spirits are helpful to human being whom they give life, protection and support to all kinds of human needs. More than that, God and spirits are not on the same level and ability. God is more powerful since he is the creator and capable to see and do anything above human beings. Spirits are categorized in a lower level than God. They believed that spirits were also created by God, they are dead human beings who live among them.

From the general understanding of the African culture, we find that the human relationship does not end after death. The living and the dead still have a kind of communication and responsibility among each other. Different ways are used to make the relationship exist; like sacrifices, offerings and dreams communication to update the relationship. The same applied to Shambala, many of the practices are related to the practices of other Africans. The respect offerings are the kind of gifts and hospitality, or a way of making the ancestors not frequently appears to them. The living dead are wanted and yet not wanted, Mbiti insisted.⁴³ So the way to avoid quarrelling is to respect and be responsible to them.

³⁹ Harvey 2009,80

⁴⁰Remember Usambara Mountains is made up of big rocks and big stones with big holes.

⁴¹Cf: Mbiti 1990,39

⁴²Cf Sawyerr 1994,62-63

⁴³Mbiti 1990,82-83

2.2.1 Traditional Practices Related to Easter Morning Service

Before the growth of Christianity understanding concerning death, many tribes in Tanzania, were practicing the so called “*Matanga*” which means communal mourning ceremony. This is a kind of comforting practices where the relatives and neighbors stay together for three days. On the third day morning, the elders of the family visit the grave. The Shambala said that, they go there to see if the grave has sunk so that they can fill it well, because mostly they do not cement the grave soon after burial. But behind that reason, there are some rituals done with the meaning of removing the death spirits and curse in the family and clan. They speak some words that the death should not come again and take someone else. These rituals were done in secret. The young were not allowed to know what was going on. Then in the day time, people gathered, ate together, and the celebration ended with division of the properties to the relatives, and that is called “*kuvunja matanga*” end of mourning.

The church has been discouraging these kinds of practices to Christians, by having a Christian cult of comfort (in Swahili *Ibada ya faraja*). This service aims to eradicate those pagan rituals and also teach the Christians to believe on life after death in heaven. The church tries to show that death is not the end; there is a better life after death, that, people should not continue grieving for their relatives. The other reason, apart of that, based on the economy, that, staying together for many days, cause the family to undergo a lot of expenses to feed people who are there. Sometimes this causes the family to enter into debts.

In addition to that practices, as a matter of maintaining harmony and good communication, the Shambala people were giving different kinds of sacrifices or offerings to their spirits. One of the Pastors in the diocese wrote, in his bachelor thesis, that

the dead-living hold an important position in the life of the Shambala. The Shambala offer sacrifices to the dead through *matambiko* (sacrifice). And when they come back from offering sacrifices, they say that they are coming from *Zigi* (the place of the dead). Sometimes *Zigi* was understood to be a good place, a place full of blessing and sanctification. Those people believed

that they are cleansed when they come from the offering sacrifice. This is so psychological that when these people come from Zigi they considered themselves resurrected from the dead⁴⁴.

The cleansing here could not be the same as the cleansing of the sin through Jesus' blood, but the sacrifices are literally translated as a way of repentance, to the ancestors. With sacrifices they use to slaughter animals like chicken, goat or sheep pouring blood. Sometimes they cook some food and leave it at the graveyard or in the shrine or at ramp. When they come next time and find the food was not there they believe that the ancestors had accepted their gift. ⁴⁵All these kinds of rituals were done either at midnight or early in the morning before sunrise.

2.3 Early Christian and Biblical source of the Easter Morning Service

The Easter morning service at the graveyard emerged from the main celebration of the Easter where Christians all over the world remember the death and resurrection of Jesus their savior. Thus, in order to understand the the service at the graveyard, I should explain how Easter itself was emerged and how it was practiced. The Early Christian sources reveal two quite distinct modes of celebrating Easter. The first mode was to keep the feast on Sunday following the Jewish Passover. This way focuses on the celebration upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which had taken place on the first day of the week, as it appears in the four Gospels. This mode became ultimately universal. According to Paul Bradshaw in his book *Early Christian Worship*, the second mode of celebrating Easter comes from the ancient form of the celebration in the second –century in Asia Minor. At that time Easter was made to be a memorial of the death of Jesus, replacing the feast which was practiced on the fourteen day of the Jewish month (a month was called Nisan)⁴⁶ by the Quartodecimans, who were called in other words fourteeners by other Christians.⁴⁷

The meaning of that feast originally, was not focusing on the resurrection of Christ but rather on “Christ, the Passover lamb, sacrifice for us” (1cor5:7 and John1:36 *behold the Lamb of God*) and died on the cross on the day of preparation of the Jewish Passover at the hour when the lambs for the feast were being slaughtered John19:14ff.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Shemweta 2000,20

⁴⁵Interview with Guga 12 July 2010

⁴⁶ Biblically this Nisan Month is the Lord's Passover month.

⁴⁷ Bradshaw 2010,88

⁴⁸ Bradshaw 2010,89

From there, traditional Christians adapted the Passover feast to Christian Easter. In addition to Bradshaw, Cantalamessa Raniero, in his book *Easter in the Early Church*, explains about Easter and its meaning from the early Church. In his writing he used the word *Pascha* with the meaning of Easter. He says:

The diversity of Pascha has its roots in the very origins of the institution. There two characteristic Pascha texts of the Old Testament, Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16. In Exodus we have a ritual to be performed in every family, with the slaughter of a small animal such as nomadic shepherds would own , in Deuteronomy on the other hand we find a single sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem on behalf of all Israel, with slaughter of bullocks as well as of sheep.⁴⁹

His aim is to show the difference of the two Pascha. That is in its theological meaning Exodus 12 recalls chiefly the saving act of God. It is “*Pesah*” because God *Pasah* (“passed over” or protected”) the dwellings of the Israelites (Exodus 12: 23 and 27). In Deut 16 as in Ex13 and 14, he shows the emergence of a new character, humanity. To the ritual question of the son, which means the father from now on ought to answer: “With strong hand the Lord caused us to go out from Egypt” (exodus 13:14, cf Deut 16:1cf)⁵⁰ That, by the hand of God Israelites got out of Egypt and this shall be taught to their generations. From that way Cantalamessa asserts that, the spiritual content of Pesach came to have two poles. First is the Immolation and eating of the lamb connected with God’s protection and the destroyers passing over the houses of Israelites. Secondly, is the exodus from Egypt, interpreted as passing from slavery to freedom.⁵¹

According to him Paul finds that there is a relation between the Jewish Pascha to the Christian Pascha in the meaning of “divine” and “human” this can be based on 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

In the divine level the Pascha consists of sacrifice and this is realized in Christ. On the human level the Pascha consists of what Phillo called the passage from vices to virtues expressed by

⁴⁹Cantalamessa 1993,5

⁵⁰Cantalamessa 1993,5

⁵¹ Cantalamessa 1993,5

Paul as the turning away from the leaven of wickedness to the unleavened bread of Purity v8.⁵²

The Jews were supposed to cleanse their bodies as the sign of forgiveness or turn away from leaven to unleavened bread through their sacrifices. After Christ, there is no more need of sacrifice. The Passover has been given as a sacrifice that is Jesus Christ himself.

From the time of the Israelites, the Passover became a Jewish practice from generation to generation as God commanded them. Together with that, they had other traditions which among them are the anointing of the dead bodies in the third day. Hence, the aim of anointing was to make sure the corpse did not rot, and also was a kind of maintaining the connection and continuity with the dead. Corley speaks of how the Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome did during and after the funeral. When the death happens, women were the ones responsible in taking care of the dead bodies, by washing and anointing. Then after the burial they had the

Gravesite rites which did not presume later notions of an afterlife or “resurrection” for the deceased, but rather, functioned to establish a sense of connection or continuity with the dead. The Dead were remembered, their presence felt; they praised as well as mourned.⁵³

However, in the ancient Greece and Rome they were cremating the dead bodies, but then, they kept the ashes in urns in the tomb and have visitations on the third day of the funeral, on the ninth day after the funeral, and at the end of the mourning period as well at various times throughout the year.⁵⁴

All of these do not appear directly in the Bible, but it is through the Bible we learn about the Passover and get to know the whole history of the Jewish cultures and what they did. Basically from the Bible we believe that the continuation of their culture is according to God’s plan. As it is written in Exodus 13:14 *And when in time to come, your son asks you, “What does this mean?” you shall say to him, By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.*

⁵²Cantalamessa 1993, 6-9

⁵³ Corley 2010, 24

⁵⁴ Corley 2010, 29

2.3.1 How the Passover Transferred from Old Testament to New Testament

In his explanation Cantalamessa shows how the Passover transplanted from Old to New Testament and from Israel to the church.

The Transfer was a purely chronologically datum: - Christ had died (and risen) in Jerusalem during the celebration of Jewish Pesach. John shows the death of Christ at the very hour when the Paschal lambs were being sacrificed in Temple. The authors of New Testament reinterpreted the deeds of Jesus paschalized the life of Jesus to represent as the realization of the ancient Pesach. The synoptic Paschalized the Eucharist they see in it that is in last supper the moment at which the Pascha of Christ replaced the Jewish one and the memorial of the Lords death was superimposed on the memorial of Exodus. Paul Paschalized not only Eucharist but also baptism 1Cor 11:23-26. John Paschalized the whole life of Christ, seeing in the new Exodus of human kind accomplished by the new Moses who gives the true manna (John 6) and makes the true water flow in the desert (John4)⁵⁵

Jesus lived the Jewish life and practiced as a Jew like we see in the Old Testament, where they were celebrating their Easter and its rituals. After the death of Christ, that's where we are getting the new idea of Pascha. The scarifications' of animals ends when Jesus died. This is because He is the Lamb of the Lord who takes away the sin of human being, through him there is no more needs of animal scarification. The sacrificial death of Christ was seen as the realization of all expectations and foreshadowing contained in the ancient Pesach. In the light of Christ's event the authors of New Testament reinterpreted everything Jesus had done. This is where the original diversification of Pascha began.

In connection to that, the New Testament's account of the women who went to the graveyard at dawn, for the sake of anointing Jesus' body, is taken as a biblical source of Easter morning service.(Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1-2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1). However, it seems that the tradition was there even before Jesus' resurrection. The women did as their normal Jewish tradition of visiting the graveyards for the purpose of anointing the dead bodies. Alton Motter says, the tradition of Jews, going to the graveyard at dawn to anoint their deceased friends, was compelled by

⁵⁵Cantalamessa 1993, 9

the love and inner sorrow they had to them. Therefore, for Motter, what happened on Easter morning might be the basis for the Christian mass assembly of the morning worship.⁵⁶

2.4 Missionaries in NED⁵⁷

The basic source of Easter morning service at graveyard as I have explained, is the local traditions and Jewish traditions. Consequently, that is a good foundation of the study. Together with those sources, the Shambala did not create that service by themselves, there were carriers of the service as a Christian practice. Although there is no document which shows when exactly the service started, but I realized that the missionaries also play some parts in implementing the Easter morning service. As it is known that, the missionaries are the ones who brought Christianity and teach the Bible, in which the Jewish traditions are found. In that case, it is relevant to show when the missionaries arrived in NED. From the administration source, the history of NED shows that the first Germany missionary, who was known as Kramer, arrived in Tanga on 6th of July 1890 with the aim of doing mission work.

In 1891 the other two missionaries from Berlin, Johannsen and Wohlrab, came to Tanga and went to Mlalo, which is one among of the first big mission stations. In 1907 the missionaries were beginning to train the evangelists and by 1920, seven African Pastors were already ordained. When the Germans were defeated by the British in the World War I, the German missionaries had to leave for Europe, but the Germany missionary activities were resumed some years after the war. The medical services were started and several mission stations were built. In 1962 Heinrich Walterberg a German pastor, who made the liturgy in Shambala language, became the first bishop of Usambara Digo Lutheran Church in the northeast.⁵⁸ Walterberg stayed in office for one year up to 1963, then Bishop Sebastian Kolowa was chosen as the first African bishop of the diocese. This short history tells us that, it is within this period the Easter morning service at graveyards was introduced in

⁵⁶Motter 1959,12

⁵⁷ The information about missionaries in NED is found mostly from the diocese website www.elct-ned.org and from some Pastors who have the same information as it is in the website.

⁵⁸ Before the foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, there were seven churches in Tanganyika that is before the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar to form Tanzania. In 1938, the Churches founded a federation known as the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Tanganyika, which brought together these seven churches. On June 19, 1963, the seven Churches, under the umbrella of a federation, merged to become a single Church, known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Then from there, those churches became synod and later they were called dioceses and the names also were changed. The Usambara Digo became The Northeastern Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter endeavoured to explore the basis of Easter morning service held at graveyards and the practices before and after Christianity. The background shows the Shambala had their ways of maintaining the relationship with their ancestors as any other African traditions and cultures. In some ways, the traditions relate with the Easter Morning at graveyard to the extent that, the service seems to be originated from them. Though in the other ways also, missionaries seemed to play a part introducing the service while spreading Christianity. Together with that, some writers tries to find out what the Bibles says about Easter. It seems that we can not just start to speak about Easter directly, since it does not appear in the Bible as Easter. The events happened during the Passover, descending to Jewish practices, help us to meet the time of Jesus and his death. Then, through the death of Christ and his resurrection, Christians get the Easter celebrations. Hence, the Shambala traditional practices and biblical practices through missionaries, seem to have big influences on the service. The following chapter is the analysis of the interviews from the Pastors, Theologians and members of the ELCT-NED.

3.0 THE PRACTICE OF EASTER MORNING SERVICE IN NED: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

This chapter is about the analysis of the interviews done during the field research. In it I will show the responses of the Church Ministers, as Pastors and Evangelists, and the ones from the lay Christians, and their critique concerning the service. Before analyzing I would like to present how the service is conducted and the liturgy used, which I translated from the vernacular language to English.

3.1 Holy Week

The lent season is a season which Christians consider as Holy days. Christians use this time as time to change their behaviors spiritually. Some use the lent time to repent and feel forgiven of their sins.⁵⁹ After the Ash Wednesday, the following Wednesdays and Fridays in lent, there are church services in the evening where people meet and reflect on the passion of Christ by reading the Word of God, and singing lent songs and prayers. Then follows the Passion Week or Holy week, which is after the Hosanna Service on Palm Sundays.⁶⁰ Throughout this week the church welcomes those who were excommunicated to return to the group⁶¹ (in Swahili the act called *kurudi kundini*). Together with that, in this Holy week the church makes sure that the graveyards are cleaned, sometimes by the members who volunteers, or the church hires people to make sure the job is well done. On Thursday of that week there is service in which the congregations celebrate the Holy Communion as the supper of Jesus. This Thursday is also called Holy Thursday. In the same service, those who accepted to return in the group are received.

On Good Friday there are two services in the morning at 10:00am and in the afternoon at 2:30pm; the latter is the most remarkable event since it is the service of the hour of death of Christ. Naturally the congregation listens to the passion texts during the liturgy and singing the passion hymns. By 3:00pm, as the ninth hour, the time of the death of Christ according to the New Testament, the bell rings and the whole congregation kneel down for silent prayer as

⁵⁹ It is the tendency for Christians in Tanzania to use this season to repent and have prayers for their spiritual life. You will find many people fasting during this time and for those who are able they fast for all forty days of lent.

⁶⁰ This is a time almost all Churches have in their Calendars.

⁶¹ The church does not excommunicate people, it happens that in the ELCT when a person get married out of the church or having a baby without being married is called to excommunicate him/herself and suppose to repent and come back to the group

the sign of the death time of Jesus. The most important theology is on the pain and death of Christ. This makes the day also to be the most important in the church life. However, the day is mixed with sorrow and joy in accordance with the significant death of Christ. Before the morning of the Sunday of resurrection, on Saturday night, there is a kind of vigil where people gathered in the church, not for the whole night but, from 7:00pm to 10:00pm for prayers. Together with that, the Church youth act on the life of Christ and the passion story. This is a kind of young people service. Most of the elderly are not attending; they only wait for the Easter morning service at graveyards, where also, the youth do attend. As I have explained above, the service starts early before dawn. According to the NED traditions, the service has its liturgy in Shambala language. The liturgy starts soon after arriving the graveyard. After the service at the graveyards, then follows the normal Easter Sunday service which starts from 10:00am as on other normal Sundays. Then after all those services, the Easter celebrations go on at home, where it includes eating together, and some are visiting each other. The whole village seems to be cheerful. Each family tries to find different foods. Those who are able financially, slaughter animals like goat or sheep for celebrations.

3.2 Liturgy for Easter Morning Service at Garveyard

Below is the translation of the liturgy used in the Easter morning service at graveyards. With the heading: “The Service of Resurrection at the Graveyard”⁶²

”Introduction”⁶³

P: Christ has risen.

C: He has truly risen.

P: My healer lives, I will also live, I will not stay in the grave, and He will send me to heaven, He will not leave me His person, dead.”

Choir or hymn (from hymn book mwimbieni Bwana)

”Confession

P: I believe in God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit! Everything came from Him created by Him. He is to be Glorified eternally.

⁶² As it is translated from the Shambala language which was *Mviko wa Ufufuki webindwa hembila*. All the translations are mine.

⁶³ The P in the liturgy stands for Pastor and C stands for the Congregation

C: Amen, Amen, Amen.

P: I believe in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who chooses us by His words before creation. He saved us from the slavery of darkness, and made us to be in the Glory of His son.

C: This is true.”

Song: From Choir or Hymn book

“C: I believe in the name of the Son of God who incarnated through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. He stayed with us, He took our appearance as human beings in the form of meat and blood. He was tempted as we human being are tempted. He did not sin.⁶⁴ God sent Him with His Holy Spirit to preach the grace of God, but to those who receive him he gave the right to become the children of God.

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell and preached to the dead. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended and he will come in the same way as people saw him going into heaven.

C: Amen Come Jesus Christ, do not delay, we are waiting, come, come our Lord”

P: When He will descend from heaven, a cry of command will be heard, together with the voice of an archangel, and the sound of a trumpet of God will shout.⁶⁵ He will come to judge the living and the dead. This is my Lord who redeemed me, a lost and condemned person; He purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. He did not save me with gold or silver, but with His Holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. That is how I became His person, I stay in His Lordship, and I will honor and serve Him. He will lead me in His unbroken righteousness and His eternal joy. I will live forever because He arises from the death, He is living. He will be the Lord forever and ever.

C: This is mostly certainly true

“P: I believe in the Holy Spirit that came from the Father, who was sent by the Son when he ascended, to stay with us eternally, to strengthen us. To show us the grace of God as God wishes. He (the Holy Spirit) should be praised and Glorified by His new congregation, the congregation of believers which is holy forever.

⁶⁴Some of the words in this part sound like the second part of the Nicene Creed.

⁶⁵ Words from 1Thess 4:16

C: Amen, Amen, Amen.

P: “I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. He removes the darkness of my heart and place in His light. He made me a Person of God. He gave me to hold the truth and live in it.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

C: Amen, Amen, Amen, This is most certainly true.”⁶⁶

P: I believe that through the power of holy baptism I am cleansed and born again, and brought into the congregation of Jesus for His grace. In this congregation of holy people, I am amazed of the Lord. He poured his blood on the cross, and died for me to cleanse my sin. He gave me His body and His blood to be the joint of His love. For all these I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Hence, He will raise me in the last day.

C: Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!”

Song: from choir

“P: Christ has risen, he is alive!

C: “I know that Christ in whom I believe, who saves me, is risen, let me stay in His faith, I should not fear when my time of death come.”

C: I am happy when I will leave this earth I will stay with my Christ. Christ will give me an unbroken and new body. I will live in Him and He will live in me.

I believe that my relatives (sisters and brothers) who died in Christ went to the Lord, and enjoy His happiness though their bodies were buried in sand.

C: Sing, Christ will change our bodies to look like him. Hallelujah!”

⁶⁶This part come from the article part of sanctification in the Small Catechism of Martin, as I was translating I was forced to put it in the same way because that is how it means.

Word session. (Sermon)

After the sermon the service continues as follows:

P: Now let us read the names of those who died in this year in our congregation (children, men and women). Then follows the prayers.

Prayer session

C: We pray to you Lord we who are sinners. Hear our prayer! Hear our prayer!

P: Hear our prayer O Lord, together with those who have finished their life journey that we stay with you together in our works.

C: Amen, Amen, Amen

C: It is good that when I will reach heaven, I will see my Lord and his Glory; I will praise him together with the Angels.

P: God says if anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink the living water.⁶⁷

Glory is to the risen and the eternally, those who believe in Him will live eternally in his holy congregation (that means believers)

C: Forever and ever. Amen

Together with the prayers from the liturgy, before the Lord's Prayer, the minister asks everybody to have a one minute silent prayer for the families' who lost their relatives.⁶⁸

The Lord's Prayer

P: and C: The Lord's Prayer Our Father...

P: Blessings: The Grace of our Lord...

Looking at the liturgy, I find that many of the passages focus on the victory of Christ over death. Since we believe in Christ there is no need of being scared of death. Christ is our conquest and Redeemer. The service concludes by visiting the graves and planting flowers,

⁶⁷The words comes from the words of Christ in Jn 37

⁶⁸ This kind of silence prayer is very common even in political meetings if there is some currently passed away either a leader or any recognizable person there must be a minute of prayer to remember him or her and ask God to comfort the family who lost their relatives.

and raising new crosses on the graves which had no crosses or replacing the old ones.⁶⁹ By this time the minister either goes back to the church office or also joins the members in visiting the graves. However, there is no food given or any kind of sacrifice done there. What is done is only a normal service, with the resurrection of Christ as the theme, and putting of flowers and candles as a sign of love. Visiting graves seem to be a very important session of the service. Hence, one of the members stated that there are some people who do not even listen to what was going on before but they were only waiting for the time to visit the graves. “You know we have been preparing our decorations for the whole week so we always become anxious of the time of visiting the graves.”⁷⁰

3.3 Theologians’ Reflections on Easter Morning service

After focusing on the liturgy and how the service is conducted, the following are the responses of some theologians (this consist of Pastors and Evangelist whom I interviewed), and the response of lay people whose ideas I will combine since in some ways they sound the same.

3.3.1 The Easter morning Perception among Theologians

Concerning the question of Easter morning service, the interviewees have different views on the origination. The perceptions of the service seem to be divided into two theories as I mentioned above. First those who think Easter Morning service originated from Traditional practices and those who think that it is a biblical practice connected to Jewish traditions. This argument arose when I talked with the ministers on the meaning of Easter morning (*Mviko wa Ufufuki*). As explained above in chapter one, everyone knows *Mviko wa Ufufuki* as service conducted to remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then the second question comes: Where does this service originate?

Pastor A argued that the service does not originate from the traditional practices but it comes from the Bible and especially from the Jewish traditions of going to the graveyards to anoint the dead body. He said “this service comes from the Jewish practices where they use to go to the graveyards to anoint the dead body, even Mary Magdalena and other women mentioned in

⁶⁹ It happen that sometimes a person can be buried and by that time the family are not able to buy a cross or cementing the grave so they leave it until they are able to do so.

⁷⁰ Interview with Member I 12July 2010

the Bible went to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body”⁷¹In his explanations he does not support that traditional practices might also be the source. When I asked specifically: “what do you think about the traditional practices of going to the graves; do they have any relationship with Easter Sunday morning service?” The Pastor agreed that the traditions relating to Easter morning services were there but they do not have any impact on Christianity. He discouraged the idea of going to the graveyard to visit the dead. Rather insisted on the meaning of the death of Christ. He says “coming to the graveyard does not mean that we come to greet our relatives but we come to witness Jesus who is no longer in the grave, He is raised”.⁷² In his explanation this minister believes that there are traditional practices where people do visit the graves. But what he insists, is not to relate the Easter morning service at the graveyard with those practices which are sometimes called “unchristian practices” or pagan practices.

In the process of investigation, I came to talk to one of the Pastors in the diocese (not among those two interviewed in my field research), who has the same idea as Pastor A. According to the Bishop, whom she ones talked to concerning the service, he ascribed the graveyard service to the missionaries. The Bishop uses his Swedish experience to explain that the service is common in some parts of Europe. The missionaries who came to NED introduced it when they brought Christianity.⁷³ The two pastors shared the same feeling that the origin of Easter morning service is the Bible readings in which we get to know the Jewish practices to which Jesus himself belonged. And for Shambala area, the Bible and all Christians practices were brought by missionaries

3.3.2 Communication Between the Living and the Dead

Continuing the discussion with Pastors, Pastor B differs a bit with Pastor A. Pastor B asserts that the service is attributed to the existing Shambala practice of visiting shrines and graveyards early in the morning before dawn.⁷⁴ He associates this service with the Shambala traditional belief of reverence for dead people.

The act of going to the graves was there since the time of fathers and fathers and fathers. It is our tradition and it have a great impact in our lives. I do not say that we believe or worship the

⁷¹ Interview with Pastor A 12July 2010

⁷² Interview with Pastor A 12 July 2010

⁷³ Though the missionaries who brought Christianity to NED are not from Sweden, Munga makes a comparative analysis to show that in some parts of Europe the service is powerful.

⁷⁴ Pastor B 13July 2010

ancestors but we respect them and they communicate with us.” He continues; ”Although we as the church do not insist on the communication with dead but the communications exist secretly within our congregants.⁷⁵

He insisted that it is difficult to separate people from their traditions but it is good to involve them in order to make them feel the participation. Concerning the understanding of Christians on the Easter morning service, he maintains that the service is very important for Christians and has a big significance in their lives. Coming to the graveyard they use it as a time to greet their relatives, talk to them and introducing the new born or those married into a certain family.

In addition to that he says

If you want to realize that there is a communication between the dead and the living, take a good look in the Easter morning service, and you will see how people are emotionally speaking to their relatives, sometimes asking difficult questions.⁷⁶

Even though it seems to be very painful they afterwards feel released of their burden. For him the church should not only discourage that there is no connection between the dead and living but encourage the eternal life as a continuation of earthly life. This minister kept on saying that as the church “we should not turn our head and refuse to see our back.” He elaborates that we are now calling Easter morning a service of Christian cult because of our Christianity but also we know that we had our practices even before Christianity. Thus, our task is to teach the truth of the Gospel by using our traditions. He quoted Acts 17 where Paul talks to Athenians

For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god’ what therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (Acts 17:23).

The Pastor added that, before Christianity, visiting the graves was like worshiping an unknown god, but the Gospel reveals the power of God over the grave. So why do we not use our old objects as Paul to proclaim the truth of God? Just think if Paul did not use the same object to preach the true God to the Athenians, could they listen to him or received the Gospel

⁷⁵ Pastor B 13, July 2010

⁷⁶ Pastor B 13, July 2010

easily? Pastor B insisted that we should not be like the western people who ignored our culture without knowing it's significant to our lives.

Both two Pastors A and B above confess that the service has a big significance, leave alone the differences. Originally, the members of the church considered it as a big and important event for their lives, due to the fact that they gather together, visit the graves of their relatives, which psychologically and spiritually considered as a kind of love. Pastor A added, "I cannot explain what the day looks like, but even after coming back from the grave and having another service in the church (normal Easter Sunday service), you feel the day to be special even more than Christmas."⁷⁷ However, the difference does not mean that they believe in a different God, but everyone wanted to show the importance of the service by perceiving in diverse ways.

3.3.3 Praying for the Dead

Coming to the Evangelists, the Evangelist A claimed that the service is about praying for the dead. He further said we are not only praying for the dead but also pray for the dead to come, which means to those who go to the service.⁷⁸ Remember in our burial service we have the part which in the swahili language given like this "*(Tunamuomba na huyo atakayefuata baada ya huyu umuandae aweze kufikia mwisho mwema)*"⁷⁹ literally meaning we pray for the one who will follow after this (the dead) to prepare him or her to have a good end."⁸⁰ However he has the idea that Christians sometimes fear death, so the act of going to the graveyard listening on the sermons and prayers, helps them to accept death and be ready for it. And no one will or can escape. But a good thing comes into our faith that death is nothing for us; it is just a way to heaven. This is similar to the argument given by one of the lay Christians, who said that the services remind people that they will one day die like those who are in the grave. But it encourages them since Jesus resurrected from the dead, He will raise us in the last day. Concerning the feeling of traditional practice, the same as Pastor B, the

⁷⁷ Pastor A 12, July 2010

⁷⁸ Evangelist A 11 July 2010

⁷⁹ These are Swahili words comes from the ELCT burial liturgy which shows that they ask God to prepare the one who will follow to have a good end.

⁸⁰ Cited from Mwimbieni Bwana 2000, 273

evangelist says: “It is impossible to separate people from their tradition as we are doing now by discouraging the traditions, but in the reality the traditional thinking remain in secret”.⁸¹

3.3.4 Symbolism

Evangelist B understood the service symbolically “as women in the Bible did, we also do”. He says symbolism signifies many things. Among them is the witnessing and proclamation of Jesus’ triumphant victory over death. Therefore, because of the symbolism, the service gets its meaning when people go to the graveyard in the dawn of Easter Sunday. It is necessary for Christians to go to the graveyard on that day. For him the symbolism is well captured by the Christians who are practically/ actually going to the graveyard, which means that faith in the resurrection of Jesus, is being practically lived by the Christians.

He continues by saying that visiting the graveyard is the same as a pilgrimage to Jesus’ tomb in Jerusalem. “Since we cannot go to Jerusalem, it is better we visit graves which are in our areas.”⁸² Therefore, performing the given service is considered to be a way of going on pilgrimage to the graves. Asking him about how he thinks the Christians understand the service, he described that everybody can view this service according to his or her understanding, faith and traditions. From his experience of serving as an evangelist, he says, “I met some congregants who felt like it was a traditional practice and some attend it as a Christian cult with Jesus’ resurrection as central.”⁸³ For him the service in some ways makes congregants confused about relationship between tradition and Christianity, but the source of the confusion is the church itself. He sees the church as the source of confusion because it doesn’t teach and explain much about the service, its meaning and why they practice it. “We are practising Easter morning service because we are supposed to do so, but many Christians do not understand and even do not ask what it means”, he added . They only take it as they feel in their hearts. Moreover, by our words as human beings we cannot hinder people to communicate with their departed because it is something coming unconsciously. He said it can happen even to you since a person is your relative. When visiting the grave you could find yourself addressing some words, that doesn’t mean you’re worshipping. What we can do is to remind each other that we are not to worship the dead but we are honouring them.

⁸¹ Evangelist A 11 July 2010

⁸² Evangelist B 12 July 2010

⁸³ Evangelist B 12 July 2010

3.3.5 Enactment

Another Evangelist interviewed emphasizes on the act of women who went to the grave of Jesus on the third day. His ideas relate to the above understanding of symbolism, the Easter Sunday morning at graveyards fulfils the performance of the women visiting Jesus' tomb. He argued that most of the Christians in NED understand this service as an enactment of what the three women did in the Gospel stories of the resurrection. Though the women did not go to the graveyard for a worship service, the re-enactment is now taken as a worship service of Christ, not of the dead. The idea behind this notion is that today Christians are, by faith, joining the three women going to the graveyard to find that Jesus is not there. He is resurrected. And therefore, Christians come together as witnesses to proclaim to the world that Jesus has been resurrected from the dead.⁸⁴

3.4 Members Responses

After presenting the theologians or leaders of the Church reactions, let us now turn to the lay Christians' responses during the interviews.

3.4.1 Honoring the Departed

Traditionally in this area, the service is preceded by the cleaning of the cemetery. Though outwardly this action may seem to be a matter of sanitation of the graveyard, to others it has much deeper meaning. One of the members comments that, for relatives to clean the graves of their departed is honouring their departed relatives. This notion is connected to the idea that departed relatives, specifically parents, bless the living descendants who revere them. He further says that this service has been taken as a replacement of the Shambala service of ancestral veneration.⁸⁵ Therefore, the service is understood as a way of revering the departed relatives. He contends that a graveyard is such a greatly respected area in the parish that when a pastor is transferred to another parish, the cemetery is one of the items to be handed over to the new parish pastor. This signifies that the new pastor has to take care of the graves as a great treasure of the people whom she or he will be serving.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Interview with Evangelist C 30 July 2010

⁸⁵ Cf. to the Idea of Evangelist A above

⁸⁶ Interview with Member I 12 July 2010

Another member repeats the same sentence as the above that we are supposed to honour our late fathers as they were alive, she elaborates by saying, “Since I’m still called by my father’s name as if he was alive, then my respect and responsibility to him should not cease.”⁸⁷ That, a human being is called by his or her surname even though they are dead, this is to show a belongingness to the deceased parents.

3.4.2 Creating a good relation with departed

In other words, the service has been understood by some people as a day of commemoration of their departed relatives. The idea relates to the above idea of honouring the departed, but the interviewee insisted that we do not only honour them. But in this day we celebrate and remember our relatives. The act of going to the graves made us feel something different throughout the day. It happens, that after coming back home, the whole day we tell stories about late relatives. We talked how they did and even making jokes, and act like they were doing. Also in this day many feels the importance of cementing the grave which were not yet done, so they plan how and when they are going to do.⁸⁸

In addition to the act of going to the cemetery, it is a way of going to greet their relatives. For instance the other member said that, in her home congregation, the Sunday before the Easter Sunday, when the church leaders announce concerning the coming together for resurrection event, they also insist it is a chance to greet their sleeping relatives in the graveyard. Together with planting flowers and a new cross, they also show each other relatives’ graves to their brothers and sisters, who could not attend some of the funerals that happened recently. Moreover, this also is used as an opportunity to show the youngsters the graves of those who died long ago. Sometimes some people use this opportunity to narrate the relationship between the deceased and those who visit the graves.⁸⁹

3.5 The Role of the practice to the Christians

Despite all differences, the service has some roles to Christians and their lives. According to the empirical findings, this service takes part in comforting, encouraging and teaching people about their life and its end. Many have been confessing that when they attend the service,

⁸⁷ Interview with Member II 12 July 2010

⁸⁸ Interview with Member III 13 July 2010

⁸⁹ Interview with member IV 14 July 2010

something new is created in their heart. Below there are some roles which I tried to configure from the discussion with members in NED.

3.5.1 Unity

The service helps people socially by uniting relatives. According to member IV, the family relatives meet together to discuss the graves of their departed. Such discussions include cleaning the graves, the reconstruction of old graves, and the construction of graves of recently departed relatives. In some families relatives feel proud and blessed to come together on one day and take part in such activities. Sometimes foods are cooked at home and the relatives eat together after doing those activities. This kind of social gathering gives a sense of oneness among them.

Also during such meetings other family matters are discussed, including resolving problems and planning for other family functions like marriage. Furthermore, after the service, usually relatives would go from one grave to another showing each other the graves to those who could not attend the funerals. That act is accompanied with narrations of their blood relations with the deceased. This act helps to strengthen the bond between the living relatives because it shows how closely related the living are to each other.⁹⁰

3.5.2 Psychological Aspects

Psychologically the service at graveyards acts as a way of compensation and reconciliation between the living and the departed. There are some people who feel they did not give enough care to their departed, particularly parents during their lifetimes. Such people live with sorrow and a guilty conscience for a long time. They feel indebted to their parents. Sometimes they associate some difficulties or problems in their daily lives with a notion of anger and retaliation of their parents. But since they are Christians they cannot go to perform ancestral worship. Easter morning service at graveyard is for them a substitute of Christian alternative to ancestor worship. Therefore, cleaning and visiting the graves of their departed during the services give them the sense of compensating what they could not give to their departed during their lifetime.

⁹⁰ Interview with Member V 14 July 2010

Together with that, I find that there somepeople who are psychologically disturbed if they did not cement the grave of their relatives for instance in my own family I experience that, my mother died in 1996 and by that we did not cement her grave. That thing was disturbing my father for long time and he was always complaining especially when it was raining by saying "we should find means to cement your mum's grave because it always raining on her." Then I realized that he was very relaxed when we get the money and cementing that grave. Because he said "oooh!! It is better now, we also built her a good house."⁹¹ And in every year if he is not going there for easter he asks our relatives who are living there not to forget to decorate that grave.

3.5.3 Sorrow Relief

Some people stay with sorrow for a long time because they do not accept the reality of the death of their beloved. Therefore, they live in an illusion. Visiting the graves helps to assure them that their relatives are really dead. The tendencies of some people to utter some words like 'You have gone before us; we are coming behind you. Go in peace! and some actions like touching the stone graves and sand of the graves' help to release their sorrow, said one of the church elder. The elder gave an example of the widow who's husband suddenly died a few years ago. That woman was confused to extent the that she was running from her home and went to sleep aside the grave for some times. The relatives tried to stop her but she always wanted to do so. Then they decided to leave her and only making sure that she went and came back home. That grave was constructed with expensive things like tiles and electrical lights so the widow make sure that the grave is clean, the flowers are fresh and the lights are properly working. As the time is going she is now okay, and no longer sleep aside the grave.⁹²

3.5.4 Evangelizing the Victory of Jesus over Death

From the discussion with the Pastors⁹³ they showed that the service helps in evangelism. The ringing of the bells and the blowing of trumpets early in the morning draw the attention of non-Christians. Those people ask the reason behind it, which allows the Christians to narrate the death and triumphant victory of Jesus over death and sin.

⁹¹ Observation within my own family

⁹² Interview with Member VI 15, July 2010

⁹³ Discussion with Pastor A and B July 13/14

In other areas, the procession from the church to the cemetery attracts non-Christians to join the jubilation. There are other non-Christians who even attend the overnight prayers in the church because in those prayers there are attractive things like singing and music. Also the vigil prayer is a suitable time for non-Christians, who want to come to church but fear to be excommunicated by their communities. Both of the non-Christian groups mentioned, get a chance to hear the Gospel preached in the church during prayer and in the graveyard. Moreover, I was happy to meet a person who confessed herself that she was converted to Christianity during the easter vigil night prayer. She said that, when the youth were acting the passion of Christ "I felt painful thinking on how Jesus died for me, then I decided to be a Christian, although I got a lot of criticism from my family. But I can not turn back to a muslim religion, Jesus died to save me."⁹⁴ Other members say that, the girl was chased away by her parents and lived with one of the church elders but then the parents called her back and decided to agree with her decision.

3.5.5 Memorial of the Dead and Victorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Easter morning service has been understood by many Christians as the commemoration of the death and triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although some Christians have the idea of praying for their departed, and to their departed, the major theological implication is the Victory of Jesus over death.

3.6 Revivalist Reactions

In the discussion with the revival group who are also members of the Lutheran Church⁹⁵, the Easter morning service is considered as praying to the dead and interpreted as a continuation of traditional practices. Something which sounds negative to them since the only way is Jesus, and for them the dead has no chance and any functions to the living. This group challenged the church and said that, it is better to conduct the service in the church rather than going to the graveyard. "If we believe that Jesus has risen there is no need to go the graveyard, this make Christians to be like Thomas who did not believe until he touched Jesus' body", one of them added. For them Christianity has no relation with African religion whereby people prayed to the dead for help.⁹⁶ These members seem not to be satisfied with the church action,

⁹⁴ A Testimony from a new member 11, July 2010

⁹⁵Refer part 1.6 in chapter 1

⁹⁶Group Discussions 11 July 2010

and think that this can be one of the issues which make some of them move to the another charismatic church. One among them stated that either the church should change this system or take a good time to teach people what it means, and how it is significant to their Christian lives. Rather than taking it as a tradition or something important without explanations.⁹⁷

What came in mind is that, this service has been there long time ago. Why did elders not ask and have many doubts like they do today? The answers were that every time and every generation has its own way of reasoning and understanding. For them this is a time of globalization. As any other sectors Christianity also undergoes globalization and its challenges, the current systems, technologies and life styles. "The way our children think today is so different to the way a 1970's child thought, there is alot of reasoning these days and many questions arised why this, why that."⁹⁸ So the church also should be aware of the kind of people they are serving now and the current time and challenges we have on spiritual matters. It is better if the church finds a better way to contextualize the service so as to give a good understanding and meet the needs on both sides.

3.7 Challenges Facing the Service in NED

The word challenge has a broad meaning, in this chapter the challenges intend to show how the service is confronted by the members within and outside the diocese. The field research done showed the service challenge the people on one hand and the service challenged by people on the other. Both kinds of challenges are here thematically presented.

3.7.1 Revivalism

The matter of the revivalism has two faces. On the one hand it has to do with an external force outside the church whereby Pentecostalism has some influence on the Christians. Christians are challenged and confronted by the Pentecostals claiming that what they are doing is against the Bible. For them going to the graveyard is related to the pagans who used to sacrifice and give offering to their gods and spirits at the graveyards. So they claim that, the Lutherans are doing against the God's commandment in Exodus 20:3 "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" They consider the service as an act of worshipping the dead.

⁹⁷ Group discussion 11, July 2010

⁹⁸ Group Member 11, July 2010

Internally, there are revivalists Christians who challenge the service. Their claim is that the service is a prayer to and for the dead, a practice they consider unchristian. There are some pastors and theologians who belong to the revival group who espouse the same consent. Some say it openly and others are underground, opposing the service by not even saying or motivating people to attend it compared to what they do in other services.

The ELCT has spread all over the country. However the church got missionaries from different traditions. Thus the challenge on the Easter morning service at graveyard is unknown to many other dioceses. On the other hand with metropolitan parishes, which have other Christians from other dioceses, those Christians have always been reluctant to attend this service.

However the research shows that Christianity in Tanzania has been influenced much with Charismatic movements. The Pentecostal churches find different ways to compete with the mainline churches by using some of the church elements to show the weakness. This group of revivalist seems to be fed much from the Pentecostal teachings. And the aim of Pentecostal churches is to influence people to move from their churches.

3.7.2 Divisions among Christians

On the other hand the major challenge which is caused by the service is the division among Christians in the Diocese. The dichotomy of proponents and opponents of the service weakens the unity and integrity of the church. Also, because some people do not understand the service, they tend to move from the Lutheran Church to Pentecostal churches with the feelings that the North Eastern Diocese is not right when it practises the service. "You Lutherans needs to learn what the Bible teaches us to do."⁹⁹ This sentence implies to me that there are groups, of those who feel to be the right and true Christians and see others wrong doing Christians.

⁹⁹ Interview with Member VIII 23 July 2010

3.7.3 Absence of Graves in the Church Compound

This is a challenge which faces the service. There are other parishes where there are no common church graveyards. Usually people bury their relatives around their residential compounds. This raised a hot debate among Christians as to whether people should go to the church or their respective homes where their relatives were buried. It was said "We like to join together with other congregants for the Easter morning service, but then we are thinking about our relatives buried in our compounds. This gives us a hard time really."¹⁰⁰

3.7.4 Ignorance

The research done found that there is a lot of ignorance and misinformation about the practice. The state of affair cuts across the whole church from some ministers to lay Christians as well. With regard to the theologians, there are theologians who were born and brought up in towns where the service is not upheld strongly. Some of them have parents from other dioceses. This make those ministers to have no interest in that kind of service. Meanwhile the parishes also expressed ignorance of the practice because there are no programmes for teaching such a service in the diocese. Because of the lack of teaching about the service, people follow different teaching, which sometimes makes them go beyond the Lutheran theology and specifically the tradition of the diocese.

One of the Lutheran Church who moved to the Pentecostal church few years ago was saying , "I have been a Lutheran since I was but then I realized that, there some issues which the Lutherans are doing against the word of God, for example the issue of baptism and this service at graveyards! gives alot of questions."¹⁰¹ When I talked to this person I felt that her mind was full of ignorance on what the words of God and the Christians rites like baptism and Holy Communion means and works in the Christians lives. It seems that she is interpretnting the Bible and the acts of Jesus very literally which makes her to see the Lutheran as a very wrong and pagan practice church.

¹⁰⁰Interview with Member VII 15 July 2010

¹⁰¹ Interview with Member IX 23July2010

I noted interviewees VIII and IX as members, but they belong to the Pentecostals church not to the Lutheran Church.

3.7.5 Opposition from Some Church Minister

Apart from all the above challenges the most difficult challenge is posed by some church leaders and ministers who do not support the service. Some of them reject it openly as unchristian, hence against Lutheran doctrine of praying for the dead. Others do not say openly but resist the practice silently. The research found that some pastors do not even think about that service when they are planning for other services like Good Friday and the normal Easter services. This makes the service to be unknown to other parishes and Christians of that area as well.

One of the pastors within the diocese acknowledges that the service is facing challenges from within and without. Also, as the Pastor talked to the bishop he confessed that the church contributes to diminish following the service because the diocese has stopped emphasizing the service. The service has been left as a minor issues. No one is much concerned about it. It is taken for granted that as the other service it will be conducted and nothing bad will happen. The situation becomes worse when a new minister is transferred to the parish where the pastor leaving did not stress the service. The new pastor faces a lot of challenges and opposition and is deemed a person violating Lutheran traditions. This situation divides ministers of this Diocese between those who support the service and those who do not. This goes to the extent of affecting the new ministers in the Diocese. New ministers who come from those parishes which practice the service tend to support it, and those who do not come from the parish which support it, automatically deny the authenticity of the service.

3.7.6 Optionality of the Service

Another great challenge facing the service, is the whole issue of leaving the service to be optional. According to diocesan leadership, the diocese currently has Christians from all over the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and some dioceses do not practice the service. Due to this the service is left as optional and not recognized by the ELCT. This state of affairs challenges the service because it gives room for those who know or dislike it, not to take initiatives to learn about it and understand its role and importance.

3.7.7 Urbanization

The service crates challenges to people in urban areas. There are those who feel obliged to attend the service, but because of where they live, it becomes difficult for them to attend. People are living far from the church, which hinders their attendance at the overnight prayer.

People fear to go to the church and finally to the graveyard because of the insecurity of their homes, they are afraid of thieves¹⁰². The challenge of insecurity has been an issue largely for the urban dwellers only for some years. But insecurity has nowadays become common in the villages as well.

The distance from the church to the graves has been another challenge. In town, there have been enforced some urban-by-laws that require that cemeteries be put away from people's residences. Hence, the graves are automatically put far from residential areas since the churches are in the midst of people's residences. This has been common in the newly founded parishes where there is a long distance to the graves. In fact, relatives have to hire a car to take people to the graveyards during burials of their relatives. Hence, it makes it difficult for people to go for Easter morning service in such areas.

3.8 Effects to the Christian lives

As we have seen above the service has many positive effects among the Christians socially, psychologically and spiritually. However, on the other side, there are still the problems of dilemmas and misconceptions arise.

3.8.1 Dilemmas

In looking on the service we still found there are some doubts whether the service is Biblical or traditional. This seems to create problem for some members in trusting the validity and authority of the service as God's ordained practice. The service's validity depends on the questions; does it come from the Bible or is it a continuation of our traditional practices? No one gives the correct and satisfactory answers.

3.8.2 Misconceptions

From the misunderstanding of the validity, the members found themselves believing that the service is originated from traditional practices of worshipping ancestors. Despite the discouragement from the Church, some members are still practicing their traditional rituals secretly. And others do not practice it physically, but take the Easter morning service as part of their ritual. Moreover, the revival and fanatic Christians found themselves in blaming the

¹⁰²Interview with member III 13 July 2010

diocese to practice traditional worship within the church, which in a way or another cause the division of the church as the above point shows.

3.9 Comparison and Differences among the Theologians and lay People

In doing the reaserch the empirical responses appeared into three groups. The theologians which includes pastor and evangelists. The lay people who are normal members of the church and the revival group who belongs to the Lutheran church and those from the Pentecost churches. In both of these groups there are some similarities and differences in the ideas concerning the Easter mornng service conducted at graveyard. The similarities are like, both parties agreed that the service has a great influence and significance among the Christians lives. That, through this service, people are psychological healed, sorrow releaved and also united together to worship, pray and celebrate the gace of God saving them through the death of His son. Moreover they both get chance to evangelize and testify of the resurrection of Christ among the Christians and non-Christians.

In addition to similarities, there there are also some differences among the groups. As I have analysed above, the difficulties occur on the understanding of the service itself, if it is a Christian practice or a traditional practice. As for the revival group, they are criticizing why the service has to be done at the graveyards. In the same way, some of the theologians, in one way or another, are arguing in ways that the service is a continuation of the women in the Bible who went to Jesus' tomb early in the morning. And as the Jewish tradition of anointing the dead body in the third day after burial. On the other side whether they are praying for the dead or not, it is an adaptation of traditional practices.

Thus the differences and similarities appeared to be common in both parties. Hence. the problems which arise seem to be caused by unproper understanding of the Easter morning service within all groups.

3.10 Chapter Summary

The response of the interviewees above shows the two understandings of Easter morning. Both as a Christian practice introduced by the Missionaries, and as a practice influenced by the traditional practices. Both two ideas are given according to the understanding and the importance of the service to the congregants. However, the chapter shows us that the service has a big significance spiritually and psychologically. It makes people maintain their

relationship with their departed relatives, and at the same time faith that life continues even after death. Moreover, the empirical research shows that there is a need for the church to teach people about life, death and the relationship among the living and non-living in a Christian way. Together with that, the meaning of Easter and the resurrection of Christ, and its significance to Christian life, should be insisted. In the next chapter I will discuss the theological implication of the service, and lastly give the final conclusion.

4.0 THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE EASTER MORNING SERVICE

The previous chapter discussed about the field work research, where I presented the responses of the interviewees about the question of Easter morning service. This chapter is a theological discussion on the practices and the understanding of the members. The discussion below focuses on testing the theological authenticity of the Easter morning service at the graveyard. This is done by evaluating the understanding, the perceptions and the roles of the service to people. The evaluation is done by cross checking the empirical understanding of the service against Biblical, Lutheran and NED traditional teaching, and African tradition pertaining to the service.

4.1 Overview of the Easter morning service

In the beginning of the presentation we realized that before the coming of Christianity the Shambala had their traditional practices where they were giving sacrifices, doing rituals (*matambikos*) to their ancestors, with a kind of communication among the living and the dead. The relationship had a big influence among the living and the dead, due to the responsibility and obligations in both two parties to maintain peace and harmony. Among of the practices were the visiting of the graves, shrines and going to the ramps for rituals, offering foods, praying to the dead, and for the dead, as I have described in chapter two.

Together with that, it seems that death does not cut off the relationship between the parents and sons or the deceased and the living. But it increased the relationship to the extent that, the deceased becomes more respectful and honored by the living. The deceased status changed to be of the spirits, who believed to have power and able to communicate with God, nearer than the living one. Thus manifesting the unbroken family relationship between the deceased parents and their living descendants. Dr. Idowu cited in Harry Sawyerr, *God: Creator or Ancestor* confesses the relationship by observing the Yoruba saying “I am going to speak to the “spirit” of my fathers.”¹⁰³ This is to say the human relationship and recognition of each other’s rank exist even after the death of the one.

¹⁰³ Sawyerr 1970,83

In the analysis part of the study, I presented the liturgy of the service used in the Easter morning service at the graveyards. The main theme of the liturgy focused on the resurrection of Jesus and the victory over death. Together with that, there are some prayer sessions connected with singing and praising. Looking at the gathering and the time, you can see how people committed themselves and be ready to attend such a service early in the morning. The observation shows that there is something spiritual, which forces people to feel responsible of going to the graveyard for prayers and thanks giving for the death and resurrection of Christ the savior.

Moreover, the service includes remembrance of the departed fellows within the congregation by mentioning their names, which also implies the strong relationship between the living and the dead. The consideration of the dead, among the living, also can be seen in the part of prayer session like, “Hear *our prayer, O Lord, together with those who have finished their life journey, that we may stay together with you in our works*”.¹⁰⁴ That means together with those who have finished their journey, (the deceased), Christians are asking God to be with them. There are many things we can learn from the liturgy, which show the unity of the Church of God (the congregation of believers) who are living, and dead believers in Christ. In the confession the words “*I believe that my relatives (sisters and brothers), who died in Christ, went to the Lord and enjoy His happiness though their bodies were buried in sand.*”¹⁰⁵ The living ones, still remembers and wishes their relatives to be among of the members of the kingdom of Christ. Also, the honoring and loving each other is expressed by the work like cleaning and decorating of the graves in the Holy week.

However, throughout the study there are many perceptions concerning the Easter morning service at the graveyard. The major two differences are on the origination of the services, whereby some of the members and theologians argue the service to be substituted from traditional practices. While other members claim the service to be an adaptation of the Biblical and Jewish traditional practices of visiting of graves, three days after the burial. These two perceptions give the study two dichotomies between the official teachings and popular understanding.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from the prayer session of the Resurrection Liturgy.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted from the confession session of the Liturgy

4.2 The Easter Morning Service as Praying for the Dead

In this section I will try to evaluate how the Lutheran Church considers about the prayers for the dead and how the members of NED, think about the church praying for the dead.

4.2.1 Popular Understanding of the Service

Starting with the popular understanding, the empirical research revealed that the service has been understood as a prayer for the dead. In the way people explain about the Easter morning service and its significance to them, I got the idea that, in attending that service some of the church members feel to be communicating with their dead relatives. Their explanations reveal to believe that, the living dead can hear their prayer and help them in their needs. The question is: why did they have such kind of notion? Then I realized, it was happening when doing the traditional rituals. Some prayers were offered to the dead (ancestors) asking them to protect, forgive and rescue the family or clan from disasters. Prayers like: *“here is meat your so and so has come to bring you sheep and drink grant him health and so on”* are believed to work among the member in the society.

With such kind of understanding, the research finds that, people have taken the Easter morning service as their old traditions, and feel as if they are talking and praying to their departed during the service. Together with members, some of the theologians also regard the service as the replacement and adaptation of the Shambala traditions, which gives some implications of communicating with their ancestors. “The act of going to the graves was there since the time of “fathers and fathers and fathers,” it is our tradition. And have a great impact in our lives. I do not say that we believe or worship the ancestors but we respect them and they communicate with us.”¹⁰⁶ This shows a positive side of prayers to the dead.

On the other side, the research finds disagreement of the prayers to the dead. One of the groups against the prayers for the dead are the revivalist groups, who rejects the service and consider it as doing something against the word of God. “We only pray to God the almighty and the dead has nothing to do with the living.”¹⁰⁷ This understanding reveals the doubt on the validity of the service. The revival groups, as other groups in the church, still seems to be unaware of the meaning of Easter morning service at the graveyard. Hence, there is a sense of

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Pastor B 13July 2010

¹⁰⁷ In the Discussion with Revival group 11 July 2010

taking the scripture and translating it literally without having a deep understanding, background and its natural context. The same applies to some of the theologians (pastors and evangelists) in the diocese. They seem to be unsatisfied about the meaning of the service and doubt its validity with its spiritual understanding.

4.2.2 Official Understanding of the Service

On the other hand, the traditional church teaching ideas about the service, which was given by theologians interviewed, showed that the service is not a prayer for the dead. With reference from Pastor A who described that the service has no communication with the traditional practices, rather it is a Biblical practice originated from the Jewish traditions.¹⁰⁸ According to them, the Lutheran church does not pray for the dead. These conflicting perceptions raise the question of what is the Lutheran theology on the issue of praying for the dead. Or does the Lutheran Church allow or have prayers for the dead?

In the book *Beyond the Gates of death* written by Hans Schwarz, Martin Luther is reported to have allowed his followers to pray for their dead parents. However, for Luther this had to be done privately. Luther is quoted in one of his sermons saying: “If you want to pray for your father’s or mother’s soul, you may do so at home in your room and that once or twice and afterward let it be with that.”¹⁰⁹ That shows Luther was not against praying for the departed. But for Luther, praying for the dead does not force God to change their destiny. He insisted that “We rather entrust our loved ones to his eternal mercy.”¹¹⁰ The question is how far does the mercy and grace of God reach? Nobody knows; we simply cling to Luther’s idea of placing the departed in the hands of God. This is similar to different burial liturgies which express our dependency upon God’s grace and mercy. This liturgy shows that the Lutherans do not pray for the dead but place them into the hand of the God of Mercy. However, the critical analysis of the statement, and the understanding of people on burial in the Christian way, proves the opposite. It does not make a difference because even placing the beloved ones in the hands of God is equivalent to praying for them.

¹⁰⁸ Refer conversation with Pastor A July 11,2010

¹⁰⁹ Schwarz 1981,181,115

¹¹⁰ Schwarz 1981,115

The same idea appears in the *Book of Concord*, which shows that the Lutherans are not forbidden to pray for their dead. The *Book of Concord* comments that: “We know that the ancients spoke of prayer for the dead. We do not forbid this, but rather we reject the transfer of Lord’s Supper to the dead *ex opera operator*”.¹¹¹ However, though there is no place written direct to show that the Lutheran church does not forbid people to pray for their departed, it is not to say that the church allows it, but the church insists that people are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, if a person dies without believing in Jesus Christ, prayers of the living will not help him.

Schwarz, he examines this issue by presenting three major periods of the Bible; the Old Testament, New Testament and Intertestamental periods. Where in each periods different teaching about death, and how to relate with death, and the dead are taught. He says that some of the teachings about the dead and living are found in the deuterocanonical books. For instance teaching about Purgatory is from the (2 Macc 12:44).¹¹² For him, theologians give different arguments on praying for the dead and to the dead. He was against St. Augustine, “who declared that prayer, good works, giving of alms, and commemorating in the Eucharist Christ’s sacrifice, are ways in which we might be able to intercede for the dead.”¹¹³ That praying to the dead is an unchristian act (paganism) and that Christians should not do so. Schwarz goes further talking about praying for the dead by bringing two major ideas; the Roman Catholic understanding and the Reformers understanding of praying for the dead.

As for the Catholic understanding, he says: “because people die at different times and they believe that they will all be resurrected together at the end time, it was natural to assume that the deceased (souls) must remain somewhere”¹¹⁴, which is purgatory. The Catholic Catechism states : “ There exists a Purgatory , in which the souls of the unjust who die with the stains of sins are cleansed by expiation before they are admitted to heaven”¹¹⁵ Purgatory is divided into four parts; limbo for the infants, limbo for the fathers, one place for the saints and finally a place for the average Christians.

¹¹¹Robert and Wengert 1959,267

¹¹² Schwarz 1981,111-112

¹¹³ Schwarz 1981, 113

¹¹⁴ Schwarz 1981,113

¹¹⁵ Schwarz 1981,111-112

It then assumed that there was a twofold possibility to change one's lot from purgatory to heaven, either by staying in purgatory for the allotted time to make up for one's wrong doings or omissions in this life, or by having the time reduced through outside intercession.¹¹⁶

For the reformers, Schwartz declared that, Martin Luther was not against praying for the dead. However, in reading about Luther, I realize that he advised that when he discovered the misuses of indulgences and others were feared of their families thinking on their loved ones to be tormented in purgatory.¹¹⁷ For him, it was better for everyone to be able to talk to their parent direct and not through another human being. He meant to show that prayers do not have transitions; it is a self communication from man to God. Moreover, as Luther's commented it is better for Christians to entrust their loved ones to the mercy of God, since our deeds cannot change, rather than what the living did to fulfill their conscious responsibility to the deceased ones.

From the evaluations, we can ask ourselves why members of the church dis/agree with the Easter morning service. The answer can be in two different ways. Firstly, during the introduction of Christianity by Missionaries, many traditions were regarded as pagan and the converts were forced to ignore their cultures and practices to become Christians. Thus religion became a new thing among the believers. Idowu argues that "the missionaries introduced a completely new God who has nothing to do with the past of Africans. Thus, there was no proper foundation laid for the Gospel message in the hearts of the people, and no bridge built between the old and the new."¹¹⁸ The result is that people have to find other ways to satisfy their needs of worship, and still remain Christians, since they did not understand well what has been taught by the missionaries. Bediako insists that: "The church has on her hands communities of believers who, by and large live ambivalent spiritual lives."¹¹⁹

The second answer following is the Charismatic movements, where by the Pentecostal churches are trying to find the inferiority of the mainland churches to get members from there. However, the rejections do not come because of their strong faith only. It seems that there are

¹¹⁶ Schwarz 1981,113

¹¹⁷ Schwarz 1981,114-115

¹¹⁸ Bediako 1992,269

¹¹⁹ Bediako 1992,269

forces from the Charismatic churches, looking for a loophole to discourage Christian members in the mainland churches. They want them to see their churches as practicing pagan rituals, and thus encourage them to move to the charismatic churches. Though, those Charismatic churches themselves has taken contextualization into consideration by applying many of the rituals related to the traditional practices, to make people feel worshipping God according to their context. But they do not want to think that can also be done in the Lutheran church. Rather they try to criticize and make it to be seen as wrong practices within the church.

The understanding of people that the service is for praying for the dead, is contrary to the official diocesan teaching. However, the dichotomy shows that there is a gap between the official teaching and popular understanding of the service.

4.3 Relationship between the Living and the Dead

This part relates much to the above idea of praying for the dead, that the living human find many ways to maintain the relationship with the deceased, either by prayers or other rituals. The empirical research done, showed that there is a strong sense of relationship between the living and the dead, which is manifested in this service. This notion has its origin in African religion, specifically in Shambala, whereby the departed are considered to have power over the living people. The relationship is of two faces; first is the fear and reverence of the departed relatives, especially parents, and second is the unbroken love for the departed. The two ideas lead to the issue of commemoration of the dead. In the traditional rituals, we saw that the honoring of the departed was done by giving some gifts like food, drinks and showing respect by listening to their demand. That is to show how more powerful they are than them.

However, we can find commemoration of the departed common in the Lutheran church also. The first Sunday of November has been commonly understood as a day of all saints. This day has as its aim to remember the Christians who lived a faithful Christian life and died loyal to their master and savior, Jesus Christ. Jürgen Moltmann in his book *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* speaks about the "*The feast as Rituals.*" In his explanations he calls all Saints' Sunday as a Sunday of the dead in the Lutheran church. Further, he describes everything happening or practiced in the churches as a ritual. That is why he calls the Saints' Sunday in the Lutheran Church as the Sunday of the dead, since it focuses on remembrance of the

departed spiritual fathers. He continues by saying “Every human is familiar with rituals of the time, which give order to time's flux and in the yearly cycle awake particular memories.”¹²⁰

Nevertheless, the commemorations does not only appear in the Lutheran Church., Bradshaw shows that

At Jerusalem in the fourth century, for example, there was a special early service every Sunday morning at the site of Christ's tomb during which one of the Gospel accounts of resurrection was read. This practice subsequently spread to the other parts of the world. But other evidence suggests that there was more to the significance of this day than just the remembrance of Christ's resurrection, however important that may have been.¹²¹

Hence, we can see that, the Easter morning service at graveyard does not only appear from nowhere there are some bases where we can realize it to be founded.

Furthermore, the idea of commemoration of the dead to the Lutheran Christians of this area, is a result of influence from other denominations and other religious faiths. These include the African religion, Islam, the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Church. The most powerful is African religion. This state of affairs calls for the theology of contextualization. Hence, on the other side, I can say that may be it is because of the traditional Religious power, that the missionaries contextualized, adopted and adapted the practice of ancestral veneration to suit this service, which makes the Christians of the area under study feel at home in the Christian faith. Munga in a way supports the idea of theology contextualization in African life setting by quoting Kofi Appiah-Kubi, saying that we Africans need to serve our Lord in the terms that we understand, and not how the Euro-Americans or Semitic people do. “...our theological reflections must be reflected to the contextual African situations.”¹²² From this point of view we can convince ourselves that, the service under study has to be interpreted and understood as a way of contextualization of veneration of ancestors among the Christians in this area.

¹²⁰ Moltmann 1992,97

¹²¹ Bradshaw 2010,83

¹²² Munga 1998,38

4.4 Unity and Integrity in the Church

This is another part which should be taken into consideration when looking on the theological effects of the service, since it can create a spiritual crack within the church. The division of ministers in the diocese as far as the support of the service is concerned, has also to be scrutinized when doing theological evaluation of the service. The division has a lot of implications for the loyalty of those ministers who are against the service in the North Eastern Diocese church traditions. According to the ELCT historical background and current structure of the church, every diocese is autonomous. Also every diocese follows its own traditions. Hence, if a minister in any way challenges or disagrees with the diocesan traditions, she or he makes her or his loyalty and vows to the diocese questionable. Theologically speaking, every minister in this Diocese has to abide by the church regulations and traditions, which this service is among.

Therefore, it is not right for the same diocese to have diversity of traditions on the same issue. The church has to find ways of creating uniformity in her area. If not so, the unity and integrity of the church is weakened. On the other hand, if the Church allows ministers to select which service to be practiced and which not, it allows further chances for ministers to violate other services. The ministers may stop other practices when they are not interested in them. And if the church leaves some of its traditions simply because some are not interested in them, then the church will be destabilized because it is not possible to follow what some want and what some do not want. The church should stand by its values and traditions.

Moreover, the Unity and integrity does not only appear in the Church. As believers, we find in the roles of the services above that the service has been used as a way of the family gathering, having time to eat together, discuss about family issues and other problems. Then how does the church maintain this unification among her member? There is a need of a theological bond which will maintain the unity within the church and among the members.

4.5 Re-Enactment and Symbolism

In chapter three above, the interview shows that, the service has been considered as the symbol and enactment of the women visiting the grave of Jesus. Re-enactment and symbolism appears to have the same meaning of acting like. Theologically speaking, almost all the services in the church are either symbolical or a re-enactment of past services. The symbols have meaning to those who use them. The two ideas are well explained by the sacrament of the Holy Communion. Pauline theology look upon the Holy Communion as a re-enactment of

Jesus' death "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*" (1Cor. 11:26). The wine and bread are symbolically representing the blood and body of Jesus Christ. Hence, Christians re-enact the death of Jesus Christ every time they celebrate Holy Communion. On the other hand, Holy Communion itself represents the envisaged banquet which the church will celebrate with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God "*I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*" (Mt. 26:29).

Therefore, though the service under study was not ordered by Jesus, it is symbolical and re-enactment natures prove that symbolism is common in the Lutheran Church and is condoned by the Holy Scriptures. Hence, *Mviko wa Ufufuki* can theologically and symbolically be best clarified by the analogy of Holy Communion.

In addition to that, symbolically this Christian cult of giving and placing candles, flowers and new crosses can also replace the traditional acts of giving foods and sacrificing animals, which were done by the traditionalists before Christianity.

4.6 Remembrance, Eating and Visiting

In connection to re-enactment and symbolism, we can see the service theologically presenting the three events happening to the Israelites, remembrance, eating and visiting.

To remember is a normal part of the activity of the human mind. When, however, God is the One who is remembered in prayer and ritual, or, when it is believed by the faithful that God himself is actually remembering his own relation to his people, then "to remember" with its appropriate nouns becomes a special verb in the religious vocabulary of Israel and the church of God. We get the references of remembrance done in the Old Testament, where God seems to remember his Covenant to His people, and the act becomes for the remembrance of God's deeds throughout the life of human being. Yahweh is bound to his elect people, Israel, by his covenant and thus there is a unique relation between the two covenant partners. Not only does Israel remember Yahweh, but Yahweh actually remembers his relation to his people.¹²³

There many occasions where God remembers his covenant relation with Israel (Lev 26:45; Psalm 105:8; 106:45; 111:5). Also Israel remembers the words and deeds of God. The exodus

¹²³ Remember the God's promise to Israelis' before coming out of Egypt in Exodus

or deliverance of Israel by Yahweh from Egypt, is central to this remembering (Deuteronomy 16:3 Deuteronomy 16:12; Exodus 12:1-28). Through the Passover events we find God giving instructions to His people on how they should keep the Passover of the Lord, which they shall remember the day when they came out of the land.

Moreover, in the same event of the Passover we find the saving act of God. As in chapter two, where Cantalamessa explains about Easter and its meaning, from the early Church as the saving act of God, by passing over and protecting His people from the tenth plague of the death of the first born. At the same time theologically, we find Passover as passing from slavery to the freedom. Easter morning service gives the same implication, as it was to the Israelites God sent His son as a Passover lamb to save His people from the slavery of sin, and giving them the Promised Land (eternal life). Therefore every time when people celebrate the Easter morning service, they remember the great love of God and His promise of deliverance to them.

However, the most discussed, and possibly the most important use of the theme of memory, is related to the Last Supper. Both in the account of Luke (22:19) and of Paul (1 Cor 11:24) we read, "Do this in remembrance of me ". Luke connects the command with the word over the bread and Paul with both the word over the bread and the word over the cup. As we have seen above in the Holy week before the Easter morning service, the Eucharistic/ Holy Communion celebration brought people together eating and drinking the same body and blood of Christ in remembrance of Him. In the Holy Communion we are united in Christ, sharing together the forgiveness of sins through the body of Christ. However, the Easter festivals which are conducted after the services implies sharing the Passover lamb for each family, as it was in the Jewish time (Exodus 12).

4.7 Mysticism in the Service

Next to that, is the mystical understanding of the service by some people. Theologically, worship services are mystical in nature. However, the mysticism expressed in this service by some people is more of personal feelings than of official teachings of the service. Therefore the theological authenticities of the mystical actions explained by interviewees are questionable. Since this service is not universally practiced in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, finding reference to its mysticism becomes a difficult undertaking.

Nevertheless, the mysticism represents the gap between official teaching and the popular teaching of the service among people. The official diocesan teaching on the service is that the service is a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the act of visiting graves early in the morning is just a re-enactment of what the women did when they went to anoint the body of Jesus, as one of the diocese leader declare. Musk is of the opinion that the official teaching gives stipulations of the teaching of the given religion, which is contrary to the popular understanding that deals with the daily challenges of people.¹²⁴ In our case, people have the idea that the dead have power and influence over the living. This kind of understanding may psychologically induce mystical speculation. However, this does not deny the reality that some people might have seen visions of extraordinary things because we cannot prove those people wrong due to the lack of means of testing the validity of their claims.

Another gap between the official teaching and the popular understanding of the service, is clearly seen in the misconception of the service. As has been seen earlier, there are some people who refuse to attend the service in the Church graveyard because they bury their relatives at home. That makes them feel that they do not do justice to them if they do the service in the church leaving them at home. This state of affairs proves that for some people the service has to do with departed relatives. Though they do not clearly say it, but intrinsically they pray for their relatives.

4.8 A Need of Contextualization

According to the study, there is a need of contextualization. The church should find the way to interact between the culture and Christian worship. It is true that some of the cultures should not be taken as they are but the church should find a way that the worship should not be syncretism. Stauffer in the article *Worship: Ecumenical Core and Cultural Context* says:

There has been an effort always by the Christian church to contextualize its worship life, but also to avoid syncretism-that is, to avoid those cultural elements which would contradict or undermine the Gospel, or to confuse the people regarding Christian identity.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Musk 1989,198-200

¹²⁵Stauffer 1996,12

That means, it is simply not enough to take elements from a culture and insert them into Christian worship, without understanding what those elements mean in their own cultural context. There is a need to explore a given culture in depth before elements from it are imported into worship.

There is a need to understand, for example, the cultural meanings of an African tribal King's hut before it is used as a model for Christian church, or Buddhist meaning of a pagoda before using it as a Christian baptismal font. There is a need to understand the dynamic of the entertainment culture before using a theater or an opera as a model for worship space.¹²⁶

In practicing theology according to a certain culture, there is a need of thorough anthropological and theological exploration, to have a true meaning of the cultural symbol to avoid syncretism. Again Stauffer advises that:

In anthropological and theological exploration it is better to use adaptation rather than adoption, for it is often the case that cultural elements need critique, transformation, and reorientation for such use. They must be able to serve the Gospel, to be oriented toward Christ present in Word and Sacrament.¹²⁷

For him, Christian liturgies welcome the values, cultural patterns of peoples and races, so long as they can be vehicles of Christ's message.

Jürgen Moltmann in his book: *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, speaks about the "*The feast as rituals*." In his explanations, he described that "Sermons and Liturgies may change, but the rituals remains and speaks its own language. It draws near religious needs and acknowledged expectations into itself."¹²⁸ Thus there is a great importance of the traditional practices in the worship, since through that the real, true spiritual meaning is revealed. He asserted that "Every human society is familiar with rituals of time, which give order to time's flux and in the yearly cycle awake particular memories which are fundamental for community."¹²⁹ Hence, those Christian rituals, related to old traditions, need to be taken into

¹²⁶Stauffer 1996,13

¹²⁷Stauffer 1996,13

¹²⁸Moltmann 1992,262

¹²⁹Moltmann 1992 263

consideration to give meaning in worship. How does the church reach the goal of contextualization? There must be a method of understanding the context in order to know where to begin, and in which way, without distorting the meaning of the Gospel.

Together with contextualization and adaptations of the traditions to the Christian worship, there is a need of teachings within and out of the church for the groups like the revivalist. The study shows that, what is disturbing them is the ignorance, and lack of knowledge on how God can be worshiped and which the proper ways are. Since, sometimes there are the outside forces with the intention of getting members and not intend to make people to understand God. Thus, the proper teaching will build good foundations to Christians and help them not to be played like flags, but they would have their own spiritual stand.

4.9 Anthropological Model of Contextual Theology as away to Interpret the Easter

Morning Service

In order to contextualize a certain cultural practice, there is a need of having a method or a tool to use. Since the research deals with people's (anthropos) understanding, anthropological model of contextual theology can be a good model to interpret the theology of Easter Morning service. Bevans shows that, using an anthropological model in Christianity is to understand Christianity as a human person and her/his fulfillment. We have seen that, there were many practices related to Easter morning service even before Christianity. And in some ways they collide with Christian rites of Easter which results into confusion. Then, how does the church deals with this issue to avoid such misunderstanding. Bevans's second model suggests that, God's grace might already be at work in a culture before the missionary arrives, predisposing its members to hear and understand the Gospel message. But, hearing it within the framework of their own culture, they are likely to understand it differently than the missionary could anticipate, mapping it onto their culture in unexpected ways and gaining insights into both the Gospel and their culture that no outsider could have provided to them.

By using anthropological model of contextual theology, the Easter morning service at graveyard can be preserved by taking a charitable view of human cultures (Shambala). According to the anthropological model of contextualization, theology should not change the culture but interact within the culture to reveal the truth in worship. In his quotation Bevans says

...we are called to study the strange and sometimes offensive voices in various cultural milieus not only for the purpose of combating or converting them but also to learn from them and to deepen our insights and understanding of the gospel.¹³⁰

Thus, the church in NED should take care not to undermine a functioning culture whose members depend on it for their social well-being. Moreover, it does its best to preserve the culture out of respect for the culture and its members. When the people understand that the new religion does not require them to betray their old culture wholesale, they are likely to be more open to adopting it. And they are also more likely to participate wholeheartedly in contextualizing Christianity for their own culture.

The interpretation of the services should consider the two senses of the Anthropological model. First, the theology should center on the value and goodness of *anthropos*, the human person. In this sense the human experience, as it is limited and yet realized in culture, social change and geographical and historical circumstances, is considered to judge whether a particular contextual expression is genuine. Hence within that sense, God's hidden presence can be manifested in the ordinary structures of the situation, often in surprising ways.¹³¹

From the empirical research, we have seen that there are many diversities of understanding the Easter morning services among the Christians in the diocese. Thus makes it difficult to have one stand that could be the right source of the service, and how it implies in the Christian lives. However, following this sense of anthropology, it could be better for the church to have an investigation on the traditional practices of the Shambala, related to Easter morning services at graveyards, to find out the hidden message which forces Christians to relate the service to the traditional and Jewish practices.

Secondly interpreting the theology of this service anthropologically will help to, try to understand more clearly the web of human relationships and meanings that make up human culture and in which God is present, offering life, healing and wholeness.”¹³² This is to say within the Shambala traditions and culture there is the presence of God and how do people in

¹³⁰Bevans 2002,54

¹³¹Bevans 2002,56

¹³²Bevan 2002,55

that culture relate with God. Then how to recognize that, it is through cultural investigation and understanding. As Bevans says “an anthropological model practitioner doesn’t deny the reality of particular personal and communal experiences, social location or social and cultural change. But he is concerned with authentic cultural identity.”¹³³

The anthropological model of contextual theology would emphasize that, it is within human culture itself, in the “warp” and “woof” of human relationships, which are constitutive of cultural existence. Rather than approaching the Bible as a particular message or set of that, wrapped or clothed in foreign but ultimately similar, cultural trappings, the practitioner of the anthropological model understands that the Bible is the product of socially and culturally conditioned religious experiences, arising out of the very life of Israel and the early Christian community.

The practitioner of the anthropological model looks for God’s revelation and self-manifestation as it is hidden within the values, relational patterns, and concerns of a context.¹³⁴ Hence, the model implements that; the acceptance of Christianity might challenge a particular culture, and not radically change it. It sees a mutual benefit for both the particular culture and wider Christianity. It is culture that shapes the way Christianity is articulated.¹³⁵

Also using the anthropological model, there is a way which the theologians should act to fulfill the object. With such kind of model, the role of the trained theologians is not as of an expert to tell people the best way to express their faith. Rather, the role is like the “*reflector*” and “*thermatizer*”, the one who is able to provide the biblical and traditional background that will enable the people to develop their own theology.¹³⁶

Thus, in order to understand the Easter morning service practiced at graveyards in NED, one has to understand the culture, to grasp the meaning of the religious foundations of a place. Deep understanding of the myths, symbols and images among the Shambala, would simplify the interpretation of the service theologically. Parrinder asserts that “human Beings cannot describe the reality of the Numinous except by imaginatively using the symbols, images and

¹³³ Bevans 2002,56

¹³⁴ Bevan 2002,56

¹³⁵ Bevan 2002,57

¹³⁶ Bevan 2002,56-57

signs of their own existence and experience and stretching them to the limit.”¹³⁷ To understand peoples God-talk one has to be familiar with the symbols and entire system of language they employ for this purpose; thus the necessity of studying philosophy, psychology and so on. In addition to that, it is good also to understand the principle used to determine what is right and wrong and how their societies deal with such situation.

As for the question of communication and the relationship with ancestors Parrinder insists, that it is impossible to grasp the meaning of the religious foundations of Africans without going through the “thought area” occupied by the ancestors.¹³⁸ The ancestors are the protectors of the society as well as its most feared direct watch-dog of the moral behavior of the individual, the family, the clan and the entire society with which they are associated.¹³⁹

Thus, the anthropological model of contextual theology could be used in NED to find out the traditional background of the Shambala. By studying the culture, social practices and beliefs. Moreover to find out the hidden messages in the traditional practices which could be the source of revealing the truth by using the Gospel. Through that it will be easier also to criticize those traditions which seem to be against pagan rituals, and have ideas on how to create a theology which will help Christians in NED to have the right worship of God.

In between of the study we find that missionaries are also blamed to be the source of misunderstanding of Christianity and its rituals like Easter morning service, by introducing Christian practices without considering the culture and traditions of the particular places. But in other ways, I came to realize that the Missionaries did not intend to sweep away the culture, rather they were presenting the message in a language which the African or Shambala did not understand it. I would like to use the example of Paul G. Hiebert in his book *Cultural Anthropology*.

Hiebert describes that, in doing communication there is a sender and receiver. The Sender sends the message according to his or her language, symbols and cultures. Then the receiver receives also according to his or her own language, symbols and cultures. Besides, the

¹³⁷ Parrinder 1954, 30

¹³⁸ Parrinder 1954, 57

¹³⁹ Parrinder 1954, 48

receiver filters the message through the grids of his own personal, as well as cultural, experiences.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the message sent lost or distorts its meaning due to the variations in experiences, cultures and language. Hence, this causes the receiver to act on the message according to his understanding.¹⁴¹ What I want to say here is the Missionaries' message and understanding by Africans and Shambalas were impossible due to lack of mutual ways of communication. What was needed was the common background to be shared between the sender and the receiver. The anthropological model, as it is described below, gives some directions on how theology can be interpreted to reveal the Christian message within a particular culture and practice.

4.10 Other Ideas of the Easter Morning Service

In reading some few articles, one of the American Jessie Mills, Ph.D., also called himself as the author of several unpublished manuscripts and four trade-published religious books: *Results of Fulfilled Prophecy*, *Daniel Fulfilled Prophecy*, *Revelation Survey and Research*, and *First Corinthians Fulfilled*. In his article *Easter and Easter sunrise service*, he find that, the Easter morning service in Moravian church is called Easter sunrise service. Let me borrow a leaf from him to see his idea in connection to my study. Jessie says, the Easter sunrise is the service conducted early before dawn in the Easter morning day. In the investigation of ancient works regarding the celebration of “*oestre*” (English “Easter”), and the Easter Sunrise Service, he was convinced that God has never authorized this festival for Christians. In the beginning of this “*oestre*” celebration, or Easter as we today refer to it, only Heathens occupied themselves to this festival. However, it was not long before this changed and God's people soon applied themselves to the worship of the Sun Goddess on the 14th day of the moon.¹⁴²

What constitutes Easter Sunrise Service? It is Christians arising early before dawn, going at some high place, or grave yard, on the east side of some church and face the east to await sunrise in order to pay tribute to the resurrection of Christ, sing songs, and pray. Jessie clarifies that the practice seems very innocent, but he doubt its authority. It seems that the service amounts to sun worship, not Christ Worship. Since such practice is not God ordained,

¹⁴⁰ Hiebert 1983,113-125

¹⁴¹ Hiebert 1983,124

¹⁴² www.biblicalfulfillment.org/id9.html 22.10.2010

it stands to reason that man ordained the practice, therefore it has come down to us by way of tradition. He insisted that the Apostle Paul speaks to the Church at Colossae regarding such tradition. Col. 2:8-10.

Another question he asks is: Did ancient people before Christ practice such things? In Ezekiel 8:1-18, God shows Ezekiel what Israel was committing – sun worship – a sin which never should have been. However, God allows no sin to go unpunished. He added that in verse 16 Israel was doing the same thing that people today are doing, but they did not call it “Easter Sunrise Service.” It was sun worship according to heathen gods.¹⁴³ Jessie observed that the name Easter [oestre] came from the Old Teatsment Teutonic Mythology and it doesnt appear in the New Testament festivals, even to the writers of Apostolic Fathers, that means it was absent in the first Christians mind.¹⁴⁴ His explanations insists that, neither the Lord nor his apostles enjoined the keeping of Easter and Easter Sunrise festivals.

He further says that, the word “Teutonic”, meaning an ancient idol goddess, it is a term with ancient roots beginning in ancient Babylon and Assyria and among other pagan races. He proofs that in Ezekiel Chapter 8:16-18 spells out what God intends to bring upon Israel for such practice—seventy years of slavery in Babylon. We must notice at this time God dwelled in the Holy of Holies among his people, but in Ez. 9:3, 10:4 10:18, 11:23 they began to see God leaving the people because of their sins. He has turned his back upon them and their doom is at hand, as he calls upon King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon Ez. 21:18-32. The question which Jessie arised is how can we Christians afford to follow the festival celebrations which God has not authorized simply because the majority does? His suggestions are first, we must find in God’s Word authority for observing such festivals. Second, we need to study the past history of the celebrations which is common in our day, and look closely at the effect it can have, especially on children.¹⁴⁵ For him God and Christ instituted no such festival as we have just seen in Ezekiel. A better way for Christians is to study God’s Passover when Christ and the Apostles observed it their last time together, as was commanded by the Law of Moses. Luke 22:7-20 informs that Jesus ate his last Passover meal with the apostles, and after the Passover meal he took the bread and blessed it, and gave to the

¹⁴³ www.biblicalfulfillment.org/id9.html 22.10.2010

¹⁴⁴ www.biblicalfulfillment.org/id9.html 22.10.2010

¹⁴⁵ www.biblicalfulfillment.org/id9.html 22.10.2010

disciples with instructions to eat. Then he took the wine [fruit of the vine] blessed it and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me." The new converts of Acts chapter 2 took of the communion daily, and daily heard the apostles' teaching. There is nothing to be found in the Apostles' teaching that even slightly infers festival activities to be practiced on the first day of the week when Christians observed the Lord's Supper Acts 20:7. And of all things, if the festival activities were authorized, it would be authorized each time Christians observe the resurrection by taking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, and not just once a year.

Concerning the visiting of the tomb on the first day of the week, clarified that in the resurrection morning the women came at early dawn but Jesus had already risen. No mention of the women facing to the east and paying homage to the Sun as it rose in the eastern sky, no mention of bringing colored eggs, no rabbits were brought to sacrifice to the goddess of fertility. Of course, the women coming to the tomb of Jesus had nothing to do with the present day celebration of Easter or Easter Sunrise Service.¹⁴⁶ He insisted that as a festive celebration to observe the resurrection of Christ was unknown. Thus, the truth is that Easter and Easter sunrise services is pagan. We should not involve ourselves in what God has not ordained. In all the writings of the early Apostolic Fathers, "Easter Sunday" and Easter Sunrise Service were never mentioned as Christian observances, and since it was originated by heathens, then let heathens celebrate it.

Another writer, known as Armstrong in his article "*The Plain Truth about Easter*" says The Resurrection was not on Easter Sunday! Easter is not a Christian name, but the title of the idolatrous "queen of heaven."¹⁴⁷ Having the same ideas as Jessie, he says for 1600 years the Western world has been taught that Christ rose from the dead on Sunday morning. But that is merely one of the fables the Apostle Paul warned readers of the New Testament to expect. The resurrection did not occur on Sunday.¹⁴⁸

The name "Easter," which is merely the slightly changed English spelling of the name of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian goddess Ishtar, comes to us from old Teutonic mythology

¹⁴⁶ www.biblicalfulfillment.org/id9.html 22.10.2010

¹⁴⁷ www.sabbath.org/index.../Plain-Truth-About-Easter.htm 11.01.2011

¹⁴⁸ www.sabbath.org/index.../Plain-Truth-About-Easter.htm 11.01.2011

where it is known as Ostern. The Phoenician name of this goddess was Astarte, consort of Baal, the sun god, whose worship is denounced by the Almighty in the Bible as the most abominable of all pagan idolatry. He emphasize that the apostles observed Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the holy days which were also observed by Jesus, and the early apostles, and the converted Gentile Christians (Acts 2:1; 12:3; 18:21; 20:6, 16; I Cor. 5:7-8; 16:8). Passover is a memorial of the crucifixion of Christ (Luke 22:19). However he insisted, Passover observed by the early true Church, occurred not on Sunday or any fixed day of the week, but on a calendar day of the year. The day of the week varies from year to year.¹⁴⁹

Practising Easter Sunday morning service is an abominable thing, hence it is a service of worship which honors the sun god and his mythical idolatrous consort, goddess Ishtar. Christians deceived to believe this as a Christian practice while throughout the Bible this is revealed as the most abominable of all idolatry in the sight of the Eternal Creator.¹⁵⁰

Using these American writers ideas in my paper it does not mean that I am in their side or opposite to them, but I used to them to see if there is any element of the Easter Morning service in others churches and minds in the world and how do they perceive on it. However, the Easter service or Sun Rise service as they call, seem to be unchristian kind of practice to them. Their explanations shows that, the source of the service is from the pagan god's where people were worshipng s sun and other women goddes.

The impression I got from thse writers above is, they did not consider the sunrise services anthropologically. Because by using the anthropological model of contextual theology they could be able to grasp the source of the service and its significant in those old times, and the meaning of the service by this time of Christianity. Because if by that time those people were worshipping sun adn other pagan godds, I think but this time the Christians in those chrches are not thinking like that, they now feel to worship the true God. Then how to validity that the anthropological model of contexctual theology would be a tool to show and interpret the service in a spiritual way.

¹⁴⁹ www.sabbath.org/index.../Plain-Truth-About-Easter.htm 11.01.2011

¹⁵⁰ www.sabbath.org/index.../Plain-Truth-About-Easter.htm 11.01.2011

4.11 Perspectives of African Theologians'

In connection with Bevan other theologians have been trying to show the way how the Contextualization or adaptation of traditions can be used in doing mission within the church. Edward W. Fasholé-Luke in his article "Ancestor and Veneration and the communion of Saints," has contributed by starting to show the fault of missionaries in implementing Christianity.

Western missionaries rejected African ancestor cults as pagan superstition and forbidden the converts to participate in the rituals of the ancestral cults. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was and still is, at this point, that Christianity has met with stiffest resistance in Africa, and that several independent African churches are reasserting the ancestral beliefs and practices.¹⁵¹

The idea shows that it was a mistake for missionary to reject the African rituals, that's contributed to the non-understanding of the Christianity among the African. However, nowadays the independent churches try to incorporate the practices in doing mission as a way to attract people. Fasholé-Luke continues by saying,

Fortunately, anthropologists have continued to proclaim the fact that ancestral cults are expressions of the family and tribal solidarity and continuity, and are signs that African churches and even foreign missionaries are beginning to take the findings of the anthropologists seriously; they are also wrestling with the problem of incorporating these ideas and practices into Christian faith and practice. But we are convinced that this enterprise will be abortive, unless the Churches develop a theology of communion of Saints that will satisfy the passionate desire of Africans, Christian and non-Christian alike, to be linked with their dead ancestors.¹⁵²

As many other theologians, Fasholé-Luke see the good way to contextualize the idea of ancestor veneration is by introducing the method, which will be used to interpret the Gospel by considering the contextual background. For him the good way is to have a theology of Communion of Saints. He considers that the doctrine of Communion of Saints can be a satisfactory and adequate expression to avoid the dangers of syncretism and the peril of the double existence that is people becoming Christians and at the same time Africans by

¹⁵¹Fasholé-Luke 1974,209

¹⁵²Fasholé-Luke 19974,209-210

practicing traditional rituals. The idea relates with that of Mbiti, who explains that because of misunderstanding of Christianity and unsatisfactory worshiping practices, the African Christians used to go to church at the same time have as they have their own rituals.

Together with finding the way of contextualization it is good to ask ourselves a question: what influences Christians to relate to Eastern morning service, and their traditional practices of worshiping ancestors. Meyer Fortes, in Fasholé-Luke's article, has four significances of venerating ancestors which we can use to answer such a question like that. First it is a chance where people used to "venerate" their ancestors. Fortes reminds that

The veneration of ancestors is not because of fear, ignorance or superstition but because ancestry and more particularly parenthood, is critical and irreducible determinant of their whole social structure. Every important activity and significant social relationship among them is expressed and sanctioned by the ancestor cult. And the pivot of this cult is the key to the relationship...that is, the relationship between father and son.¹⁵³

Thus, for Christians to mix the traditions and the Christian cults does not mean they are scared of being attacked by the ancestors. It is the way to fulfill obligations and responsibility raised throughout their lives, which everyone in the society is demanded to fulfill.

Second, the chief filial obligation of sons is the performance of funeral rites for their parents; this duty is supported and upheld by religious sanctions. Thus:

to fail in it is to incur the everlasting wrath of the ancestors. For the mortuary and funeral rites are the first steps in the transformation of the parents into ancestor spirits and the worship of ancestors is in essence the ritualization of filial piety.¹⁵⁴

In the previous chapters we find that one of the African understandings of ancestors is to maintain the relationship, however, going against the ancestor's rules or devaluating them could cause disasters among the family or in the clan. It is the same idea, when members of the church understand the Easter morning service as a way of maintaining a good relationship

¹⁵³Fasholé-Luke 1974, 212

¹⁵⁴Fasholé-Luke,212

with their departed ones. And both ideas insist that the ancestors are powerful, and they remain to be the parents, son and daughters of the family. Thus, the living human should not ignore them.

The third significance of Fortes states, the ancestors are the guardians and custodians of the moral values, however, the ancestors;

Are the jealous guardians of the highest moral values, that is to say, the axiomatic values from which all ideal conduct is deemed to flow. The first is the rule that kinship is binding in an absolute sense. From this follows the second rule, that kinship implies amity in an absolute sense. The third rule is the fundamental one. It postulate that the essential relationship of parent and child, expressed in the parent's devoted care and the child , expressed in the parent's devoted care and the child affectionate dependence, may never be violated and is, in that sense sacred. It is indeed the source of the other rules... anyone who violates the rules is liable to the mystical penalty of death.¹⁵⁵

The fourth point is the right relationship between the ancestors and the living relatives. What the ancestors demand and enforced on pain of death, is conformity with the basic moral axioms in fulfilling the requirements of all social relationships. These are the counterpart, in the domain of kinship, of the obligations posited between persons and their ancestors in the religious domain.¹⁵⁶

Fortes points underline two significant truths about ancestral cults in Africa: First, these cults represent a cord of family ties, preserve the solidarity between the dead and the living, thus enhancing amity in the community. Second, the cults indicate that the ancestors are the custodian of the morality of the tribe or community; hence, ethical conduct is determined by reverence for the ancestors.

How can we incorporate these ideas with Christian theology? Or, how then can Christianity help people to maintain such kind of relationship in a way that, the relationship goes together with the Gospel teaching?

¹⁵⁵Fasholé-Luke 1974,213

¹⁵⁶Fasholé-Luke 1974,213

Fasholé-Luke suggests that, if Christian theologians in Africa give the doctrine of the Communion of Saints the centrality it deserves, it could provide a frame work for incorporating African ideas about ancestors into Christian theology. But it must also be emphasized that, though there are points of contact between African and Christian ideas on the subject of the ancestors, nevertheless, there are some aspects of African ancestral beliefs which are incompatible with the Christian faith and must be rejected.¹⁵⁷

Another theologian, who has contributed to the question of worship and spirituality according to the culture, is Taylor. Though he is not an African, his writing about Christianity and African Religion attracted me specifically in the article *what is Man?*

Taylor describes the personal totality of all beings, and a humanity which is the total of the living, the dead and the divinities, which embraces the background of the primal world-view. What I understand from him is, the human life does not start just after being born or being able to recognize and differentiate things, rather, life starts from the background of a person. The idea relate with Mbiti's ontological idea of *Zamani* and *Sasa*. That before being *Sasa* there was *Zamani*, thus the background of every human being started from fathers and fathers and give the current human being the value of being living.¹⁵⁸

He maintains that the solidarity experienced in the life of the extended family, the clan and the tribe. That's where an African learns to say "I am because I participate."¹⁵⁹ To him the individual is always an abstraction. Man is a family. The head of the family was the link between the seen and the unseen members; though his acts and words communion was renewed, discord was healed, and the advice and powerful aid of the elders was enlisted.¹⁶⁰

Taylor explains how rituals maintain the solidarity and unity among the family. And the central features of these rituals, is not a communion through eating and drinking together but a recognition and acceptance of the pattern of mutual obligation, through the division of food according to the rules of kinship.

¹⁵⁷Fasholé-Luke 1974,214

¹⁵⁸ Mbiti 80-82

¹⁵⁹ Taylor 163,93

¹⁶⁰Taylor 1963,103

In African perspective social life is more considerable since a person value is within the community. Nyamiti quoted by Mika Vahakangas portray it by differentiating between the Western systems concepts of community and African community. In western world individual are thought to form communities with other individuals. While in African notion, community moulds and creates the individual, without his community human being is nothing, he is equivalent to the dead or inanimate objects. In case of more communal lines of thinking, before there can be “we”, there must be “I” and “thou”. In African conceptions there must be “we” before “I” exist.¹⁶¹ In addition to that he enlightens that in African societies,

Personality is conceived in vitalistic terms in the sense that the true personality consists in fullness of life or vital maturity. Such vital quantity comprise fecundity both on procreative and non-proactive levels, practical wisdom (implying knowledge of the ancestral traditions), magico-religious sacred powers responsibilities and rights, fulfilled openness or relationality to the supreme Being and other Spirits, to human community (both of the living and the dead) and to the cosmos, together with liberty not only as emancipation from all kinds of oppression but also in the sense of consciousness or awareness of giving oneself to the other(s) and of being accepted by that (those) others(s)¹⁶²

Hence, the quotation above insists that in African thinking, to achieve personality is to be a true human involving with others, and it recognizes the rank and the importance of each other’s within and for the community. That is why; the Logos incarnate is Person per excellence for Africans.¹⁶³ Solidarity within the society is a tool of maintaining harmony and the happiest society.

The Easter morning service at the graveyards, is used as a solidarity tool among the living and the dead, however, it reminds people to be aware of where they are coming from in the sense that, their Sasa existence is because of those who existed in Zamani time. The question to ask is how the church helps people to maintain their communality without doing against the word of God? Many ways have been used to find the harmony between the popular understandings of beliefs, or worship, using the cultural traditional backgrounds to incarnate the messages.

¹⁶¹ Vahakangas 1997,196

¹⁶² Nyamiti 1992,5

¹⁶³ Nyamiti 1992,5

That's where we get the terms Inculturations, adaptations, contextualization's and many other. Nyamiti reminds the two ways which are commonly used by theologians. The first one is approaching the subject from the Biblical situation to the African cultural situation. And the second is that of taking African cultural background as their point of departure. Although, this study does not deal with Christological subject, I would like to take Mbiti's ways, as quoted by Nyamiti, to find out the Christological subjects which have particular interest for the Africans and confront the New Testament teaching about Christ with the African traditional world-view as an example.¹⁶⁴

With regard to the first, Mbiti discovers that the idea of *Christus Victor* (Miracle worker and risen) is particular relevant, for this Christ is the conqueror of those evil powers (spirits, magic, disease, death) feared by the African and is guarantor of Immortality. Other subjects which Mbiti sees as meaningful to the African are Christ's birth baptism, and death, since they correspond to the life crises ritually stressed by the African.¹⁶⁵

The quotation shows the comparison and difference between Jesus and how African believed about the diviners or human miracle workers. Christ is a risen miracle worker, who conquered all evil powers, which Africans feared. Moreover, the baptism and death are the biblical rituals replacing the African traditional rituals of transition from one group to another. Koffi Appiah- Kubi employs a similar method to Mbiti's and stresses Jesus as Mediator or Intermediary, Saviour, Redeemer, and Power, Liberator; Healer.¹⁶⁶

Thus, as Mbiti used an analogy of Jesus as the great victor and conqueror over all spirits and the great miracle worker over all magicians, the ELCT NED also can use the Easter mornig service at the graveyard to reveal Jesus as the great ancestor who is risen from the dead, ascending to heaven, sent His Holy spirits as the helper, protector and pray for His people. If the ancestors believed to help their people, protect them and helps them in their needs, Jesus is more than spirits because He saved them and He will live with them in His ertenal life.

Nyamiti further reflects on the relationship between Jesus and the saints, where he sees that the theology of the ancestorship of the son of God is incomplete without theological considerations of its link with us; for indeed, Christ, the Head, is incomplete without his Body, the Church of which we and the saints in the other world ,are members. This has led to

¹⁶⁴ Nyamiti 1992,4-5

¹⁶⁵ Nyamiti 1992,5

¹⁶⁶ Nyamiti 1992,5

an examination of the relevance of Christ ancestorship to the heavenly saints and those of Purgatory.

Reflection on relationship between Jesus and the saints show that the saints in Heaven and purgatory are, in different degrees, our ancestors in Christ, that is, they are ancestrally related to us by virtue of their participation in the ancestral status of the Redeemer. Among these saints are the African ancestors who died in friendship with God. In addition to being our consanguineous kin, they are our ancestors in Christ. This “Christian ancestorship” of the Saints is qualitatively different from that of the traditional African, and surpasses all racial or any other natural distinctions.¹⁶⁷

He continues to ask: What are the implications of this ancestral Christology?

There is a need for the insistence on the central importance of the life of the grace of the Spirit (traditionally known as sanctifying grace) in order to live our ancestral relationship with Christ and the saints, fully and authentically. Such authentic ancestral relationship is impossible without frequent prayer, devout reception of the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), together with special devotion to the saints. Any racial or other discrimination is diametrically opposed to ancestral kinship in Christ. Ancestral kingship with Jesus is authentically lived by sincerely and humanity shown especially by his ministry of evangelization (through words and deeds), and other forms of service in the church, together with active engagement in the struggle for peace, justice, and integral liberation, in view of the Kingdom of God.¹⁶⁸

What I understand from Nyamiti is, a good ancestor is the one who had a good relationship with Christ in deeds and words. Being a saint, depends on how a person was spiritually devoted. Thus, for Christians it is better to fight to have a good relationship with Christ. Spiritual life, prayers and the grace of God, are the way for Christians to join in the congregation of believers, that is, the living and the dead in Christ. In connection with the suggestion from the African theologians, let us try to find out if there is any element of this service in the Bible.

¹⁶⁷ Nyamiti 1992,12

¹⁶⁸ Nyamiti 1992,12

4.12 Biblical Interpretation of Easter Morning service

To understand the concept of Easter morning service at graveyards biblically, we should first and foremost trace the idea of Easter and the resurrection of Christ. In chapter two, I have explained the beginning of Easter as Passover during the Old Testament period. Where the Israelites were passing from Egypt to the promised land and the fulfillment of God's on covenant to them. Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16 show us how God instructed the Israelites on how to perform the Passover. However God insisted the rite of Passover to be inherited from generation to generation: *"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast."* (Ex 12:14) The theology of Passover is translated as the act of God saving His people from the Egyptian slavery life, and protecting them over the first born death punishment.

From the time of Isarelites, the events continues as an important event to the Jewish life. That is where Jesus also as a Jew seem to practice the Passover as a fulfillment of the tradition. Throughout the time of Jews, the Passover was done by sacrificing the lamb as an offering to God for the cleansing of the sins. Through the death of Christ, Jesus replaced the animal lambs and became the lamb of God who was sacrificed for the sins of all. From that time, the Passover got another face that Jesus himself is the Passover given by God. His blood on the cross replaced the blood of the Jewish lambs and it is given once for all. As I have described in chapter two above, after the death of Christ, the new idea of pascha was found. That is where we get the origin of Christian Pascha (Easter), where we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

In connection to the Easter morning service, the women act of going to Jesus's tomb for the sake of anointing the body Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1-2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1, is taken as the re-enactment among the Shambala. However, through the study we find the different aims between the women in the Bible and the Shambala Christians. For the women in the Bible, went to annoint the body of Jesus in their Jewish tradition, to annoint the dead body on the third day after burial. For the Shambala Christians, the object of Easter morning service is to celebrate the resurrection of Christ as the victor over death, and remembering the great work of God, to save his people through the death of Christ. Together with that, as we have seen, it is a way used to evangelize to the non –Christians that Christ is alive, he is no longer dead.

In the analysis above, I find that there is a notion that people are communicating with their ancestors in prayers, dreams and so forth. The question I asked myself is: Does the Bible speak about the communication between the living and the dead? In Isaiah 8:19 "And when they say to You, Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter, should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?" According to story, God seems to teach his people to depend in Him only. Since he is a living God, who loves and listen to them there is no need of asking the dead anything. Schwarz employs the same by saying

Since God is a God of living, the living should think about asking the dead becomes evident from the episode of faltering king Saul consulting the dead priest Samuel through the medium at Endor (1Sam 28). The answer he received he could obtain from the living as well. He was confirmed in his suspicion that God turned away from him and that his kingdom would be soon handed to someone else. Many centuries later Jesus still affirmed that it was useless to communicate with the dead. In his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he rejected the idea that people would avoid disaster if they received a direct communication from the hereafter.¹⁶⁹

Together with verse from Isaiah, king Saul also appears to ask Samuel, who was dead, to give him the meaning of what was happening in his kingdom. However, the answer given by Samuel to Saul, was just a confirmation of what Saul suspected. That is to say, there was no help from the dead Samuel. In Luke 16:31, Abraham brushed aside the plea of the rich man by saying: "if they do not hear Moses and the prophet (ie. The scripture), neither will they be convinced if someone should arise from the dead"¹⁷⁰ According to these verses, the dead can do nothing to help the living. The believers are encouraged to depend on, ask and listen to the living God only, who knows and answers the needs of His people.

Although the dead can do nothing to help the living, still the remembrance does not cease, even in the Bible we find them to be remembered as our fathers due to their great deeds and faith. *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant-son Jesus* (Acts 3:13). Luke addresses God as the God of our fathers, and that, through them we see the great deeds which God has done. Together with that we who believe in God, are still called the Son of Abraham

¹⁶⁹ Schwarz 1981,119

¹⁷⁰ Schwarz 1981,119

Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith. Gal3:6-9.

Since we believe and have faith in God we are called by our fathers name the sons of Abraham (those who are righteous) ...And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." Gal 3:29.

4.13 Chapter Summary

Consequently, the interpretation of Easter morning service, appears to have a lot of theological significance within the Shambala Christian society. As it has been seen since the beginning of the study, there are two big dichotomies in the understanding which needs to be considered as an important issue and no one to be undermined. The aspects of praying for the dead, does not appear only to the traditionalist, but also in some way to the official understanding where the liturgy and other literatures support to have the idea in the church. The relationship between the living and the dead, is not as like a sin, it is only how do people relate with their dead, that's where we can see the wrong side of the one side. Nevertheless, the significance of the Easter morning at graveyard, need to be carefully theologized to meet the need of the Christians.

Hence , people do unity through the service, the church should take care on how to maintain this unity, so as to meet the need of people and at the same time to have a proper Christian worship. As the way of re-enactment, remembrance and symbolism, the contextualization and adaptation of the service should be taken into considerations. The good models of theology should be used to find out the hidden message of God in the service, and reveal it through the Scripture. The Bible itself enlighten us that, there is good thing we can learn from our fore fathers ,thus, we can not ignore them, but we can use them as our model to see the great love of God and receive His grace. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the church to see how the unity of the church is maintained, how do Christians understand their true God through their traditions, and how the Christians sees God through their culture and practices and get spiritual satisfaction in worshipping God. Together with that, the church should be careful in

contextualizing the kinds of traditions to avoid worshiping of the dead , but to have a proper way of worshiping God. Yet Christians should remember that, God is not a god of the dead He is a God of the living.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It was the aim of this research to find out the contextual and theological significance of Easter morning services to the individual Christians and the Church. Furthermore, the study intends to find out the meaning and the role of Easter morning service at graveyards and its theological implications to a Christian's life. Together with that, to perform a theological evaluation of Easter morning service (*Mviko wa Ufufuki*). This was done by an analysis of people's understanding of the service along the framework of Biblical, Lutheran and NED theological traditions. The understanding of the service included the perceptions of people about the service and their views on the role played by the service.

According to the research, the Easter morning service at graveyards is significantly perceived as a re-enactment of what the three women did who went to the grave early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus. There was also a symbolical understanding of the service, whereby the visiting of the graveyard signifies witnessing and the proclamation of Jesus' victory over death. Furthermore, some theologians in the diocese take the service to be a substitution, contextualization, and adaptation of Shambala ancestral veneration. This is because of the ideas appeared between the traditionalists, and some theologians who perceived the service as a replacement of the traditional practices of relations between the dead and the living. As a result, people perceive the graveyard as a highly esteemed place. There was also a mystical perception of the service, whereby people have reported to have seen some extraordinary things like angels. Sometimes people interpret some events like the descending of clouds as a divine visitation of God through the clouds.

In connection to that, the service has also been understood as a commemoration of the dead, where there is the understanding of the service as a prayer for the dead. This notion has been both from some of the traditional Christians and the revivalist Christians. However, on the side of the revivalist Christians, this is taken as an abomination and unbiblical act because the service has to do with praying for the dead. For me, those are just misunderstanding because the liturgy does not suggest that, it is a prayer for the dead.

Besides, the study also found that, the service is of great significance in a way that, it plays several roles in the lives of people. The service is a psychological healing agent. It does this by acting as a reconciliatory medium and a way of compensation of what could not be offered

to one of the relatives during his or her lifetime. It also helps some people who stay for a long time with their sorrow to release their sorrow. The service also acts as a unifying factor for relatives who live far apart from each other, because they get a good time to come together during the service. While meeting for the service, the gathered relatives also resolve issues in the family.

Spiritually, the service has been taken as a way of self giving due to its timing. It takes a determined heart to wake up early in the morning for the service. It also plays the role of a reminder of one's vows and covenant with God through the overnight prayers. Moreover, it plays a very essential role in evangelism. The trumpet blowing and ringing of the church bells very early in the morning are irregular to Christians. These attract non-Christian's attention, which makes Christians explain the situation, which helps to propagate Christian faith to them. On the other hand, some non-Muslims join their Christian relatives to visit the graves as an act, which provides a chance for them to hear the saving Gospel preached in the graveyard.

In addition to that, through the research it has also been seen that, the service faces several challenges including the misconception of the service, accusations from revivalist Christians and Pentecostal Christians at large. All these are caused by ignorance about the service to both some Lutheran Christians and those from other denominations. On the other hand modernism, including urbanization, has been a great challenge to the service due to the change of life style and residential setup in towns, which makes difficulties for Christians to attend the service due to distance between their residential area, church and the graveyards. Lack of common graveyards, in some parishes, has also been noted as another major challenge for the service. This raises more challenges to the future viability and continuity of the service because the country is moving toward urbanization at a rapid pace.

Hence, as we have seen the Diocesan ministers have not to hold the same view of the service. Some support the service and others do not. Meanwhile the diocesan leadership considers the service as optional, depending upon the context of its parishes. It is because of this that there is no uniformity in the diocese concerning the practice of the service. This challenges the unity of traditions in the diocese and loyalty of ministers to the diocese.

From my side I can say that, the Easter morning service at graveyards plays very important roles in the lives of people spiritually, socially and psychologically. It is significant and

important tool for Christians to proclaim the victory of Jesus over death, specifically to the area like Tanga which is surrounded by conservative Muslims, who are against the resurrection of Christ. Together with that, it unifies Christians and makes them confident and not scared of death, rather, they are sure of life after death since Christ has risen. Hence, as the interviewees, I saw the service to have an important role in psychological healing, sorrow relieves and maintaining the respect of each group within the community.

Consequently, the service needs to be upheld firmly, because, theologically speaking, the church has not been clear on the issue of praying for the dead. On one hand, the church seems to forbid the act but on the other, some activities show that the church condones praying for the dead because even Martin Luther did not forbid it, neither does the *Book of Concord*. This may in some ways be consonant with the idea that the service is special for praying for the departed.

Also theological evaluation revealed that commemoration of the dead is a common thing in the Lutheran church. According to the church calendar, all Saints Sunday is taken by the Lutherans as a day for the commemoration of the departed Christians. This practice gains motion in the lives of people from the fact that reverence of the dead is a reality in the African people's worldviews.

Furthermore, the study shows that the Diocesan leadership emphasizes that service under study should be understood symbolically. As symbolical understanding of the service is simultaneous with a re-enactment of what the three women in the Gospel did when they went to anoint Jesus. It also goes with the witnessing of Jesus' resurrection and its proclamation to the world. This necessitates Christians going to the graveyards practically in order to make it real.

By using the idea of anthropological model of contextual theology, I can say that, there is a wide gap between official Lutheran and NED traditional teaching about the service on one hand and popular understanding of people about the service. This gap causes a lot of confusion, misunderstanding and finally dilemmas to the Christians about the aim of the service and the authenticity of the services. The gap needs to be bridged by theological teaching about the service to the people. Theological evaluation done showed that the service is doctrinally Lutheran, consonant with the Biblical teachings and genuine in the NED

traditions. The research showed that the official diocesan aim of the service is met. But people's understandings of the services proved that there are differences between official teachings of the diocese and their empirical understanding of the service. This state of affairs calls the Church to do more contextualization of the service by incorporating some African traditional concepts into the service.

As I notified in the beginning in general, my evaluation is that, the service should continue, since it has a great significant to Christians and seem to be among of the evangelical tools. But, I would like to put forward some few recommendations. The diocese has to educate people about the service. The education will help to eradicate the ignorance in both ordinary Christians and some church ministers, which seems to be the major problem of the service. Therefore, if the diocese addresses this problem thoroughly well, through questions, disputations, regarding misconceptions about the service, problems will be eradicated within and out of the diocese. It will also help to convince Christians, who are originally from other Dioceses than NED to accept the service as authentic to the Lutheran church. Since currently the service is optional, the diocese should create a policy that will lead to uniformity in all its parishes regarding the services, both in practicing it and the liturgy used. This will automatically oblige church ministers not to follow their whims but rather the Diocesan traditions.

Since the only liturgy for the service is in Shambala language and very local one, the diocese should create and publish a Swahili liturgy for the services so that every minister in the diocese will be able to lead the service. This will also help to create uniformity of the service throughout the diocese, different from the current situation, where ministers create their own liturgies for the service in the places where people do not understand Shambala.

Lastly, as I have seen that the service plays important roles in the lives of people, the church should find ways to contextualize and adapt some of the African traditions into the service. The anthropological model of contextual theology as it is studied in the paper could be a good model to use in doing theological contextualization by learning the real context of Shambala and their understandings. The church come out with a clear spiritual meaning of the service, which in some ways favours the good traditional practices, and in other ways shows God's meaning of the worship. This will help to make the service real in the African context, even

though, it is important to be careful not to agree on all local traditions and be critical to the practices which seem to be unchristian.

Finally, this research has raised a question: Since the service plays vital roles in the lives of people, should the service be emulated by other dioceses in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania? The answer to this question needs more research. This research paper is just the beginning.

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B: List Of The Interviewees

NAME	DATE OF INTERVIEW DATE	GENDER	OCCUPATION STATUS
Pastor A	12.07.2010	Male	Parish Pastor
Pastor B	13.07.2010	Male	Parish Pastor
Evangelist A	11.07.2010	Male	Evangelist
Evangelist B	12.07.2010	Male	Evangelist
Evangelist C	30.07.2010	Male	Evangelist
Member I	12.07.2010	Female	Peasant
Member II	12.07.2010	Male	Peasant
Member III	13.07.2010	Female	Teacher
Member IV	14.07.2010	Female	Retired Nurse
Member V	14.07.2010	Female	Shoopkeeper
Member VI	15.07.2010	Male	Teacher
Group Discussion	11.07.2010	Male/females	Lutheran members
Member VIII	23.07.2010	Male	APentecostal Member
Member IX	23.07.2010	Female	A Pentecostal Member

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