

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

*An Assessment of Perceptions and Attitudes of Christians
Towards Cremations and how These Attitudes and
Perceptions Affect Missiological Education*

BY
GRACE ITEGI

*A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Christian Education*

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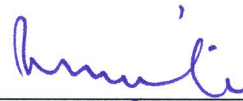
AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF CHRISTIANS
TOWARDS CREMATION AND HOW THESE ATTITUDES AND
PERCEPTIONS AFFECT MISSIOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Master of Arts in Christian Education

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIANS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES
TOWARDS CREMATION AND HOW THESE PERCEPTIONS AND
ATTITUDES CHALLENGE MISSIOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed)



Grace Itegi

July, 2007

ABSTRACT

The research study focused on cremation of the dead and the attitudes and perception of Christians towards it. Cremation is quite a rare practice among Kenyan Christians who view it cautiously and with apprehension.

The study sought to establish the perceptions and attitudes of Christians with regard to cremation as well as to determine their knowledge concerning the subject. It was also the researcher's intention to find out how the doctrine of resurrection relates to cremation and some of the theological views that arise from the topic. The role of Christian education in the matters of cremation was also pointed out. The researcher also focused on how these perceptions and attitudes affect missiological education. It also aimed at enlightening Christians on cremation matters so that they in return are helped in making informed decisions. In addition, the study looked at the cultural beliefs and values that are held by Christians and how these values affect their view about cremation.

The study population included congregation members of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Nairobi Baptist church, Pentecostal churches and other mainline churches in Nairobi as well as pastors from the same churches.

The researcher used two questionnaires to collect quantitative data from the sampled churches. One tool targeted congregation members while the other collected data from pastors. A total of 359 members and 54 pastors participated. An interview guide for the individual in-depth interviews was formulated and administered. The researcher held two focus group discussions one with church workers and the other with a few friends. The researcher also interviewed two people who had cremated their loved ones.

The researcher hypothesised that there is a relationship between respondents' attitudes toward cremation and their willingness to cremate a loved one. The study also endeavoured to contribute towards highlighting and creating awareness within the Christian fraternity in Kenya so as make informed decisions in matters pertaining to cremation practice.

The results indicated that respondents strongly felt that cremation does not hinder the doctrine of resurrection. It was found that knowledge about cremation was lacking in the churches. The members are in need of church teachings about cremation. The results point out how Christians' perceptions and attitudes affect missiological education especially due to the discontentment when some Christians opt for cremation while others are opposed to it.

To

My husband who tirelessly walked with me through difficult times of research, to all pastors, evangelists, scholars and Christians who are interested in obtaining more insights in the subject of cremation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Lord has mandated the church to lead, teach and guide His people in such a way that they will be able to make a difference in shaping their walk with God. It is upon this institution, therefore to ensure that issues that are likely to disturb Christians in their pilgrimage are explained so that they have a clear conscience in their search for a deeper spirituality. One such major issue that is troubling the Kenyan Christian fraternity and which demands to be addressed relates to whether it is right or wrong to cremate the body of a Christian. Undoubtedly, cremation is a foreign and a 'controversial' issue. As it unfolds, Kenyan Christians are being challenged to possess an indepth understanding of the subject so that they can make knowledgeable and informed choices with regard to the disposal of a loved one's body.

The practice of cremation has penetrated Kenya and the church will demonstrate its leadership by advancing the knowledge and promoting the members' ability to choose wisely when issues about cremation arise. Knowledge about cremation will be necessary because when the church fails to meet the demand for clarification of contentious issues, and when quality instruction and teaching about such issues is wanting, then the soul is malnourished and spirituality is affected.

This study calls upon the church to deal with the complexities of its mission with regard to cremation before things go out of hand. The study is an attempt to close the gap that exists as far as cremation is concerned.

Background Information

Until recently, the cremation of Kenyan Christians was not an option to be considered. The practice of cremation however is increasing and the need to educate Kenyan Christians about whether or not to cremate their loved ones is demanding urgent action. The recent cremation of the late Anglican Archbishop and his late wife caused tension in the church. Many church members were opposed to the cremation and the impact of the opposition should not be underrated. The tension showed that there is little congruence between the church's teachings about cremation and the perceptions and attitudes of Christians towards the subject.

Over the years, the practice of Kenyan Christians has been to bury their dead. Therefore the church, through Christian Education Ministry, needs to address the theological concerns wholistically so that pastors, evangelists and church leaders are able to teach, enlighten and make people understand how to address the issue. It is important for the church to prepare a scripturally-grounded response with regard to cremation. The researcher has observed that the church has, to some extent failed to pro-actively address issues pertaining to cremation. It's teachings have not included any written material on the practice of cremation, yet it is a matter that concerns and affects the Christian in the same way that the work of the Holy Spirit and the Christian outreach do.

Problem Statement

Over the years the Kenyan church has not been vocal on the issue of cremation. Yet even if shelving the problem may seem comfortable and necessary to the church, to some extent, it is not at all sufficient. The doctrine of resurrection is an area to be shed light on. In particular it is imperative to clarify whether cremation undermines the doctrine of resurrection and/or if a Christian would be violating God's ordinances for opting this method of body disposal. The theological views about scriptural verses e.g. (Gen 3:19,

NIV) ‘...dust you are and to dust you will return’ and how they relate to cremation should be addressed. The recent cremation of the Anglican Archbishop aroused the curiosity of many Christians and the church has not attempted to satisfy it. Cultural beliefs and practices in Kenya run deep and it is necessary to examine the values Kenyan Christians attach to body disposal and how that influences their view regarding cremation. These concerns disturb many Christians and their fears, reservations or apprehensions must be addressed in order to ensure that missiological education is not affected.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to generate information that will contribute towards the creation of awareness and enhance better understanding of Kenyans with regard to cremation so as to enable Christians and other people to make informed decisions in related matters.

Significance of the Study

To provide information that gives guidance regarding cremation in a form that is helpful to the church and its adherents. There has not been any Kenyan scholar known to the researcher who has researched into or written about cremation. This proposed study therefore will fill this important gap and provide a useful insight into the subject. There is need for Christians to understand cremation from a theological and biblical point of view. Such an understanding can relieve them of anxiety and misconceptions which are all detrimental to a life of faith. This research study is therefore an attempt to provide such information.

Objectives

Ultimate Objective

The ultimate objective is to provide pastors, evangelists and church leaders with information that would contribute towards helping Christians make informed decisions with regard to the cremation of their loved ones.

Immediate Objectives

By the end of the research study, to have:

1. Established the attitudes and perceptions of Christians towards cremation;
2. Determined the level of knowledge with regard to cremation among Christians;
3. Established the importance of church teachings about cremation;
4. Found out how Christians' perceptions and attitudes affect missiological education.

Research Questions

- a) What are the perceptions and attitudes of Kenyan Christians towards cremation?
- b) How do these perceptions and attitudes affect missiological education?

Hypothesis

1. *Null*

There is no relationship between church teaching about cremation and its Pastors' understanding about the subject.

Alternate

There is a relationship between church teachings about cremation and its Pastors' understanding about the subject

2. *Null*

There is no relationship between respondent' attitudes towards cremation and their willingness to cremate loved ones.

Alternate

There is a relationship between respondent' attitudes towards cremation and their willingness to cremate loved ones.

Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework is constructed to summarize visually how the different variables will be tested. It clarifies the relationship between key study variables and to provide guidance in the description and analysis of these variables. It is structured into four groups of variables. The **background variables** help the researcher to draw a socio- demographic profile of the respondents in relation to their gender, age, marital status, educational level and district of birth. **Independent variables** are hypothesized to have a significant effect on the two dependent variables – cremation and missiological education. **Dependent variables** 'indicate the total influence arising from the effects of the independent variables' (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999, 58) i.e. church related issues, personal related issues and cultural related issues. **Conditional variables** clarify the eligibility of the study population. For example, one must be a Christian Kenyan to participate in the interviews.

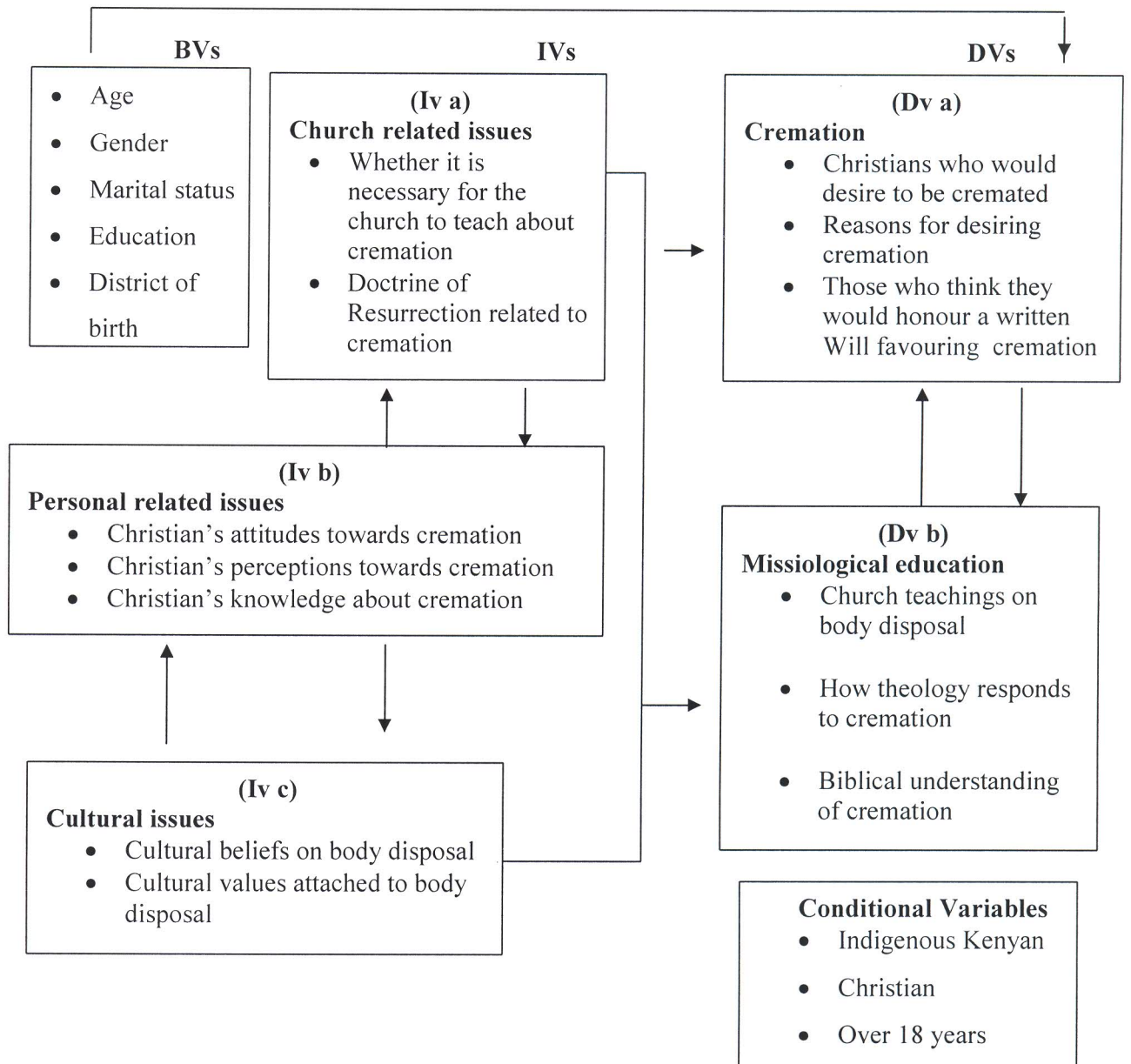


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework

Limitations

The researcher would have liked to draw a larger sample size from churches for comparative purposes. This was not possible due to lack of resources and time. It was not possible for the researcher to travel outside Nairobi to hold focus group discussions.

Delimitations

Due to financial constraints, the study was carried out in two Nairobi Anglican churches and one Baptist church. The researcher also collected data from a pastors' conference.

Definition of Terms

Cremation: The term cremation comes from the Latin word *cremo* which means 'to burn' (Ontario Consultants: n.d., 3). It is also defined by the Wikipenda (2006, 1), as 'the process by which a body is exposed to extreme heat, usually 1800-2000 degrees Fahrenheit or more' It is 'the practice of reducing a corpse to its essential elements by burning' and it is also 'the practice of interring the body through burning at a crematorium and the ashes disposed by the crematorium officials or the relatives of the dead or according to the wishes of the deceased (Wikipenda, 2006, 1). It is a conscious, deliberate act of burning a corpse into ashes.

PCEA: Presbyterian Church of East Africa

ACK: Anglican Church of Kenya

NPC: Nairobi Pentecostal Church

RCC: Roman Catholic Church

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief History of Cremation

It has been observed (Cremation Association of North America, 2000-2005) that scholars today have generally agreed that cremation probably began during the early stone-age – around 3000 BC. However, it has been stated that ‘the practice of cremation on open fires was introduced to the Western world by the Greeks as early as 1000 BC. The Greeks seem to have adopted cremation from some northern people as an imperative of war, to ensure that soldiers slain in alien territory are accorded a funeral attended by family and fellow citizens. The slain soldiers’ corpses were incinerated on the battlefield, then the ashes were gathered up and sent to the homeland for ceremonial entombment’ (Delvin 2003, 2). Later the Romans ‘followed Greeks in cremation of their military heroes. It gained momentum in Rome and became a status symbol that constructing and renting space in columbariums (the place where the urns are kept) became a profitable business’ (Delvin, 2003, 3).

Process of Cremation

According to H.D. Tribe Ltd (2005, 2) the casket containing the body is placed in the cremation chamber, ‘where the temperature is raised to approximately 1400 degrees to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. After approximately 2 to 2½ hours, all organized matter is consumed by heat or evaporation and the residue left is bone fragments known as cremated remains.’

A visit to the Langata crematorium in Nairobi by the researcher recently revealed that the body is placed in a coffin and slid into a ‘retort’ which is a brick lined stove that looks like a big bread oven. This ‘oven’ is ‘made to measure’ and can only accommodate one body at a time. The three-hour process begins by lighting the fire through an opening and then releasing diesel to flow through pipes thus intensifying the fire. The researcher learnt that each body consumes 40 litres of petrol to burn.

Ashes Collection

The Wikipenda: free encyclopedia (n.d. 3) explains that ‘after the incineration is completed, the bone fragments are swept out of the oven and the operator uses a pulverizer called a cremulator to process them into a consistent power.’ According to the Langata crematorium operator, the bones are ground using a special machine. The bone ashes are taken to the City Mortuary from where the family members collect the ashes which is put in an urn.

Costs per Cremation

The Langata crematorium operator explained to the researcher that it costs Kshs.16,000.00 to cremate the body of a Kenyan. Non Kenyans pay more but the researcher did not get the figures. The daughter of the late ACK Archbishop who was cremated a few years ago explained that these charges include transport charges from the mortuary (within Nairobi). Burial sites on the other hand range from Kshs.3,400.00 (for temporary sites where the grave is cleared after a while) and between Kshs.14,400.00 – 17,600.00 for permanent sites.

Examples of Body Disposal in the Bible

According to Phillips (2000, 2) ‘from the earliest times in the Bible, burial constituted the proper means of dealing with dead bodies.’ The researcher is in agreement with Phillips because in Genesis 23:4-6 (NIV) we see the first record of burial in the Bible where Abraham buys a burial site for his wife Sarah. According to Genesis 25:9-10 (NIV), Abraham is buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael. The Bible records that even criminals were accorded burial respect. In Deut. 21:22 (NIV) we read ‘If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse.’ Even liars like Ananias and Sapphira were buried Acts 5:6 (NIV). God Himself buried Moses in the valley opposite Beth Peor – although to this day no one knows where his grave is (Deut. 34:5-6 NIV). Kings were honoured by being buried (2 Chron. 16:14, NIV). Jesus Himself was buried (Matt. 27:57ff, NIV). ‘Surely, the divine precedent in the burial, not the burning, of His body should be the authoritative example for all Christians’ (Boettner 1956, 52). Kloosterman (n.d., 2) is of the view that ‘biblical examples indicate that burial is the preferred method of caring for a corpse.’ With all due respect, it would have been easier to cremate these people than bury them. Why would any Bible loving Christian want to use any other method?

Although burial is the most commonly reported method of body disposal in the Bible, Phillips (2000, 2) disagrees with Kloosterman (n.d) and states that ‘burial is not a uniquely Christian practice. It is a pagan practice based on the false idea that the same body which is buried lives on in the nether world.’ He points out that ‘there’s a Christian way to view both practices, but neither practice is inherently Christian’ (Phillips 2005, 3). Geisler and Douglas (1998, 1) on the other hand, challenge this view and say that ‘from the Christian perspective, burial is the pattern used in Scripture and has been historically

followed by the church' and so 'burial is an important practice and symbol in Scripture' while 'cremation is a poor symbol of scriptural truth.' Kloosterman (n.d., 2) observes that 'negatively, the Bible talks about cremating corpses most often in contexts of divine judgment against wickedness.'

It is the view of the researcher that even though burial has always been the accepted method of body disposal as recorded in the Bible, no Scripture however condemns cremation. Although the term cremation is not found in the Bible the records of 'hooligans', 'evil doers' and the disobedient being burnt is not argument enough to fight cremation. With all due respect, the church needs to enlighten members on the intricacies of cremation.

Some Biblical Arguments for Cremation

A number of arguments have been advanced in support of cremation. The scope of this paper does not allow for an exhaustive exploration of all these arguments and only but a few are discussed as follows:-

Fire is a Symbol of Blessing

Fire can be both destructive and at times a blessing. Perhaps this is the reason why Phillips (2000, 3) argues that 'in biblical times, fire was often regarded as symbolic of the divine presence, so it was appropriate to feature fire in sacred ceremonies. God was represented by a flaming torch in an encounter with Abraham, at Mt Sinai the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire.' The researcher agrees with Phillips because, even after Christ had ascended, and as the disciples waited at the Day of Pentecost, 'they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them' Acts (2:2b, NIV). The Holy Spirit came in His physical form – tongues of fire. Hence, Phillips (2000, 3) argues that 'since fire represents God, cremation can be a symbol of the believer entering into the presence of God'. Geisler and Douglas (1998, 2) however

hold a different view, ‘while fire in some cases may be seen as good or serve as a symbol for the divine presence, it is wrong to apply this to cremation.’ Why? Because ‘fire was most often associated with warning and judgment’ and so, ‘to connect the burning of a human body with fire would more than likely bring images of human sacrifices.’

Nevertheless, Geisler and Douglas (1998, 3) agrees that ‘fire at best has a dual application and cannot be used to support cremation alone.’

It is common knowledge that without fire we will not cook, may die of hunger or cold. However, fire has also destroyed many lives, property of unknown value. Fire has reduced many people to paupers. Is fire therefore good or bad? Is it evil or divine? It is the strong feeling of the researcher that one cannot support or reject cremation on the basis of how good or how bad fire is.

Paul’s Theology Deemphasized the Body

Phillips (2000, 3) argues that Paul’s theology ‘found sacred value only in the living body. It was the living body that was the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, NIV), not the dead one.’ He continues to argue that ‘just as a temple is constructed for worship and is destroyed after it is no longer used for worship, the body may be dispensed with in a like manner’ and so ‘Paul viewed the body as an earthly tent that would soon be demolished after use’ hence ‘those who adamantly advocate earth burial because it enhances bodily resurrection have a weak New Testament foundation on which to stand.’

In 1 Cor 15 (NIV) Paul discusses at length matters of life after death and reminds the reader that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (vs. 50). According to Phillips (2000, 2) however, Paul did not believe that the residual dust in a tomb would be the substance of a new heavenly organism, and that by the ‘resurrection of the dead’ Paul does not mean the ‘reassembling and the reanimation of the corpse. What removed death’s

sting for Paul was not gazing at a prettified corpse but the good news that mortal nature can put on immortality.’ According to Geisler and Douglas (1998, 2), ‘belief that Paul devalued dead bodies is totally without warrant. Paul never taught that a dead body should be despised or destroyed. Therefore, Paul’s emphasis on the living body (1 Cor 6:19, NIV) cannot be used to teach there is no value in a dead body.’

The researcher’s view here is that the mortal body will be exchanged with a new resurrected one, a more glorious body, after the present has decayed, and God is able to resurrect us from anything and nothing – He created the world out of nothing. However, according to Boettner (1956, 51) ‘we cannot bring ourselves deliberately to take the body of a dear one, only less precious than the soul that it enshrined, and give it to the flames for violent destruction, even though we know that the spirit has departed.’ Nevertheless, according to the researcher, the body of the departed whether buried, burnt, lost in the deep seas or otherwise, is devoid of the Spirit of God. What matters most is the soul that departs the moment one breathes his/her last.

How Church Traditions have Addressed Cremation Issues in the Past

The Catholic Encyclopedia (n.d.) has pointed out that Christians never burned their dead but they followed from earliest days the Semitic race and the personal example of their Divine Founder. The Wikipenda (n.d., 3) points out that ‘cremation was widely regarded as barbarian in the ancient Near East, to be used only by necessity in times of plague.’ Warren (2001, 1) affirms that ‘in the history of the world, not only has burning been traditionally reserved for the ungodly, such as heretics and witches, but the scriptures consistently indicate that having one’s body burned is a curse of God...’ The body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, should not be subjected to merciless and violent crashing.

It is no wonder then that Orfanakos (2006, 2), a Parish priest argues that cremation is traditionally forbidden on the grounds that ‘it violates the requirements of the body as it is

in the earth'. According to Phillips (2000), on the other hand, the broader tolerance most Christians now have on the subject of cremation is anchored in a reinterpretation of their basic sources of authority. They have realized that the method of corpse disposal in the biblical culture was not a major concern.' Heintz, (2004, 1) therefore succinctly has put it thus:

'... the Bible condemns humankind to return to dust (Gen. 3:19), and cremation only brings that condemnation to pass in a more speedy way. If the body will eventually become dust, then why not hasten it? Cremation seems to be an immediate fulfillment of what the Bible forecasts for all mortals. In short, if God ordained the natural process of returning to dust, then how can cremation be against the will of God?'

In response to a question on whether there are Scripture passages that denounce cremation, Arnold (2006, 1) says 'I know none. '

It is clear from the above arguments that the Bible appears to regard burial highly. Given the above facts, the possibility that opponents of cremation are reacting because they have been used to the same method of body disposal for a long time – traditionally that of burying may not be far fetched. This then leaves one wondering whether proponents of cremation are being disobedient to God or not as may have alluded.

Doctrine of Resurrection and Cremation Practice

According to Boettner (1956, 40) 'what we call death is not the end, but only the entrance of the soul into a new and more wondrous world.' Chambers (n.d., 2) on the other hand asserts that 'the body in death becomes a seed sown on earth and the seed of the present body contains the nucleus for the new body' and that 'our great God in the resurrection does not create new bodies, but recreates us from the seed sown in death and burial.' According to Chambers (n.d., 3) 'cremation has always been deeply connected to idolatry and the worship of false gods and must be reserved exclusively for the wicked and God rejecters in our midst.' Does cremation then undermine the doctrine of resurrection?

According to Gehrke (in Bunnie 2005, 3), God will make us alive at the resurrection by His unassisted Word and therefore He has made no provision to employ human agency to retard the destruction of bodies ...’ In response, Schimdt, (in Bunnie 2005, 2.) posits that Gehrke’s argument has no meaning unless we define the prohibition against testing the Lord our God. Schimdt further points out that the promise of God as pertaining to death is that our bodies shall live and cremation in no way constrains God to fulfill that promise and suggestion to the contrary would seem to be rooted in doubt about the power of God. Bunnie (2005, 2) explains that cremation is destructive and violent and that in the Bible, fire is for the most part a symbol of evil, destruction and sometimes even a portrait of hell and even though it is done to a dead person, cremation is an unacceptable form of violence.

The researcher concludes this section by using Gehrke’s words (in Bunnie 2005) that the arguments against cremation as contrary to our Christian faith are not persuasive because the hope of the gospel is for a new body, not a rehabilitation of the old one. Burial or cremation will not change the destiny of a soul. It is the feeling of the researcher that the souls of the cremated people will enjoy God’s presence even at the final day.

Theological Arguments against Cremation Based on Jesus’ Teaching

In Luke 9:60, Jesus said ‘let the dead bury their own dead.’ According to Phillips (2000, 2) this is the ‘only reference that Jesus seemed to have made with regard to the dead’. For this reason Phillips (2000, 3) argues that ‘allowance for cremation should be given because Jesus gave little attention to the disposal of the dead. According to Phillips (2000, 2), Jesus made a negative reference to earth burial when He compared hypocrites to whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean (Matt. 23:27, NIV). Geisler and Douglas (1998) argue that the fact that Jesus gave little direct attention to something does not mean it is without

importance. Jesus gave little attention to spousal abuse and less to abortion, yet this does not in any way indicate His approval of these practices. Jesus attacked ‘many Jewish traditions, but burial of the dead was not one of them. So, even though Jesus said that the dead should bury their own dead, the passage has nothing to do with either approval/denial of cremation/burial. What is noteworthy is that Jesus never said, ‘Let the dead *cremate* their own dead,’ but rather, ‘Let the dead *bury* their own dead’ (Geisler and Douglas, 1998). According to Gehrke (in Bunnie 2005, 3), Jews exclusively practiced burial ‘because burial was a Jewish custom.’ On the same line of thought, Atwood (in Bunnie, 2005, 3) points out that he would put burial in the culture and not religious category. Apart from rare cases of judgment and/or punishment as in the case of Achan (Joshua 7:25), Samson’s father-in-law (Judges 15:6, NIV), Saul and his sons (1 Sam 31:12-13, NIV) cultural practice for body disposal among the Jews was burial.

However, with all due respect, would Jesus, having been a Jew and raised in the Jewish culture, have talked about any other method of body disposal apart from burial – a Jewish practice? The first Christians were mainly Jews and so their culture was that of burying. The researcher is in agreement with Atwood (in Bunnie, 2005) who sees burial as a cultural rather than a Christian issue.

Some Non-Biblical Arguments for Cremation

It has been argued that cost implication is one of the arguments for cremation. It is quite obvious that cremation, especially if it takes place immediately after death, is considered less expensive. Those who are economically less privileged may be forced to opt for cremation due to the cost of burial. Kloosterman (n.d) is not moved by such an argument. He says that the ‘argument by itself is insufficient to justify choosing cremation. The economic argument, he continues, will convince only those who for other reasons have

already chosen cremation.’ Geisler and Douglas (1998) seem to be of the same opinion with Koosterman. They say that cremation is undoubtedly cheaper than burial but comments that ‘doing evil is often cheaper than doing good. Sometimes a price has to be paid for doing what is right.’

Scarcity of land is another reason in favour of cremation. In the west where the practice of cremation is common, the Cremation Society of Great Britain, (n.d.) recorded that in 1951 land became an issue due to demand for more housing and recreational facilities necessitating tighter restrictions and expansion of burial grounds. In Kenya, the same land scarcity exists. Many people are squatters or slum dwellers who have no land of their own. Without land and money to buy a coffin, burial might soon not be an option. Geisler and Douglas (1998, 3) agree that the argument concerning land does have some legitimacy in certain circumstances but they are quick to emphasize that ‘land in many countries and cities can be accessed for the purposes of burial’ and therefore land should not be a hindrance to burial.

Another reason is cultural prohibition. Linton (in Reed 1985, 14) defines culture as ‘the sum total of the knowledge, attitudes and habitual behaviour patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.’ It is necessary to find out what inhibitions or prohibitions certain cultures have towards the practice of cremation. For instance, would a person feel threatened with isolation and separation because of supporting cremation? It has been argued (Reed 1985, 16) that ecological factors can influence a cultural change and that ‘natural habitat where people live and the climatic conditions greatly affect their cultural ways.’ The researcher will be interested to find out whether respondents would advocate for a change in the method of body disposal. The researcher was keen to establish whether cultural values affect their view of cremation.

Teachings Against Cremation Practice

According to Orfanakos (n.d.) ‘the church has unequivocally taught since Christ’s Crucifixion that the proper way to treat the dead is by reverent burial of the body in the context of a proper church funeral and prayers for those who fall asleep in the Lord. Acceptance of cremation, therefore, ‘would represent a radical departure from an establishment which there seems to be no adequate reason to institute a change.’ Geisler and Douglas (1998, 4) say that it is important to preserve the body for theological reasons. They argue that ‘human nature is a soul-body unity, and it is soul and body together that put on immortality’ and therefore ‘the corpse is a good representation of this hope because it is that very body that will have numerical identity with the glorified body.’

Grant (1998, 2) on the other hand, holds a different opinion. He says that ‘no theological obstacle exists to cremation’ and argues that ‘God who created the universe out of nothing will at the end of time be capable of recreating a resurrection body for individuals.’ Summers (in Wingfield, n.d., 2), is in total agreement with Grant. He confirms that he hears no theological objections to cremation and adds that ‘arguments that cremation might somehow diminish God’s ability to resurrect a body are inconsistent.’

The researcher, like many other Christians, is aware of many biblical verses that talk about burial as a way of body disposal but the whole concept of cremation and its biblical as well as theological understanding is still beyond comprehension. Tidwell (1982, 121) states that, ‘the Bible is the source of multitudes of truths which make up the essential subject matter of religious education.’ It is upon the Christian education ministry of the church to ‘stay within earshot of what is happening’ (Ela 1988, 11) with regard to cremation so that Christians are taught because lack of knowledge is a serious problem in a Christian’s pilgrimage. The theological argument advanced by the researcher, to use Geisler and Douglas’ (1998) words, holds that there is a ‘precedence for earth burial not because it

enhances bodily resurrection, but because it maintains a consistent expression of its theology that is well grounded in the New Testament. With this view in mind, the onus lies on Christian education to offer the relevant teachings to Christians.

This chapter has highlighted key issues with regard to cremation as raised by the different authors. To mention a few, the doctrine of resurrection was an area writers tried to expound on. The Biblical and theological issues were also raised. Some of the reasons for accepting or rejecting cremation and cultural related issues were also raised. The next chapter deals with the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and Research Strategy

The study adopted a cross sectional study design that was both descriptive and explanatory. This design was selected because it is not susceptible to validity threats like history.

The Study Location

The study was carried out in two Anglican churches, one Baptist Church and a Pastors' Conference in Buru Buru, Nairobi. Two focus group discussions and two informal meetings were also carried out in Nairobi.

The Study Population

The study population comprised Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) from whom an indepth interview was carried out. Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi of the Anglican Church (ACK) who referred the researcher to Bishop Lawrence Dena, the Provincial Secretary of the Anglican Church of Kenya. Another indepth interview was carried out with Bishop Bonifes Adoyo of Nairobi Pentecostal Church (NPC) – Valley Road. Yet another indepth interview happened with Moderator David Githii the leader of Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). Other interviews were conducted with pastors from ACK, PCEA and Pentecostal Churches. More interviews were carried out with congregation members from ACK, Pentecostal and Nairobi Baptist Church, Ngong Road, and other Mainline Churches plus two focus group discussions and two informal discussions one with church workers and the other with researcher's friends

within her neighbourhood plus also relatives of some of the people who are known to have been cremated.

Sampling Procedures

The researcher had planned to use systematic random sampling because it was the most appropriate for the design of the study. However, in the absence of a sampling frame, she and the pastors agreed that an announcement to invite the entire membership into the exercise would serve the purpose. The interviews were conducted within the church set up, after the researcher had obtained permission from the pastors.

Sample Size

To determine the required sample size, the researcher considered the known membership (the researcher knew church membership of the sample churches) and the number that was likely to respond to the interviews. The following formula was used to determine the sample size:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

where:

- n = the desired sample size when the population from which the sample will be drawn is larger than 10,000
z = the standard normal deviate is 2.0
p = the proportion in the target population estimated to have a particular characteristic if there is no reasonable estimate = 0.5
q = 1.0 minus p
d = degree of accuracy desired usually set at .05

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 2.0^2 \times 0.5 \times (1.0 - 0.5) \text{ divide by } 0.5^2 \\ n &= 2.0^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \text{ divide by } 0.5^2 \\ n &= 4 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \\ n &= 1 \\ &= \frac{\quad}{0.25} \times 100 \\ n &= 400 \end{aligned}$$

The sample size was therefore 400

This sample size was large enough for cross-tabulations of variables without risking empty cells. The size is also useful for statistical significance measures.

Data Collection

The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data. In her view, matters regarding cremation would be better understood if more than one approach was adopted. The quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires which included some open-ended questions that enabled the respondents to enjoy a good level of freedom of expression.

Two questionnaires were used: one for the members of the church (Appendix I) and the other for pastors (Appendix II). The former was divided into four sections. The first section sought information about the background variables such as the respondent's age, gender, etc. The next section focused on the respondents' view of church teachings with regard to cremation and doctrine of resurrection. This section was followed by an assessment of the attitudes, perceptions and knowledge that individual Christians have in relation to cremation. The last section sought to measure relevant cultural values and their effect on Christians' views about cremation. Because the respondents were asked not to disclose their names, they were free to provide as much information as possible without fear of disclosure. It took about 15 minutes to complete filling the questionnaire.

The second questionnaire (Appendix II) was shorter and had only one section. The researcher wanted to establish the pastors' views and knowledge about cremation and if they would be willing to carry out teachings. It was also necessary to know from the pastors how they would counsel a member interested in cremation. Most of the questions were open ended. The researcher assured the respondents of total confidentiality in respect to the information provided by them. The interview took approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaire was self-administered. Other qualitative data was collected through interview

guides. The first of these (Appendix III) was used to conduct in-depth interviews with two Archbishops – one from the Roman Catholic Church and the other from Anglican Church of Kenya, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and two Bishops – one from Nairobi Pentecostal Church and the other from Anglican Church of Kenya. The interview took about 15 minutes.

The qualitative data is used to complement and fill in gaps left by the quantitative data. The researcher trained four assistants by walking them through the questionnaires, explaining her expectations and clarifying what was required of them as interviewers. The data was collected on Sundays because this is the day most of the potential respondents were available.

Pilot Testing

This was carried out in an informal meeting with colleagues who were not members of the churches sampled. Some minor revisions were made to the data collection tools. For example, question 24 was rephrased to include ‘especially during *matanga* or memorial service’ and another inclusion on question 18 ‘better understanding’ was made. The line spacing –in the data collection tools was also adjusted.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher accorded all the respondents respect and assured them of confidentiality. She also informed them that their participation in the interview was voluntary and that they could end the interview anytime. They were also free not to answer any questions they did not wish to respond to.

Threats to Validity and Reliability

Potential threats to validity were controlled by using cross-sectional design which is not susceptible to, for example, history threat because the data collection was not prolonged. The spill-over threats were controlled by pilot testing with members who do not belong to any of the sample churches.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was first coded and then entered into the computer using the SPSS programme. This programme is efficient in statistical analyses. SPSS also helped to facilitate use of measures of central tendency, e.g. the mean, mode and median as well as standard deviation. Categorization of the variables was as follows:

Interval variables e.g. number of years of schooling

Ordinal variables e.g. grouped age, attitudes

Nominal variables e.g. gender, marital status

The researcher has carried out data analysis at two levels:

- Univariate analysis and
- Bivariate analysis. The former enables the researcher to examine each of the key variables singly for descriptive purposes. The latter involves a cross-tabulation of two variables at a time, for example
 - background by independent or dependent variables
 - independent by dependent variables
 to establish the extent to which they are related.

Chi squares (Pearson χ^2) have been used to determine whether two variables are statistically related or not at the 0.05 level. The researcher has also used SPSS to measure the degree of freedom with regard to statistical significance of specified independent and dependent variables. The chi squares have also been used to test the hypotheses.

The researcher has presented the study results graphically by use of tables and by description with the help of percentages.

This chapter has explained the research methodology. The next chapter presents the results, interpretations and discussions of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter highlights the results, interpretations and discussions of the study. The researcher's working definition of the term cremation is as mentioned in the first chapter, 'the practice of interring the body through burning at a crematorium and the ashes disposed by the crematorium officials or the relatives of the dead or according to the wishes of the deceased'. It has also been defined as 'the practice of reducing a corpse to its essential elements by burning' (Ontario Consultants n.d., 3). Cremation can also be viewed as a deliberate and conscious act of a method of body disposal which is carried out through burning the body. It is a calculated, intentional and a premeditated plan for disposing of a body.

The first section of the chapter presents the results of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data generated through structured questionnaires from pastors and congregation members, indepth interviews and focus group discussions as well as two informal groups; one drawn from three pastors and the other from friends within the researcher's neighbourhood. The description begins with a description of the characteristics of the 413 respondents, that is, 359 church members and the 54 pastors. The data are obtained from those who participated in questionnaire interviews. The second section presents the interpretations and discussions of the results of the study population.

Characteristics of the Study Population

Information in this section contains an examination of the study population from the 413 respondents who participated in the questionnaire interviews. It also presents the qualitative data from the indepth interviews, focus group discussions and informal group discussions.

The 359 church congregation members participated in the questionnaire interviews. As shown in table 4.1, the Anglican Church of Kenya had the highest (56%) representation. This was intentional as the researcher considered it resourceful to get the biggest percentage from this church because of the recent cremation of its leader, the late Archbishop Kuria, who had earlier cremated his wife.

Table 4. 1 Respondents' churches by gender (n=359)

Name of the church	%	Male (%)	Female (%)
Pentecostal Churches	14.1	13.0	14.7
Anglican Church of Kenya	56.0	60.5	50.6
Nairobi Baptist Church	25.2	19.5	32.1
Other mainline churches	4.4	7.0	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The youngest of the 359 respondents was 18 and the oldest 82 years old. Their mean age was 38.66 ± 13.04 (standard deviation). As can be seen in table (4.2), the respondents are fairly well distributed across the age groups with the largest group constituting nearly a third (31%).

Table 4. 2: Church respondents by age-groups (n=325)

Grouped Ages	%
Under 21 years	1.5
21 – 29 years	26.4
30 – 39 years	30.9
40 – 49 years	17.0
Over 50 years	24.2
Total	100.0

(The researcher did not collect information about age from the pastors).

According to Table 4.3 over one-half (56%) of the respondents have been to school for between 13 and 17 years. This indicates that most of the respondents had relatively high levels of education. Indeed, a majority of them had completed Form IV and were either enrolled in college, at university or had completed their studies. The mean number of years of formal schooling is 15.51 years \pm 3.059.

Table 4. 3: Grouped years of formal schooling (n=316)

Years of schooling	(All) %	Males %	Females %
12 or fewer	19.6	18.4	19.9
13-17 years	56.3	47.1	44.5
18 or more years	24.1	34.5	35.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

(The researcher did not collect data about schooling of the pastors).

The researcher also intended to draw a higher proportion of the pastors' respondents from the Anglican Church given that they worked closely with the late Archbishop who was cremated. Table 4.4 lists the denominations from which the 54 pastors who were involved in the questionnaire interviews were drawn.

Table 4. 4: Respondent churches – Pastors (n=54)

Name of the Church	%
Anglican Church of Kenya	44.4
Presbyterian Church of East Africa	18.5
Pentecostal Churches	37.0
Total	100.0

Indepth interviews were carried out with Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki of the Roman Catholic Church, Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi of the Anglican Church of Kenya (who then referred the researcher to Bishop Lawrence Dena), Bishop Bonifes Adoyo of Nairobi Pentecostal Church and Moderator David Githii of the Presbyterian Church. The researcher also held two focus group discussions with seven church workers and five

colleagues. She held informal discussions with three pastors drawn from Anglican Church of Kenya and four Christians within the researcher's neighbourhood.

In summary, this first section has provided an overview of some key characteristics of the two groups of respondents – church members and the pastors. The next section presents other key results of the study beginning with respondents' knowledge about cremation.

Knowledge Regarding Cremation

This section focuses on the knowledge of the respondents regarding cremation. It is important from the onset that the researcher establishes the respondents' knowledge over the issue. She sought information about whether the respondents had ever heard about cremation and their source(s) of such information. An overwhelming majority (96 %) had ever heard about cremation. Among these, only 4% had received information from either a church sermon and/or seminar. About a fifth (19%) cited a church member as their source of information about cremation. To confirm these reports, the researcher had asked the congregation members:-

‘Has your church taught about methods of body disposal?’

In response, only 28% responded in the affirmative citing burial (54%) and a negligible proportion (3%) cremation as one of the methods of body disposal taught in their church. Out of the 359 members interviewed 42% knew a person who had ever been cremated. Slightly over a quarter 26% reported having taken an interest to personally learn more about cremation.

In summary, this section has given results of the knowledge of the respondents regarding cremation. The next section presents the results of Christians' perceptions and attitudes towards cremation.

Perceptions and Attitudes of Christians with Regard to Cremation

To measure the perceptions, the researcher asked the congregation members questions like:

‘would cultural values attached to body disposal in your community influence your view about cremation?’

A reasonable proportion (45%) responded affirmatively. Still the researcher asked:

‘If Christians in your community accepted cremation would it change the way you view the gospel?’

and more than a half (62%) responded that their views would not be affected. The researcher also asked attitude questions like:

‘would you encourage a change from your community’s way of body disposal to cremation?’

where a reasonable proportion (43%) positively responded. The researcher measured the overall attitudes of the congregation members in three categories namely; positive attitudes, moderate attitudes (which refers to those who were neutral) and negative attitudes. The results showed that 23% had positive attitudes, 51% had moderate attitudes and 26% had negative attitudes. The results highlighted in Table 4.5 shows that more males had positive attitudes compared to female.

Table 4. 5: Overall attitudes of congregation members (n=327)

Attitudes	Male %	Female %
Positive	24.2	20.3
Moderate	47.1	56.9
Negative	28.7	22.8
Total	100.0	100.0

From the qualitative data, attitudes and perceptions of the congregation members included views like: ‘There is change in attitude by some members in the church, especially those who have been raised in urban areas.’ ‘Christians’ attitudes keep changing and nowadays they are warming up to cremation.’

The researcher sought to establish the attitudes of the pastors and had asked the question

‘Church member(s) may tell you they prefer to be cremated if they died. Would you agree, disagree or you are not sure?’

More than one half (57%) were positive. The researcher also asked the pastors

Church teachings about cremation would positively influence the decision-making of those who would like to honour a written will favouring cremation. Do you agree, disagree or are unsure’

Again more than one half (69%) were affirmative. The overall attitudes of the pastors were measured using the three categories mentioned earlier (positive, moderate and negative) and there was however a remarkable difference compared to the attitudes of the members of the congregation as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4. 6. Pastors’ overall attitudes (n=54)

Attitudes	%
Positive	48.1
Moderate	23.1
Negative	28.8
Total	100.0

As can be seen in table 4.5 and 4.6, more pastors have more positive attitudes (48%) than the members of the congregation.

In summary, this sub-section has established Christians’ attitudes and perceptions about cremation. The next section presents the results of doctrinal issues, in particular the doctrine of resurrection as expressed by the respondents.

Doctrine of Resurrection

Information about doctrine of resurrection was generated from qualitative data from the indepth interviews with Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki of the Roman Catholic, Bishop Adoyo of Nairobi Pentecostal Church, Moderator David Githii of the

Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Bishop Dena of the Anglican Church of Kenya, informal discussion with three Anglican Church pastors, as well as from a few questions in the structured schedule and focus group guide.

According to Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki cremation does not interfere with the doctrine of resurrection because God has the power to resurrect the body regardless of whether it was buried or cremated. Moderator David Githii of the Presbyterian Church also agreed that cremation does not hinder resurrection. ‘The issue of cremation is more of culture than doctrine.’ Bishop Dena was of the same view that those cremated will arise just like those buried. In an informal discussion with three Anglican pastors, the researcher gathered that cremation will not in any way interfere with resurrection. Bishop Adoyo of Nairobi Pentecostal Church however had a different view. According to him ‘only the souls of those who have been accidentally burned beyond recognition will resurrect and enter heaven.’ He doubted the entry to heaven of those who willingly choose to be cremated and quoted ‘the fire of Molech’ found in 2 Kings 23:10 and Lev 20ff as his basis for disapproval of cremation.

In a focus group discussion, one participant questioned how cremation could affect resurrection yet there is no biblical rejection or support for it. Another one pointed out that ‘God will not resurrect this earthly body but will give us a more glorious one, so why the fuss over an earthly body?’ Yet another remarked that ‘where the Bible is silent, people should be allowed to make their choice freely.’ Another member felt that ‘cremation is evil, ungodly and should not be practiced by any serious Christian.’ Still another member did not think God would resurrect those who have been cremated because such people have already committed a crime in God’s eyes.’

Two thirds (67%) of the pastors, (n=54) were in agreement that cremation does not contradict the doctrine of resurrection. In addition, results from interviews with members of

the congregation about whether cremation is unbiblical (n=336) showed that only a relatively small proportion (18%) responded affirmatively in comparison to 38% who did not believe cremation contradicted doctrine. To confirm the report, the researcher had included the following statement to the congregation members:

‘Christians who desire cremation are biblically wrong’

and only 12% of the congregation members responded affirmatively while 44% disagreed with the statement. Again, more than one half (58%) of the congregation members would have no problem with a relative’s wish to be cremated. Over a quarter of the congregation members (28%) reported that they would like to be cremated after they die.

In summary, this section has presented the analysis of the results about doctrinal issues as pointed out by the respondents. The next section presents the results of some of considerations Christians make to opt or reject cremation.

Considerations for Accepting Cremation

Respondents had diverse views why they would consider cremation. One of the reasons was scarcity of land. Congregation members expressed the view that cremation would in the long run solve land issues. Some of the views were: ‘Cremation is better due to shortage of land.’ ‘The cemeteries are getting full and instead of waiting till the buried bodies (bones) are thrown away to create room for others, why not burn the bodies as soon as one dies?’ Again, some of the pastors’ views were: ‘Landlessness is soon catching up with Kenyans and cremation may be the only alternative they will have.’ ‘There are many landless slum dwellers in especially Nairobi who might soon opt for cremation.’

Another reason was that cremation helps to reduce costs. Some of the congregation members viewed cremation as an alternative method which is less costly. They also pointed out that ‘it is good to have options as burial in African society costs too much.’ A lady

(Rose Kavwagi) who had cremated her husband confirmed that ‘it is cheaper and less cumbersome.’ A daughter of a leader of the Anglican Church who was recently cremated (Ruth) confirmed that cremation is cost effective. One pastor commented that ‘the body is a tent, when we die our spirit goes to be with Christ but while we value the body, it is not a sin to cremate it especially in view of high escalating cost that leave many bereaved families in debt.’

Some respondents felt that cremation is just another method of body disposal. The daughter of the late Archbishop Kuria, felt that ‘cremation should be considered as an alternative method of body disposal because the healing process is faster and it shortens the period of mental torture when the body lies intestate. Acceptance that one has died happens faster because there is no prolonged *matanga* (mourning) period.’ In one of the focus group discussions, a 28 year old university graduate preferred cremation. ‘I would hate to imagine that one day my bones will be thrown all over when a tractor is clearing the bush at the cemetery to give room for others to be buried. I would like to be cremated.’ To confirm these results, the researcher had asked the congregation the question

‘should cremation be an option for body disposal?’

(n=327) and two thirds (66%) responded affirmatively and a small percentage (19%) disagreed. In response to the question

‘mortality rate in Kenya is quite high hence burial is almost a daily occurrence. In your opinion, should Kenyans also consider cremation as another method of body disposal?’

Two thirds (67%) of the pastors were in agreement. In response to the question:

‘If Christians in your community accepted cremation would it change the way you view the gospel?’

over one half (62%) reported that it would not.

Reasons for Rejecting Cremation

Cultural practices were cited as a factor for rejecting cremation. The views expressed by congregation members included: ‘Cultural values in my community perceive cremation as punishment of the body and the ghosts will not be pleased.’ ‘Once someone dies, he/she belongs to the community which is responsible for funeral and burial arrangements.’ ‘I believe, as my people do, that one should be buried on his/her piece of land.’ ‘If one is not buried honorably his/her spirit would come to harass those left behind because his/her spirit still holds a place in the lives of the living.’ ‘You risk rejection by the community if you practice what they don’t believe.’ ‘Having burial of a full physical body is one last way of linking oneself to a departed loved one and cremation seems to rid one of a physical body to identify with.’ To gather more insights into this issue the researcher sought to know whether

‘cultural beliefs and practices would affect their view about cremation’

An overwhelming percentage were positive as is highlighted in Table 4.7

Table 4.7 – Beliefs of a community can affect their view of cremation (n=327)

Category	%
Agree	85.0
Unsure	7.4
Disagree	7.6
Total	100.0

The researcher had again asked the congregation members whether

‘cultural values attached to body disposal in their community influences their view about cremation’

and again 45% confirmed this. Once again, the researcher had asked the congregation members whether

‘Those favouring cremation within the African culture are wayward.’

Over a half (58%) of the respondents confirmed that they are not. As a follow up to this question, the researcher asked the Catholic Archbishop his response to a situation where cultural beliefs and cremation are in conflict (especially if the deceased had left a Will to be cremated). He replied: 'I will ask the clan and/or relatives including all the immediate family members to discuss. If they agree that we bury, I would honour their decision. If they agree that we cremate, I would honour that too. It really would depend on what the relatives and clan decides.' Bishop Dena's comment over the same issue was that he would respect the wish of the living and not the dead. If they desire burial he would not honour the Will.

The Presbyterian Moderator, David Githii, stated that he would cremate a member if the relatives requested or if he had left a Will and the family wanted to honour it. He however mentioned that no Presbyterian member that he knew of had been cremated for the time he has been in the office but he would have no problem in cremating a member.

According to Bishop Adoyo of Nairobi Pentecostal Church, there are cultural values that do not contradict the Bible and these should be withheld but others that depart from the Bible should be discarded. 'I would not cremate a member even if the relatives requested me or my pastors to do so. I would send him/her to the Hindus who do cremation' the bishop asserted.

Another reason given by the respondents was that African cultures respect the dead. Views from the pastors included: 'Kenyan culture value and respect the dead who are sent with dignity and a lot of festivals.' 'The dead should be respected because their spirits would affect those cremating the body.' 'The African perspective is to give an honourable send off of the deceased to the next world and cremating is almost dishonourable.' 'African cultures value the dead highly because the departed still come back to their bodies and use them.' The researcher asked the pastors whether

‘church teachings about cremation would affect their cultural values’ and majority (86%) responded affirmatively.

The views of the congregation members included: ‘my community respects the dead highly and by cremating you destroy the body of the member of the family.’ ‘Africans have a culture that makes a very strong attachment to the dead and that’s how my culture is.’

Some respondents were of the view that culturally it is a taboo and a bad omen to cremate a body. For example ‘to willingly burn a dead body is a taboo because the spirit of the burnt person would haunt the entire community.’ ‘Calamities may befall the culprits and no one wants to be subject to such suffering.’ ‘Cremation would definitely bring a bad omen to the clan and relatives asking why he/she was degraded by burning.’ ‘It would be an omen to cremate because my community believes that even the dead person is important and should be remembered by preserving his/her grave.’ Some of the pastors also viewed as a taboo to cremate burn the body.

Another reason expressed related to the ‘ungodliness’ of cremation. Some said: ‘Cremation is ungodly and has nothing to do with a Christian.’ ‘Any Christian opting for cremation is lost’ ‘smoke of a dead person is not a pleasing aroma to the true God.’ Some views from pastors included: ‘I strongly oppose it because the Bible is quite clear on the ways of disposing of dead bodies – burial no more no less.’ ‘What message is it sending to Christian mission?’ ‘God moulded clay and took time to create and shape me, He did not say ‘let there be man’ but I am the work of His hands and I should therefore be allowed to take time to disintegrate in the grave.’ ‘The church should not practice cremation. Period.’

In summary, this section has presented the results concerning the reasons cited by respondents in favour of or against cremation. The next section presents the results touching on church’s teachings regarding cremation.

Church Teachings with Regard to Cremation

The respondents articulated the need to be taught about cremation. Three quarters (75%) of the congregation members would like the church to teach about cremation. Over a half (65%) predicted that church teachings would change their view of cremation.

Qualitative from informal discussions had views like: ‘Teachings are necessary because sometimes other members are confused when one has been cremated.’ ‘Ignorance is no defence so we should be taught.’ To confirm this further, the researcher sought to know from the pastors if they

‘would be willing to use their pulpit to teach about cremation’

and nearly half (46%) were willing to do so. The researcher had also asked the pastors whether they think churches in Kenya should carry out such teachings and more than a half (67%) were of the same view.

The congregation members held views like ‘teachings about cremation will help me make an informed decision.’ ‘It is important so that Christians can make an informed decision on whether or not to embrace it.’ ‘Teaching will enable people know what cremation is and be able to make knowledgeable decisions.’ Some of the views from the pastors were: ‘I would teach and leave the individuals to decide what they would like done with their bodies after death.’ ‘Since cremation is not a Kenyan cultural practice, teachings conducted would enable members to make knowledgeable decisions.’

The other reason given by the respondents was that teachings would positively influence the decision making of those who wished to honour a written Will. A confirmation of this report was obtained from pastors with two thirds (66%) responding affirmatively and almost an equal proportion (65%) from congregation members confirmed that teachings would change their view of cremation.

The respondents also reported that teachings would help give a biblical understanding. The pastors' views varied. For example: 'Churches should come up with a clear theological policies so that the negative impression toward cremation will be cleared.' 'Teachings about cremation will educate Christians that no scripture rejects or affirms this alternative method of body disposal.' 'Recently born again Christians have begun to be cremated and the church needs to explain its biblical basis so as to set people free and at peace.' 'There are many people who think it is evil and demonic and such teachings will enlighten them.' The members of various congregations also had varying views such as 'Cremation is awkward but if the church directs us on its biblical basis, then we can think about it.' 'Jesus was not cremated. The church should therefore tell us why Christians should practice it.'

Many respondents again believed that teachings about cremation would strengthen the decision-making of those who are for or against the practice and persuade them, if need be, to honour a written Will. To confirm these views, the researcher asked the pastors whether

'teachings about cremation would strengthen the decision-making of those who would like to be cremated after death'

and three quarters of the pastors (75%) were of the view that they would be strengthened.

The congregation members also articulated their views with regard to writing a Will. They said that 'although cremation is not common in Kenya, people are now writing Wills and some are agreeing to cremate them.' 'If someone leaves a will to be cremated, I would have no problem.' 'I have no problem with cremation because two members of my family have already declared they would like to be cremated after death.' Report from the pastors on whether

'Church teachings about cremation would positively influence the decision-making of those who would like to honour a written Will favouring cremation'

showed that about three quarters (76%) were affirmative.

Bishop Oduyo rejected such prospects and categorically stated that ‘the dead cannot dictate to the living.’ Bishop Dena would honour the Will only if the family is in agreement to cremate. Moderator David Githii of the Presbyterian Church had no problem honouring a Will as long as the relatives agreed to it. Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki, like Moderator David Githii, would honour would honour it too only if there was no conflict between the family members.

In summary, this section has presented the results from the respondents concerning church teachings. The next section explores how Christians’ perceptions and attitudes affect missiological education.

How Perceptions and Attitudes affect Missiological Education

Qualitative data collected from the pastors included views such as ‘lack of knowledge about cremation is likely to affect missiological education because to some people cremation is appropriate but ignorance can affect their response to mission.’ Respondents also felt that many Christians are not comfortable with cremation. To them, it is a foreign practice and can definitely affect missiological education. Some pastors were concerned that they did not have information about cremation which would affect mission because church members are equally lost. Other members of the congregation felt that: ‘Cremation has nothing to do with church mission so why bother?’ ‘Church mission will be affected because peoples’ hearts will struggle when they see other Christians being cremated.’ To confirm these reports, the researcher had also asked of the pastors:

‘In your opinion, would lack of knowledge about cremation affect the mission of the Kenyan church?’

and nearly three-fifths (59%) responded positively. In response to the question whether the pastors agreed with the statement:

‘considering the Kenyan context, it is necessary for the different churches/denominations to conduct teachings with regard to cremation practice’

two thirds (67%) were in agreement.

Cremation raises theological concerns that might divide the church. The following are some of the comments from the pastors: ‘cremation has no biblical references and not many pastors have a theological foundation for it.’ Some pastors argued that even those Jesus called to life after they were dead could not have come to life if they had been cremated and so cremation may be seen as backsliding of the church since there is no biblical reference for it. Yet some pointed out that cremation is a controversial subject that can plunge the church into unnecessary divisions. One pastor stated that ‘Cremation involves fire which is associated with final judgment of a Christian who lives a careless, sinful and ungodly life.’

The researcher also sought to find out the advice given by pastors regarding Christian’s fear of cremation’s effect on their faith in God. One pastor stated that he would encourage such a member to stick to the traditional way of burial and embrace the Jewish or Eastern way of making reusable tombs. Yet another said that he would advise such a member to cremate because even Job, when responding to God, said he is dust and ashes. Yet another one said: ‘I would encourage them to recognize that their faith in Jesus is based on their commitment to the Lord and not the activity of cremation when they are dead. Cremation is neither right nor wrong it is just a cultural practice. What matters is strong belief in God and hope for eternal life.’ ‘One of the church heads interviewed by the researcher was categorical that ‘no pastor under my authority would entertain cremation.’

Other comments received from the congregation members included: ‘I cannot say it is unbiblical because the Bible does not talk about it and I do not know how this affects my

salvation.’ ‘I am discouraged when I see Christians practicing cremation because it is unbiblical.’

According to one of the church leaders interviewed by the researcher, Bishop Adoyo, there is nothing to relate cremation with. Although people understand the Bible differently, ‘I would like those advocating for cremation to make me comprehend what they understand by the fire of Molech’ (2 Kings 23:10). ‘God Himself has said it is a sin to allow children to go through the fire of Molech’ (cf. Lev 20: 3ff). ‘If anyone came for counsel I will advise them to go to the Hindus and be cremated there’

According to the Presbyterian Moderator, David Githii, it is hard to support or deny cremation either theologically or biblically. The biblical references that we find are about people being burnt for disobedience. Others concern people offering human sacrifices to their gods. That cannot be said to be cremation.

An Anglican clergy who attended the Nairobi Diocesan Synod in 2006 shared with the researcher that it was the Synod’s feeling that ‘since cremation does not contradict the scriptures, the church should not stop those willing to cremate.’

Professing Christians are already practicing cremation which is a cause of confusion to those against it. Some pastors expressed such views as ‘Nowadays, born again Christians have expressed their wish to be cremated and sometimes it becomes a heated debate because of lack of knowledge especially from the pastors.’ Some pastors also felt that cremation is unbiblical and dishonourable to the temple of Christ in which the believer’s body is housed. Some congregation members felt that cremation does not help them to communicate the truth about resurrection. ‘When Christians cremate their dead like Hindus, what testimony is that to non-Christians?’

Some respondents felt that burials have become extravagant and that affects tithing and giving in the church. Some congregation members felt that if people stopped misusing

natural resources by cutting trees to make expensive coffins, the country would be greener. One of the pastors was of the view that money ‘wasted’ during funeral affects people’s economy. This affects giving and tithing in the church.’

In this section, the researcher has so far presented the main study results. In the next section, the interpretations of these results are discussed.

Discussions

This section presents discussions, implications and interpretations of the results of the study. These will enable the researcher to answer the study’s two research questions. The first question explores Christians’ perceptions and attitudes towards cremation while the second examines how missiological education is affected by these perceptions and attitudes.

Knowledge Regarding Cremation

It is apparent from the results that majority of the respondents have little if any knowledge about the subject under focus. Given that the church has been silent with regard to this alternative method of body disposal, the Christians are not likely to know much about the subject. It has already been established that cremation is not a frequent subject of discussion in the pulpit hence the deficiency in knowledge of cremation is evident. It is not surprising that the pastors interviewed have had almost no experience of cremating a member.

While it is evident that there is general lack of knowledge about cremation among Kenyan Christians, the researcher feels that it is important to take keen interest in the subject because it can safeguard one from potential conflicts if a member of the family declared a desire to be cremated after death. The results have shown that the respondents willing to be cremated have a relatively high level of education. The probability of many

Christians leaving a Will in which they indicated their desire to be cremated after death is likely to be high. However, the researcher is uncertain about the extent to which the results would have been different had the educational levels been more diverse of the sample. Increased awareness about cremation will most likely help Christians to understand the topic and free them from developing defense mechanism when confronted by the reality of cremation. Such knowledge will ultimately hinder any interference with the harmony of relationships among the Kenyan church when it finally knocks on one's door.

Perceptions and Attitudes of Christians with Regard to Cremation

It was evident from the results that Christians' perceptions and attitudes seem not to be hostile towards cremation. It was no wonder then that a good number of Christians indicated their desire to be cremated after death. It was also not surprising that the respondents were of the opinion that cultural beliefs would not interfere with their view about cremation. Although there were many respondents with moderate attitudes (i.e. they were neutral and were neither for nor against cremation) one can argue that if the church conducted teachings, majority of these Christians would be able to make an informed decision for or against cremation. As it is, they don't seem to be in a position to make up their mind over the topic. If the church continues in its silence, these Christians, and they are the majority, might be influenced to accept or reject cremation without knowledge of the reason they are making such a decision.

It was evident that the pastor's overall attitudes had a higher percentage as compared to the congregation. This means that the pastors have the duty of offering information to their members so as to help them reflect and understand the reason why they hold certain views. It is only by empowering the Christians with information that will help them to make knowledgeable decision.

The results also indicated that more males, compared to females, preferred cremation. Given that the man is the head of the family would they (men) have an influence in the rest of the family members? It is common knowledge that when the leader of the home decides to follow certain views, quite often, the rest of the members, or most of the family members might feel inclined to think and act the same way. It is only the church teachings that will free these leaders as well as their family members from any ignorance that might be associated with cremation practice.

Doctrinal, Theological and Educational Issues with Regard to Cremation

This section deals with discussions regarding the doctrine of resurrection, some theological issues pertaining to cremation and the role of education.

The results show that Christians have diversified views about the doctrine of resurrection when related to cremation. Pastors and congregation members interviewed have already acknowledged that the doctrine of resurrection is not hindered by cremation. I agree with their view that God is able to resurrect bodies whether decomposed, burnt, lost in the deep waters or eaten by animals. The respondents are right when they say that the Bible is silent about cremation because the Holy Bible does not make any reference to cremation. However the Bible does make references to the burning of the dead - as was stated in the literature review – as in the case of Achan and his family (Joshua 7:25). Achan had disobeyed God's instructions and was put to death – together with all his blood relations – by burning. According to the researcher this scripture concerns burning someone for disobedience. Christians seem not to cremate those whom they hate but their loved ones.

Also referred to in the literature review is the burning of Samson's father-in-law and his daughter – Samson's wife (Judges 15:6). The burning in question was an act of revenge, wrath and anger meted out on a father and daughter by Philistines who felt wronged by

Samson when he burnt their grain fields. Do opponents of cremation use this scripture to reject the practice? The researcher's view is that this scripture does not support an authentic biblical argument against cremation because the Phillistines were taking revenge. Christians cremate a body not out of anger, revenge or hatred but as a choice of the form of body disposal they feel is most appropriate.

In 1 Sam. 31:12-13 (NIV), Saul and his sons' bodies were burnt. Saul was not brave enough to withstand humiliation if captured alive by his enemies and so he preferred to commit suicide. His sons too had been slain by the army of Philistines. Determined to humiliate Saul and his sons even in death, the Philistines took Saul's armour to the house of Ashtaroath - one of their gods – and fastened his body and those of his sons, to the wall of Beth-sham (vs. 10). But some men took the bodies and burned them (vs. 12).

The Jews were known to follow their forefathers' footsteps of burying their dead in caves, not burning them. According to Dake Anointed Bible (325), the only logical speculation for burning Saul and his sons in this instance is that 'it was the only convenient thing to do in the midst of their enemies.' Again this scripture, according to the researcher, cannot be used to oppose cremation.

It is necessary for the researcher to point out at this point that the Jewish culture, through which Christ came to redeem the world, practiced burial, as discussed in the literature review. The Africans too, like the Jews, practice burial, apart from times when some tribes threw the dead bodies in the forest. It is no wonder, that, in the Kikuyu culture (Kihumbu 1975, 9) people who got burnt were either sorcerers or 'poisoners'. When a 'poisoner' was identified, he/she was 'forced by the society to eat his poisons and then he was put to death by either being rolled down a very long steep slope in a giant beehive or by being burnt alive with dry banana leaves in a desert place.' This ties in very well with the

Jewish culture where people were burnt for wrong doing e.g. Leviticus 18:21. As Niebuhr (2001, 69) succinctly puts it, ‘Christ sees a person as one who has become human in a culture, and who is not only in culture but also one into whom culture has penetrated.’ So according to the researcher, most Christians are opposed to cremation due to primarily cultural limitations that they have been attached to all along.

It is the researcher’s view that the scriptures mentioned cannot firmly support the argument for or against cremation because even in our Kenyan society, many are the instances that pick pockets, witches, robbers etc are burnt by a mob in a rage for a wrong doing. Such acts cannot be termed as cremation. To equate burning wrong doers to cremation is incorrect, at least in the researchers view. In the literature review, it was argued that the view that cremation might ‘somehow diminish God’s ability to resurrect a body is inconsistent’ (Grant 1998).

Most of the pastors interviewed consented that if Christians were taught, they would be more open to the idea of cremation. Most of the pastors interviewed would not turn down a member who desired to be cremated and also pointed out that ignorance over the issue would affect Kenya’s mission.

Some of the respondents raised key theological issues such as the desire to know the meaning of ‘dust to return to dust’ in Genesis 3:19. In the literature reviewed, Heintz (2004 n.d, 3) argues that ‘cremation fulfills the return to dust command more speedily and so it is not against the will of God.’ Could it be that Heintz’s argument has a link with Abraham’s response while he pleaded for God’s mercy upon Sodom, when he referred to himself as ‘dust and ashes’ (Genesis 18:27, NIV). Job (30:19b (NIV) also refers to the same words when he is lamenting and reflecting on God’s power ‘... I am reduced to dust and ashes.’ What does dust and ashes mean? May be this is the reason some Christians argue that when the ash of a loved one is buried it goes back to the soil, it is dust. Could this be the reason

why the Anglican (Book of Common Prayer 2002, 173) and Presbyterian liturgy has the words ‘earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust’ in their burial liturgy? While the above Scriptures hold, it is clear that God did not say ‘for ash you are and to ash you will return’ but said ‘for dust you are and to dust you will return’ (Genesis 3:19, NIV) but the above argument that when ash is buried it still returns to the soil has some legitimate inclination to the Genesis 3:19 Scripture.

Theology must respond to people’s concerns because, for instance, when Mr Muthangani (The Standard of Thursday September 22, 2005) interviewed individuals on their reaction to the former Anglican Archbishop’s cremation in the year 2005, one person said that ‘only God has the power to punish sinners by burning through eternal fire. Dr Mumo, a lecturer at a Christian University in Nairobi ‘rejected the idea that cremation was contrary to the African worldview and said that the Kuria family should be congratulated for their courage’ (Council for World, 2006). During the memorial service of an Anglican member, Mary Nyambura – cremated in 2002 - sharp disagreements erupted from church members. Some argued that ‘cremating Mary was tantamount to disconnecting her with her God whom she loved and lived for,’ others said ‘it was a total disgrace to the whole church of Christ’ while others felt that cremating a Christian interfered with what they believed was the biblical practice and left them wondering whether they were still ‘spiritually intact’ and whether God would forgive them for being partakers of such an act.

However, others commented that whether cremation or burial, the most important thing was for Mary to resurrect when the Lord finally blows the trumpet. Theology must address the above issues.

This notwithstanding, it is the view of the researcher that whatever scripture we try to turn to, getting one that supports or rejects cremation will be an assumption or speculation, not a fact.

The respondents also cited by the respondents is Leviticus 18:21 (NIV) ‘Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of the Lord.’ In this Scripture God warns Israel against child sacrifice and not to imitate their neighbours who carried out the practice which also involved sexual orgies. The warning expands in Leviticus 20:1ff ‘... for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name’ (vs.3b). Would this scripture be used to reject cremation? Did God not ask Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering yet no one would term this ‘sacrifice’ as a ‘potential’ cremation act. It is the researcher’s argument that neither Leviticus 18:21; 20:1ff, 2 Kings 20:23 nor Genesis 22:2ff can be used to reject or accept cremation.

The Christian Education ministry of the church, as was mentioned in the literature review, needs to come to the help of the Kenyan church with regard to the topic. Buconyori (1993, 12) has said that Christian Education is complex and touches all aspects of a person’s life and enables people live a precious and healthy life. I agree with Buconyori because every activity of the church involves some form of education, cremation matters included. It is necessary therefore for the church, through Christian Education, to use Wachege’s (1992, 159) words to be ‘actively present in the cultural life of the society by offering a properly developed theological presentation’ of the cremation practice and ‘of the human problems for which people are seeking an explanation.’

As the results showed, there is need for pastors to be equipped in order to be effective in their response to concerns raised by members. As some pastors highlighted, cremation matters are rarely, if ever, talked about even by pastors and their lack of knowledge has been blamed for this. Again, the fact that very few pastors have been involved in cremation implies a theological deficiency among them. The role of education, in this respect would be to empower the pastors, evangelists and church leaders with

knowledge and skills to enable them to theologically respond to the issues raised by their congregants. When the pastors and evangelists are equipped, their effectiveness in directing, guiding and counseling church members will go a long way in settling at ease the conscience of many who may be struggling with the issue.

In summary, it is clear from this section that the doctrine of resurrection, the theological issues and the role of education are all necessary in shaping the opinion of Christians as far as cremation matters. The next section discusses Christians' considerations when opting for or rejecting cremation.

Considerations for Choosing Cremation

Land and economic issues seem to be important considerations issues. The respondents argued that land in Kenya is scarce because of congestion, and overpopulation. The researcher had reviewed literature in which the authors discussed this important variable. Landlessness in Kenya is evident given the escalating squatter settlement(s) and sprawling slums. The potential land problem could necessitate tighter restrictions on expansion of burial grounds e.g. Langata. The researcher feels that even if land problem might not be acute, it is imminent that it will finally knock on the doors of many people who might have to opt for alternative methods of body disposal, in this case cremation.

Again, the respondents argued that cremation helps to decrease the costs of body disposal. Transport costs, costs incurred during the prolonged '*matanga*' (mourning) period and mortuary costs are likely to be reduced if people opt to cremate their dead. The money saved can be spent on children's school fees and cost of books, etc.

Undoubtedly, church teachings about cremation would demystify the myths surrounding the subject. Clearly, what the respondents are pointing out is that cultural change is not a new thing. For instance, according to Kihumbu (1985, 57), Kikuyus never used to bury their dead but instead threw them in the forest to be food for animals. If one

happened to die in the house, it was vacated and left to disentangle on its own. With time, they changed to burying.

The firmness with which different African communities hold on to their cultural values differs from one community to another. Even though burning the dead may be traumatic to some, it may not be the case with another. It is evident that the church congregation, especially the urban areas, is from diverse cultures. The church should be sensitive to this cultural divergence in its endeavour to educate its members on the subject.

Considerations for Rejecting Cremation

One of the reasons for rejecting cremation was on cultural grounds. Culture is part of a 'total' person. The believer in Jesus Christ is a 'cultured' person as well. Culture is part of people's heritage and identity. Niebhur (2001, 33) defines culture as 'a way of life that is transmitted from one generation to another, a human achievement.' The study results showed that cultural ties among Kenyans are quite strong. I agree with the respondents when they say that their beliefs and practices would affect the way they view cremation because people find identity through culture. Strong ties of culture and customs are witnessed when after the birth of Jesus, His parents take Him to the temple and all Jewish rituals were performed (Luke 2:22f). Even Jesus, after healing the leprous man, instructed him to go and show himself to the High Priest as was the custom of the Jews (Lk.5:14, NIV). However, deep rooted as respondents' values are did not deter their concerns that church teachings about cremation would change their values.

Respect for the dead is another cultural aspect that Kenyan communities hold on to. The spirits of the dead are considered to be still among the living. According to Boettner (1956, 48) 'under normal conditions we show much more respect for the bodies of our loved ones if they are tenderly laid away in the earth, under the coverlet of green, in the

posture of rest or sleep and in as good a state of preservation as possible.’ The respect for the dead is upheld because the spirits are believed to get angry, annoyed and frustrated if things do not work out the way they should. Some congregation members of one focus group discussion reiterated that

‘the spirits do much harm if they are provoked and do much good if they are pleased. Those who opt to adopt any other method would risk being dubbed as outcasts within the community.’

Another cultural factor for rejecting this method of body disposal relates to the ‘taboo’ of cremation due to belief in spirits. African communities view cremation as degrading and humiliating the dead because of their strong beliefs in life after death in the form of spirits. The fear of the members and some pastors is not far fetched. Africans believe that death does not separate the dead from the community and that life is not terminated but death is a stepping stone to the next life. The Bible also teaches the same concept. That we are here on earth for just a while (1 Peter 2), we are only pilgrims soon to depart this world and enter heaven.

Some of the respondents felt that cremation is un-Godly. However, the Bible does not make any reference to cremation apart from burning of some disgruntled members of the society or those burnt as a result of human sacrifice to gods. There has not been any clear rejection or affirmation of cremation among Christians. According to the researcher, that which the Bible does not condemn or affirm cannot be used to reject or embrace the issue under discussion. The researcher therefore agrees with the respondents who felt that when the Bible is silent about an issue, the decision then is left to one’s conscience and that it is not realistic to use the Bible to support a one-sided view.

‘Need for Church Teachings with Regard to Cremation’

The results showed that both pastors and congregation members are in favour of church teachings. However, how will the church teach if the pastors and church leadership do not have the knowledge about the education required? Not long ago, one of the Church leaders in Kenya was cremated. The researcher wonder if the pastors who worked under him are competent enough to counsel members in matters of cremation.

Some of the respondents are interested in teachings through church sermons, others would like to be taught in seminars and through church articles and newsletters. The researcher wonders how well prepared the pastors and/or evangelists are to effectively impart this education. The researcher is in agreement with the respondents that the church teachings will help make informed decisions concerning whether to or not to cremate. Information is power and it frees a person from speculation, assumption and/or lack of confidence in handling an issue. Such teachings will also provide knowledge and create awareness among church members.

How Christians’ Perceptions and Attitudes Affect Missiological Education

This section deals with some of the factors that affect missiological education due to Christians’ perceptions and attitudes towards cremation.

According to Ferguson (1988, 434) missiology is a discipline in theology and incorporates several strands, among them the biblical study, which investigates the basis of the church’s mission, a historical study which surveys the growth and expansion of the church at various periods and assesses its impact on different societies and cultures. Missiological education therefore has a lot to do with the instructions and instructional methods offered by the Christian education ministry in carrying out the church’s mission. The respondents seemed to understand that the fate of one’s spirituality would not be

affected by whether or not one was cremated. The researcher supports this understanding because salvation is not about burial or cremation. The method of disposal of a dead body should therefore not cause one discomfort. Even Elisha walked with God, but did not see the inside of a grave. God will resurrect him when the Day comes just as he will those who were cremated or buried.

Lack of knowledge about cremation among Christians will affect missiological education because as Hosea 4:6 reminds us, people perish for lack of knowledge. The pastors and evangelists need to equip themselves with education that will help the members to realize that the soul of the dead, whether the body was buried or cremated, has value, dignity and worth that is absolutely independent of the method used to dispose the body. If the pastors and evangelists are ignorant about knowledge regarding cremation, the members will be at a loss when they need clarification and/or counseling in matters of cremation.

As the respondents pointed out, undoubtedly cremation raises theological concerns that might divide the church and so the subject is indeed controversial. As stated in the literature review, scholars' views about cremation differ one from the other. The issue of the doctrine of resurrection and people's doubts regarding whether or not cremated bodies will resurrect continues to attract interest in the church. This will challenge missiological education because 'at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord' (Phillipians 2:11). The researcher would like to comment that the church needs not to be divided over the topic because the silence of the Scriptures does not mean rejection or affirmation of cremation.

Testing the Hypothesis

The study had two null hypotheses:

- a) There is no relationship between church teaching about cremation (independent variable) and its Pastors' understanding about the subject (dependent variable)
- b) There is no significant relationship between respondents' (church members) attitudes towards cremation (independent variable) and their willingness to cremate loved ones (dependent variable).

Hypothesis 1: When the two hypothesis were tested using SPSS computer program, the first one was found to have no association between the church teaching about cremation and the Pastor's understanding of the subject. The researcher therefore accepts the null hypothesis and rejects the alternate hypothesis which indicated the existence of a relationship between the two variables. This result does not surprise the researcher given the finding that Kenya's Christian church generally does not teach about cremation. The church would therefore not have been previously expected to increase the understanding of its pastors with regard to the subject of cremation.

Hypothesis 2: A cross tabulation of the two variables in the second hypothesis yielded a Pearson Chi square of 38.181; 4 degrees of freedom; with a .001 significant level. The researcher as a result therefore rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis, which indicates that there is a significant relationship between the respondent attitudes toward cremation and their willingness to cremate loved ones.

This finding indicates clearly that the respondents with relatively positive attitudes toward cremation are more embracing and therefore more likely to portray willingness to cremate a loved than those with negative attitudes toward cremation.

In summary the researcher feels that from the foregoing discussions, the respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards cremation are mainly affected by pastors'

and church members lack of knowledge. In addition, the cultural values and traditions of people plus ignorance of church members towards cremation matters also affect the perceptions and attitudes.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter gave the results and discussions of the research study. This chapter presents the researcher's conclusions of the study based on both quantitative and qualitative data, the indepth interviews, focus group discussions and informal meetings with three pastors and members of the researcher's neighbourhood.

Christians' Knowledge About Cremation

There is an apparent lack of knowledge about cremation among the Christians, yet the church has the capacity to sensitize its congregation about cremation as well as the importance of writing a Will. The church has the capacity and/or resources to facilitate, for instance by inviting experts capable of discussing such issues. The practice is on the increase, yet many Christians remain ignorant. This ignorance can partly be attributed to lack of exposure among the pastors who have little or no experience. So long as the pastors remain ignorant, so long as they do not take the interest or trouble to learn about cremation, their congregations will continue to be ignorant.

Doctrine of Resurrection, Theology and Education Issues

Most of the respondents believe that cremation does not hinder resurrection but there are others who are of the view that a cremated person will never resurrect. All cremated people, according to the researcher, including Hindus will resurrect just like the buried ones

so as to face the judgment seat of Christ. God will judge each of us, whether we are born again or not. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Whether Christian or heathen, all created human beings will face Christ. It is therefore the researcher's view that all Bible believers should be convinced that the issue of 'no resurrection' for cremated people does not arise.

Most of the pastors agreed that there are theological issues to be addressed with regard to cremation. For example issues to do with sacrificing to idols and equating the sacrifice to cremation have been cited by the respondents. It is the view of the researcher that theological support against cremation is lacking. Those cremating their dead are not going against God's ordinances because all the quoted Biblical references in this study do not support or reject cremation. The opponents, according to the researcher, do not seem to have any theological grounds to reject cremation.

As highlighted in both the results and discussions, cultural values and beliefs have a firm grip on human being because cultures are as diverse as the communities are in especially Kenya. Even though there are cultural values that must be discarded because of their waywardness when looked with eyes of the gospel, it is the researcher's view that cremation does not affect the truth of the gospel. Cremation issues are biblically silent just like matters to do with taking the corpse in the church during a funeral service. The researcher therefore concludes that cremation practice is more of a cultural issue than a theological one. The church therefore has the duty to help the congregation understand the role of culture in a Christian's walk with God.

As the church continues with its Christian education, it has the responsibility to provide theological knowledge and competence in the handling of cremation matters for pastors and evangelists. This can build the confidence and morale of church members and ultimately enable them to make a wise and informed decision. Christian education about

cremation will bring light on the topic because Kenyan Christians seem to embrace discussions about the subject. They are revealing a certain flexibility and acceptance of the practice. Christians must know that God will resurrect a bowl of ashes just as conveniently as He will resurrect a bowl of dust (Wikipenda, n.d.).

Land issue in Kenya is a key factor that could consequently persuade many to opt for cremation. It is inevitable that many Kenyans will be forced to proactively think through the issue of other methods of body disposal as the church disseminates information to that effect. Knowing that the church is knowledgeable and prepared to discuss the issue is likely to instill confidence among Christians and enable them share the information. This is the role of Christian education.

Where most Kenyans are living below the poverty line and an increase in population is evident, economic hardships dictate, to some great extent, the things people do. In Kenya, it is just a matter of time, if it has not started, to see people accepting new things that otherwise would have been difficult to embrace.

Today's church owes it to its congregation and pastorate to educate them about cremation. The world is changing and Kenyan Christians should not be left behind. The Kenyan church therefore needs to be more embracing.

The researcher is able to conclude from the hypothesis tested, that there is indeed a relationship between respondents' attitudes toward cremation and their willingness to cremate a loved one. The researcher concludes that the church is the most likely source of education about cremation among its members. The longer therefore this institution remains silent about the subject, the less likely that its congregation will embrace this alternative method of body disposal.

The church should keep in tune with the daily issues of life and which have the potential to destabilize the faith, spirituality and belief of its adherents. This way it will be

well prepared to respond to those in need of a better understanding of issues relating to cremation. Clearly, the Kenyan church has been brought face to face with the issue of cremation, a relatively infrequent occurrence in the Kenyan society and cannot remain silent anymore. The researcher calls upon the church to take up the responsibility of equipping its congregations about cremation.

The researcher also concludes that the absence of a church policy concerning cremation is evident and particularly in the churches whose leaders were interviewed. There is no evidence in the data generated that any pastor in these churches has refused to provide pastoral services for any member who wished to cremate a loved one.

As the study comes to a conclusion, the researcher is able to confidently state that the research questions were adequately responded to. At the same time, the purpose for which the study was carried out i.e. ‘to generate information that will contribute towards the creation of an awareness, and enhance understanding of Kenyans with regard to cremation’ has been well articulated.

On the same note, the objectives, both the ultimate and immediate which were: ‘to provide pastors, evangelists and church leaders with information that would contribute towards helping Christians make an informed decision’ and to ‘establish the perceptions and attitudes of Christians towards cremation, establish the importance of church teachings about cremation,’ ‘determine the perceptions and attitudes of Christians towards cremation, and to ‘find out the perceptions and attitudes affect missiological education’ respectively were equally covered.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

- Church should provide information about cremation through seminars, workshops to enable Christians make informed choices with regard to cremation.

- The church should lead the way in the advocacy of Christians' education with regard to crematorium.
- The church, through Christian education, to be proactive and provide forums to deliberate upon the issue of cremation and culture.
- The pastors, evangelists and leaders should do all they can to be competent enough to confidently guide and counsel the congregations with regard to cremation.
- To the members of the congregation, the researcher recommends that they should know the church has the capacity to provide the guidance, education and counsel to any one considering to leave a Will or to cremate a loved one. All they need to do share with church leaders about their wishes or problems. This will keep the church leaders busy as they seek to learn more about a specific problem.
- Further research with a more diverse sample in terms of education levels is recommended.

Areas for Further Research

The following are areas that the researcher feels should be considered for further research:

- Possibility of church(s) to make a policy on matters pertaining to body disposal
- The psychological and spiritual effect of members of the community from which church members have been cremated should be established.
- Formulate a theology for cremation borrowing from cultural factors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Questionnaire (1)

(TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS EXERCISE YOU MUST BE A KENYAN, A CHRISTIAN AND OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE)

(DO NOT INDICATE YOUR NAME UNLESS YOU CHOOSE TO)

SECTION A

1. Name of your church : _____
2. Please tick gender : Male [] Female [] :
3. How old are you? _____
4. What is your Marital Status?
 - (a) Married [1]
 - (b) Single [2]
 - (c) Divorced [3]
 - (d) Widowed [4]
 - (e) Separated [5]
 - (f) Other – specify _____
5. How many years of formal schooling did you have? _____
6. What is your highest level of education? (Tick only one)
 - (a) Primary [1]
 - (b) Secondary [2]
 - (c) College [3]
 - (d) University [4]
 - (f) Other(specify) _____
7. Which is your province of birth? (Tick only one)
 - (a) Nairobi [1]
 - (b) Central [2]
 - (c) Eastern [3]
 - (d) Rift Valley [4]
 - (e) Nyanza [5]
 - (f) Western [6]
 - (g) Coast [7]
 - (h) North Eastern [8]

SECTION B

This section asks you questions about church and teachings on body disposal and whether the church has responded by educating members about cremation practice.

8. Have you ever heard of cremation? (Please tick as appropriate)
- (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]
 (c) Not sure [3]
9. If yes, what is your source or sources of information? (You may tick more than one)
- (a) A church member [1]
 (b) Electronic media [2]
 (c) Print media [3]
 (d) Sermon [4]
 (e) Church seminar [5]
 (f) Other (specify) _____

10. Has your church taught about methods of body disposal?
- (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]
 (c) Not sure [3]

If yes, please indicate the methods your church has taught on (10) above

- (a) Burial [1]
 (b) Cremation [2]
 (c) None [3]

11. Would you recommend that your church teaches about cremation practice?
- (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]
 (c) Not sure [3]
 (d) Other, (specify) _____

Please explain your response to (11) above _____

12. In your opinion, would church teachings about cremation change the way you view cremation?
- (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]

13. Teachings regarding cremation as an approved method of body disposal (especially during *matanga* or memorial service) will contribute towards church mission

- a) Agree [1]
 b) Disagree [2]
 c) Unsure [3]

Please explain (13) above _____

14. What recommendations would you personally like to make to the church on cremation practice? (You may tick more than one)

- a) Preach/teach about cremation from the pulpit [1]
 - b) Organize seminars at the church to address the subject [2]
 - c) Write articles about cremation in church newsletters, [3]
- Please use this space to give other explanations_____

SECTION C

The information in this section will help the church to understand the attitudes and perceptions of individual Christians on cremation practice

15. Do you know any member of your church who has been cremated?
- (a) Yes [1]
 - (b) No [2]
 - (c) Not sure [3]
16. Do you know any African who has ever been cremated?
- (a) Yes [1]
 - (b) No [2]
 - (c) Not sure [3]
17. Have you ever attempted to obtain information about cremation?
- a) Yes [1]
 - b) No [2]
18. Teachings about cremation will give a Christian better understanding on the subject.
- (a) Agree [1]
 - (b) Disagree [2]
 - (c) Unsure [3]
- Please explain your response on (18) above. _____
19. Cremation is unbiblical and it affects the way someone views Christianity
- (a) Agree [1]
 - (b) Disagree [2]
 - (c) Unsure [3]
- Please explain your response to (18) above: _____
- 20.. Christians who desire to be cremated after death are biblically wrong
- (a) Agree [1]
 - (b) Disagree [2]
 - (c) Unsure [3]
21. What is your view about cremation? _____
22. How would you respond if a member of your family informed you he/she would like to be cremated after death?
- a) Agree [1]
 - b) Disagree [2]
 - c) Not sure [3]
23. Would you like to be cremated?
- (a) Yes [1]
 - (b) No [2]

SECTION D

Information in this section will help the church to understand cultural values regarding body disposal and how Christians view cremation in light of these values

24. Is burial the only method of body disposal in your community?
 (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]
 (c) Not sure [3]
 Please explain your response to (28) above) _____
25. Would you encourage a change from your community's way of body disposal to cremation?
 (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]
 (c) Not sure [3]
 Please explain your response to (26) above _____
26. In your opinion should cremation be considered as an option for body disposal?
 (a) Yes [1]
 (b) No [2]
 (c) Not sure [3]
 Please explain your response to (27) above _____
27. One's beliefs affect the view of cremation
 (a) Agree [1]
 (b) Disagree [2]
 (c) Unsure [3]
28. If Christians in your community accepted cremation it would change the way you view the gospel
 (a) Agree [1]
 (b) Disagree [2]
 (c) Unsure [3]
29. The cultural values attached to body disposal in my community influences my view about cremation
 a) Agree [1]
 b) Disagree [2]
 c) Unsure [3]
 Please explain your response on (29) above _____
30. Those who favour cremation within the African culture are wayward.
 (a) Agree [1]
 (b) Disagree [2]
 (c) Unsure [3]

APPENDIX II

Questionnaire for Pastors and Clergy

Name of the church _____

How long have you been in this position? _____

1. Have you ever participated in the cremating a Christian?
 - a) Yes [1]
 - b) No [2]

2. Church member(s) may tell you they prefer to be cremated if they died. Would you
 - a) Agree [1]
 - b) Disagree [2]
 - c) Unsure [3]

Explain your response to (2) above _____

3. Would you use your pulpit to teach about cremation?
 - a) Yes [1]
 - b) No [2]
 - d) Not sure [3]

Please explain your response to (3) above _____

4. In your opinion, would lack of knowledge about cremation affect the Kenyan church?
 - a) Yes [1]
 - b) No [2]

Explain your response to (4) above _____

5. Is it necessary to conduct a series of teachings with regard to cremation practice?
 - a) Yes [1]
 - b) No [2]
 - c) Not sure [3]

Please explain your response to (5) above _____

6. Many Christians fear cremation because they think it will affect their faith in God. How would you advise them? _____

7. Do you think church teachings about cremation in Kenya would affect the cultural values people hold with regard to cremation?
 a) Yes [1]
 b) No [2]
 Please explain your response to (7) above _____
8. Church teachings about cremation would positively influence the decision-making of those who would like to honour a written Will favouring cremation.
 a) Agree [1]
 b) Disagree [2]
 c) Unsure [3]
9. In your opinion, does cremation contradict the biblical doctrine?
 a) Yes [1]
 b) No [2]
 c) Unsure [3]
 If yes, which ones? _____
10. Teachings about cremation will strengthen the decision-making of those who would like to be cremated after death.
 a) Agree [1]
 b) Disagree [2]
 c) Unsure [3]
11. Individual Christians will be flexible and willing to cremate their loved ones if teachings regarding cremation were conducted.
 a) Agree [1]
 b) Disagree [2]
 c) Unsure [3]
12. Mortality rate in Kenya is quite high hence burial is almost a daily occurrence. In your opinion, should Kenyans also consider cremation as another method of body disposal?
 a) Yes [1]
 b) No [2]
 Please explain your response to (12) above _____
13. In your opinion, do you think teachings about cremation would enhance missiological education?
 a) Yes [1]
 b) No [2]
14. As a church leader, what is your view about cremation?

APPENDIX III

Individual in-depth Interview guide with bishops

- Q1.** Bishop, cremation seems to generate ill feelings among Kenyan Christians. What is the church's stand on the issue?
- Q2** How would you explain the change from a cultural method of disposal to cremation?
- Q4.** What is your advice to Christians who would like to be cremated in light of how theology responds to cremation?