

**SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS
OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP TRANSFER THROUGH MARRIAGE
IN A BLACK RURAL COMMUNITY**

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SUMMARY

This study gives a theological reflection on a practice that is common among Christian denominations in the geographical area of Sterkspruit and the border town of Aliwal North in the Eastern Cape. It examines the implication of the transfer of church membership by women who marry outside their churches. This transfer is certified by a document called 'Remove', which gives a recommendation for acceptance in the new church. In some cases, this transfer, is not done willingly. The women are pressurised either by their husbands or their in-laws. This study therefore gives a missiological interpretation of this practice which members of the community concerned claim to be based on their culture as a patriarchal society.

Among other things this study stimulates reflection on what is Christian and essential for all Christians in as far as the following are concerned: Evangelisation, mission, liberation, discipleship, ecumenism, common witness, personal freedom and inter-cultural communication of the Gospel.

KEY WORDS

Socio-religious, Implications, Transfer, church-membership, women, marriage, patriarchy, mission, feminism, husband, wife, family, 'remove', evangelisation, ecumenism, common witness, domination, oppression, relationships, denomination, equality, culture and tradition.

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 gives the introduction to the whole document stating the problem, its context, motivation for the study, research method and the geographical area where the community studied is located.

Chapter 2 Focuses on the socio-cultural norms and regulations, sustaining the background and environment on which the whole mentality of transfer of church membership by married women is based. It is preceded by a picture, which visualises the concept of African marriage and the relationship between the married woman, her husband and in-laws. It also shows the degree of her bond with her family after marriage.

Chapter 3 In this section of the study the basic reasons for transfer of church membership are tabled. These are reasons gathered during the interviews with the women who experienced church membership transfer after marriage. This chapter like the previous one is preceded by a visual aid – an image portraying the actual reality of women's movement from one denomination to another while men remain in their churches.

Chapter 4 looks at the actual concrete experiences of transfer when new membership is attained. Here women relate some of the feelings and experiences they had, when they became members of their new churches. Some had to overcome some difficulties while other had a smooth transition from one church to another.

Chapter 5 Gives an overview of what really makes marriage an important institution in human society, by looking at the common values found in both two traditions members of the community of our study belong to. In both the Christian tradition and the African tradition in as far as marriage and its goals are concerned. It elaborates on the role of marriage in society and also in church, mission and evangelisation.

Chapter 6 highlights the need for emancipation of women from the clutches of dominant patriarchy. This chapter looks directly at the South African context under which women experience the impact of patriarchy in their lives. In this part of the study we listen to the voices calling for the transformation of our society and the recognition of women's claim for equality, abolition of domination and abuse by men on account of sexism and gender inequality supported by tradition and culture.

Chapter 7 takes us a little further in our investigation of the problem of transfer of church membership through marriage. In chapter seven some theological interpretation of the whole scenario is given. The main point in this section is to examine the pro and cons of the practice in question from the theological point of view based on mission and what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

Chapter 8 gives a brief summary of how the issue under discussion is related to various dimensions of mission like, evangelisation, common witness, inter-cultural communication of the Gospel, liberation and personal freedom as children of God. It is followed by conclusion.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

The universality of marriage within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions it performs, such as procreation and provision for sexual gratification and regulation, care of children and their education and their socialization, regulation of lines of descent, division of labour between sexes, economic production and consumption and provision for satisfaction of personal needs for affection, status and companionship.

The kinds of institutions and customs that a society develops to fulfil these functions depend on a number of characteristics, as size and complexity of the society, level of economic development, form of kinship system and the nature of economic, political and religious institutions. For example, the status of women affects the power that husbands have over their wives; religious beliefs are related to attitudes about divorce and remarriage; the age of marriage and the economic role of wives is partly determined by the economic system etc. (Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 14 1969: 926).

What I am trying to show here is that the issue under study is linked to a form of relationship which is universal, a relationship that is affected by a number of issues in societal life and societal expectations. My interest in this study is focused on a rural Black community in South Africa. The topic that will be discussed here is linked closely with the kinship system of this community and its religious beliefs, as well as the relationship between husband and wife.

The main aim of this study is to explore one particular practice, which caught my attention in a special way since I started my work as a priest to a number of communities in my church as a Roman Catholic priest. It is the practice of 'Remove'. This applies to the official termination of membership to a particular

church or denomination and assumption of a new membership in another church or denomination. 'Remove' is an official document, which is a proof that the person issued with it is a full member of the church that he or she is leaving. The expectation is that the condition for admission into the new church or denomination must depend on the provision of this document. This does not mean admission is not possible without a 'remove', but the possession of it is an acceptable courtesy and a desirable formality most churches are happy to extend to their moving members and to receive from prospective members. 'Remove' contains current information about the person. His or her status in the Christian community, that is the local branch of his or her denomination at the time of leaving. It is a form of spiritual curriculum vitae.

The reason I say this caught my attention in a special way is because I belong to a Christian tradition that does not follow this practice. According to the tradition I belong to, once a person is baptised into the Church that person remains a member even if he or she decides to leave the Church for whatever reason, therefore there is no formal recognition of this departure. Some people who came to me requesting a 'remove' were surprised when I told them I can't grant them one.

I treated the first request as an isolated incident, but as time went on and many more people requested "removes" or brought their 'removes' to me, I realised that there is more to this business than I thought and I began to become interested in following it up with the intention of understanding it better. Another

thing, which fuelled my interest in finding out more about the reason for the 'remove' system is the fact that it affects only one section of the community, namely, married women.

I served several Catholic communities around Sterkspruit and the neighbouring towns of Aliwal North and Lady Grey for seven and half years and I don't remember a single man asking for a 'remove' or showing me one so that they could join our community. This prompted me to ask those women who come for a 'remove' why they want it. They always give one answer: *'nditshatile'* which means: 'I am married to a man from another church'. Those who leave other churches to join the Catholic Church. They become Catholics because their husbands are Catholics. When I discovered that there is a strong link between church membership transfer of women and marriage, I decided to make an investigation into the reason or reasons behind this practice.

During my interviews with some of the respondents of this research study, it became clear that most of them never made any deep reflection on this matter. It is something which they know should happen but they never bothered to ask why it has to be like that except that it is something society is expecting to happen and therefore, that's how it should be. When it became clear that the issue at stake cannot be easily understood by only observation but that some scientific analysis and interpretation was required, I decided to embark on this project, the aim of which is to unravel underlying reasons for transfer of church membership for women who marry cross-denominationally. The most important aspect to this

practice, is the fact that it appears to be one - sided. While the male members of the black society are static in regard to church membership, the women seem to be constant denominational 'path-crossers.'

The suspicion is that the general socialisation of women and men in their approach to marriage and social expectations surrounding it do have some impact on the change of church membership in cases where husband and wife happen to belong to different Christian denominations. In order to know whether it is correct to make this kind of assumption it would be good to search for answers from the various patterns of relationships distinct to the African community. By African community here I refer to the Black community living in the villages around Sterkspruit, Lady Grey and the border town of Aliwal North. A community comprising of ethnic groups of Xhosa, Sotho and Hlubi, people of African descent, whose culture and most of their customs are shared other people of African origin on the continent.

The quotation from the Encyclopedia Britannica, at the beginning of this introduction, underlines a few important characteristics which influence certain institutions and customs in society especially when it comes to the institution of marriage. Issues like kinship systems, religious beliefs, status of women, division of labour, attitudes to marriage, divorce and remarriage etc. all play an important role in defining the form of relationship between men and women in society and between husbands and wives and their children. Therefore here I investigate this universal form of relationship, which is found in every society and is governed by

particular customs prevalent in individual societies in the world. I am doing this with specific reference to a black community in South Africa in a geographical area already mentioned above.

1. The problem and its context

The issue under discussion here is inter – church marriage which by its nature like inter - faith marriage, inter – cultural marriage and inter – racial marriage involve the coming together of partners from different social or religious backgrounds. Partners' love and care for each other in marriage help them to overcome some of the problems emanating from the incompatibility of partners' cultural, racial or religious backgrounds. However, there is a lot of evidence that such marriages sometimes experience many problems for the simple reason that partners face the challenge of overcoming prejudices and negative attitudes towards each other's social background including religious beliefs.

The issue of mixed marriages, whether they are cross–cultural, inter–faith, or inter–racial, etc. has been treated by many writers from different angles and I would like to say that those books and articles I have come across have done excellent work on this topic. I found the works of the following authors on this topic of mixed marriages quite useful in helping me to understand concrete life experiences couples in such unions can go through at times. The sort of things they have to put up with while they remain committed and devoted to one another. W. Johnson and Michael Warren's book: 'Inside the mixed marriage' (1994) gives interesting accounts of some experiences of inter–racial and

cross-cultural couples from different countries, whose unions somehow evoked some form of disapproval from some of the people who see them together.

Mixed marriages including inter-church marriages are discussed from the African context and point of view by Aylward Shorter in his: *Christian Family Power in Africa* (1977: 52 – 54), *African Christian Marriage* (1977: 138 – 161) and Whyte in Verryn's: *Marriage in modern Africa* (1975: 141 – 156).

In this particular study our interest is focused on the expected change of church membership for women on account of marriage as a norm which most black women feel obliged to abide by even though in their hearts they would have preferred to remain in their churches after marriage. This seems to be deeply ingrained in the minds of black South Africans, male and female alike. The intention is to get to the root of whatever is central to this norm. It is a formality which people believe should be observed even if it serves no meaningful purpose. Women seem to experience it as a socio-cultural pressure that they have little to do or say about, except to bend to its demand even if they resent it. Some confess that they would rather be nominal members of their in-laws' church than to have confrontation with either their husbands or in-laws over this issue. It is clear therefore that the issue is sensitive. The question is why? This is what we have to find out and see what it means to us as Christians. It will also be good to examine what our divided Christianity manifested by our denominational allegiances contribute to this problem.

Our inspection of the practice of 'remove', its consequences, and its impact on

the personal experiences of those who undergo it, will help us to ask some questions that will help us to understand Christ, His mission and His expectation of the Christian mission in the world of our time better. The grass roots experience of some of the Christian women of our community will help us to search for things that really matter in the mission of the Church, things that are substantial to the spreading of God's kingdom on earth, among all the peoples and cultures. The gist of the matter here is to find out whether the practice of 'remove' and the social requirement on which it is based are in any way in conflict with any of the Christian teachings. It will be worthwhile to keep some questions at the back of our minds as we try to expound and examine the connotation this has on our understanding of mission in our multi – denominational South African Christian community with its diverse doctrinal, devotional, activities and practices.

How is mission and evangelisation in our context affected by this phenomenon? What positive contributions can we draw from the experiences of those who have a first hand experience of 'remove' and how can that help us handle mixed marriages better in the future? Do black women who marry outside their churches have freedom to belong to any church of heir choice without putting their marriage and family relationships into jeopardy? Does culture play a negative or positive role in this practice?

My hypotheses here is that:

Patriarchal norms and hierarchical patterns of traditional forms of

relationships between male and female, demand and force black South African women of this rural community, to change church membership through marriage.

This in other words is a simple reflection on something real and concrete that is happening within Christian communities. It affects real people who are often committed Christians.

Our examination, reflection and analysis of this transfer of church membership as something required by marriage will be guided by our understanding of the spirit of ecumenism, evangelisation, mission, discipleship, church growth, liberation, freedom, inter – cultural communication of the Gospel and the challenges of feminism and women's theologies on patriarchy and cultural practices sustaining it.

2. Relevance to missiology

The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws.... God himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they come from the hand of the creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures and spiritual attitudes. These differences should not cause us to forget its common and permanent characteristics. Although the dignity of this institution is not transparent everywhere with the same clarity, some sense of the greatness of the matrimonial union exists in all cultures. The well – being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life (Catechism of the Catholic Church: Article 7, 1992 : 341).

What we read in the paragraph above clearly indicates that marriage, universal as it is, at the same time belong to the form of human relationship governed by the law of the creator and the teaching of Christ the saviour of humankind. The

practice in question affects real people who belong to a culture that is unique and distinct from some of the cultures of the world. Before their society encountered Christianity and its norms, they had their own norms and customs that guided various forms of relationships in the society to which they owe their descent and heritage. The issue we are studying in this project is a real life experience touching lives of real people. It is rooted in a real social setting under which mission takes place, mission in which different denominations participate. A study of this kind and its reflection on an issue that is open to theological examination can contribute something to self criticism of a missionary community such as ours. It can also help us to redefine our approaches to mission in this country. Christian mission does not happen in a vacuum, but within socio – cultural settings that sometimes need to be given systematic and organised critique and this is what is happening in this case.

Anyone who takes mission seriously, will realise that it is always important to become aware of social or cultural aspects which can enhance or hinder the effectiveness of mission as communication of the Good News to everyone, let alone its credibility and faithfulness to its purpose. Mission is a dialogue between the social context and the Gospel. We do have a context to review in this study, therefore I can say that the work I am doing here is relevant to mission and missiology. The issue I am reviewing is nothing else than on the job experience I am going through in my involvement in mission.

I am convinced that the result of this theological reflection can lead to practical

changes and inspire new ways of approaching mixed-marriage unions. When some of our prejudices and attitudes against each other as Christians fall away, we will be able to enjoy the fruits of what we believe as followers and preachers of one and the same redeemer. Bearing in mind that marriage in our Christian understanding is a vocation men and women are called to embrace and enjoy, it needs to be freed of all ill-feelings and prejudices for the good of the purpose it serves in society and the ministry it has to fulfil.

3. Research method used

The method applied in this research is a qualitative method. Most of the data was collected by means of interviews, which were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. They were conducted in Xhosa and Sotho and then translated into English. This was done in order to make use of them in the text of this study. As I am fluent in both languages, I got all the information directly from the respondents without the assistance of an interpreter. Published literature relevant to the study was also consulted in order to have ideas clarified and explained.

Various categories of people closely related to the problem described above were interviewed. This includes women from different denominations who transferred church membership after marriage. Other respondents include pastors (ordained ministers), lay pastoral workers e.i marriage counselors and some of the husbands of women who married cross-denominationally. Although this study project focuses specifically on women with this special experience of

transferring church membership, I found it necessary to include those other categories of people in my data collection especially because some of them are direct role players in this practice of 'remove' system (pastors and husbands).

The criteria used to select key respondents (women), were that they should be women who have transferred church membership because of marriage. They must have been married for a period not less than five years. The age of these respondents vary because some were married many decades ago and they have their own daughters in-law while others were not married so long ago but they have lived with their partners long enough to qualify for the purpose of this study.

The interviews were done within a relaxed atmosphere in the comfort of the respondents' homes.

Since the topic itself is sensitive, discretion was taken to make sure that those respondents who preferred to discuss their experiences and views privately, managed to do so without feeling insecure. In some cases it was prudent to interview the women in the absence of their husbands in order to guarantee freedom to express their feelings without hurting their partners' feelings, especially those who are not happy with their husbands' churches. In such cases I assured them that I am bound to my professional secrecy to treat their information differently. After initial interviews, some follow up interviews did take place in some cases in order to make some important clarifications.

Besides the formal interviews, I also used social activities and observations of

other that highlight the patriarchal nature of the community of our study from some social events like funerals, meetings and informal discussions. In order to make the picture even more clearer, I also took advantage of some gatherings of *'manyano'* (mothers unions) women of different denominations to make statistical surveys of the movement of women across denominational borders due to marriage. It was in such occasions where I also made opinion-poll survey of what women themselves say on this issue

4. Scope and limitation of this study

This study project is mainly concerned with mixed-marriages between partners belonging to different Christian denominations, traditions or confessions. Whether the marriages are solemnised according to marriage regulations of any particular church, is not the issue here. Our interest is basically the fact that one of the partners, who in this case is actually the wife has transferred her church membership through the marriage.

In some cases a church wedding did take place whereas in others there was no church wedding. There are also cases where the husband is nominally a member of a particular church and for the rest of his life has practically nothing to do with it. When it comes to marriage that allegiance with that church alone is enough to determine the church members of his household should belong to.

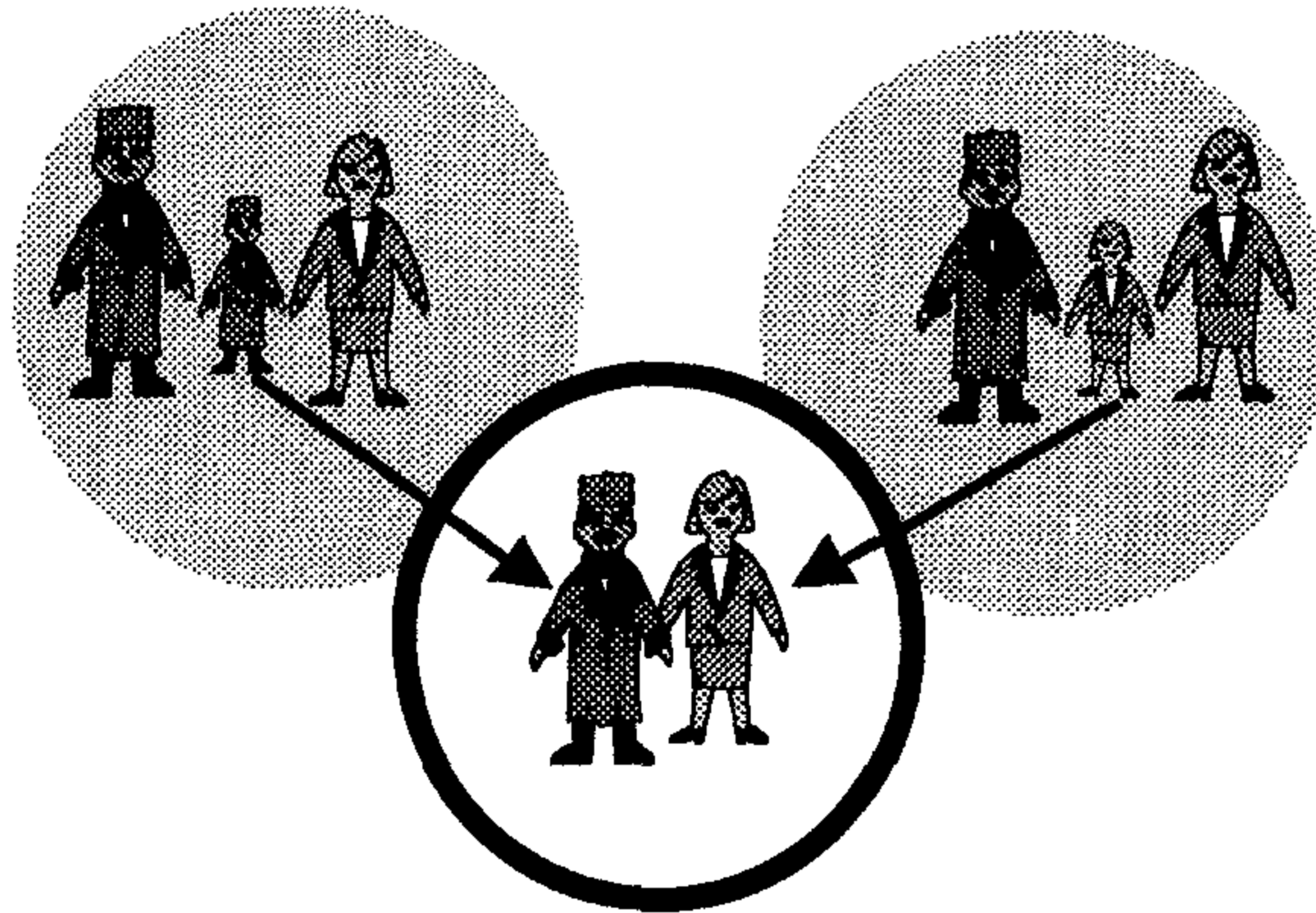
Our focus is not necessarily concerned about whether people in these marriages are active members of their churches or not. What we are after is to find out what

the transfer has, or is doing to them as Christians and how Christian churches can help couples in this situation find enrichment through our common mission and service to humanity. This we do bearing in mind the cultural notions guiding members of this particular community of our study especially in the area of marital relationships between husband and wife and in-laws on both sides.

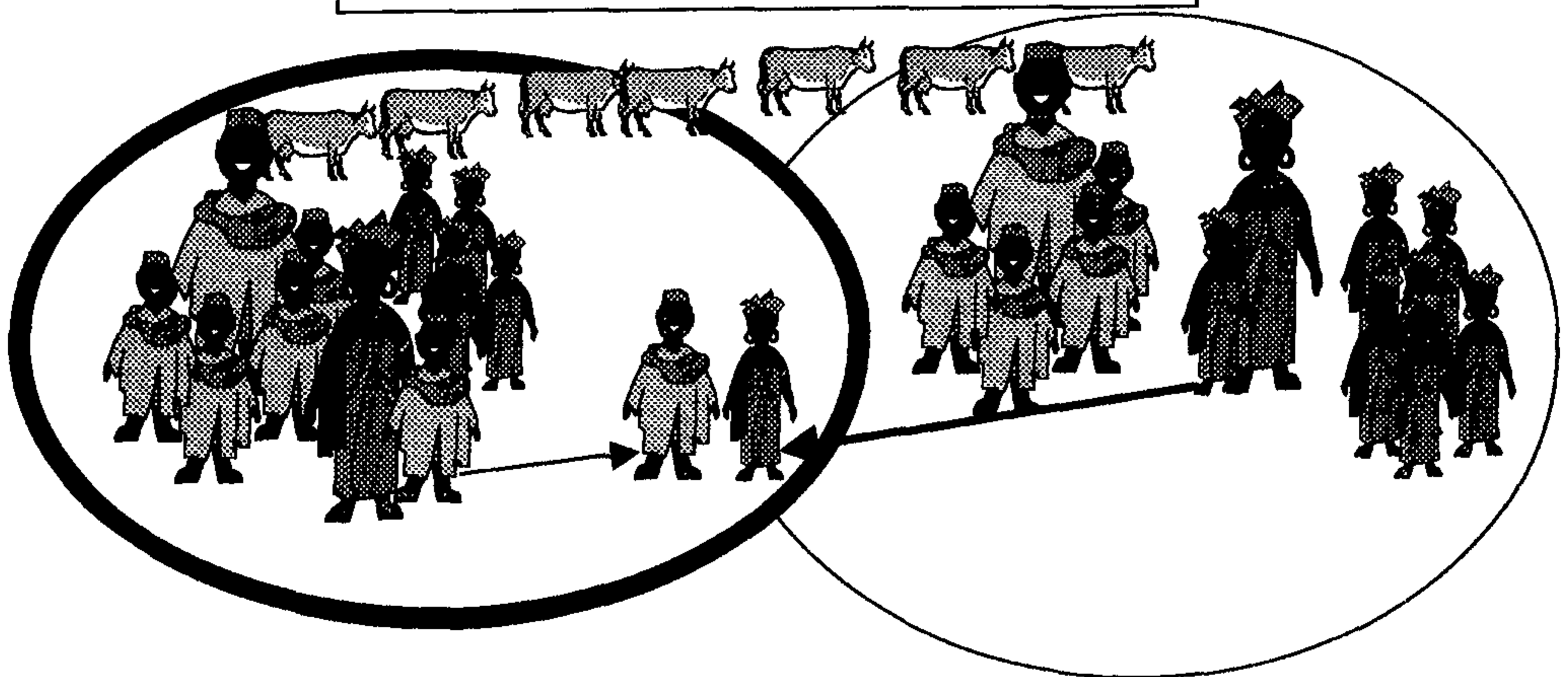
Marriage is not discussed for its own sake in this study. It is discussed in relation to its influence of church membership across denominations for married women. It provides a setting or a plot where patriarchy and its norms play a clear role in influencing human decisions including religious decisions. Marriage and family are the basic point of departure from which our topic is discussed.

Figure 1
Comparison of Marriage Patterns and Family Ties

Western Family Pattern



African Family Pattern



CHAPTER TWO

Socio-Cultural Background

Introduction

In this chapter we will dwell briefly on common features or elements found in the marital relations in the tribal groups mentioned above. Article seven of the catechism of the Catholic Church (1992 : 341) does indicate that although marriage exists in various forms in different cultures, permanent values of marital union manifest themselves in all of them even if it is with not much clarity in some cases. This very fact makes us to study marriage from society to society with special focus on different angles highlighting various areas of interests. We will therefore make an effort to explore Xhosa, Sotho and Hlubi marriage to see how basic values attached to family and societal kinship relations are expressed and communicated to those who enter marriage. As we know culture plays an important role in informing, and guiding an individual on how to conduct his or her daily life and relations with others. It will be good therefore to spend some time looking into the manner in which men and women relate to each other under various conditions, including marriage. In this way we will unravel some complex relational patterns underlying the whole network of relations between genders, family units, clans, extended families and society at large.

The ethnic groups discussed here are by their very nature African traditional societies. They are patrilineal societies in a true sense of the word. Family

lineage is traced from the father's side. Distinct features of African culture common to all African societies are easily observable in the day to day life of this local community. These groups listed above share in common, the communal spirit frame of mind in every way of dealing with their existential issues and interpretation of life and its challenges. The communitarian orientation towards human affairs, which is an essential mark in African societies, is evident in all important events in the life of an individual.

Having lived together for what I may call time immemorial, there are practices common among them, which preclude one from referring to them as distinctively Xhosa, Hlubi or Sotho. Since cultures are not static there are some cultural adaptations in some of their customs. Sometimes if one asks 'why do you do this or that the way you are doing it,' one may find that the answer does not go anywhere further than simply saying: 'Sisintu ngaloku' which means, 'That is how things should be, according to our tradition'. Having given you this kind of an answer they expect you to understand that it is appropriate to behave this way or that way in a given situation as long as one does not violate the norms laid down by culture or local customs.

With this brief introduction the aim is to show that the rural community in which our research on church membership transfer through marriage was done, comprises of different tribes which also have different clans among them. But they share a lot in common in as far as basic qualities of African societies are concerned. Our respondents come randomly from these groups. In as far as our

topic is concerned, the experience is very similar to all of them. The following are common cultural features of the community under discussion:

1. Initiation of young men and women into adult life.
2. preliminary negotiations before marriage.
3. The seal of marriage union by payment of lobola for married women.
4. Integration of newly wed women into the family characterised by extended family mode of belonging.
5. Relationships between husband and wife.
6. Relationship with in-laws in general
7. Rituals of incorporation of newly born and newly married into the family clan.

1. Inside the Xhosa, Hlubi or Sotho marriage

Before we get directly into what really happens in marriage in the above mentioned cultural groupings, it would be worthwhile also to note that the basic characteristic of our society related to this particular study is that it is a community that is communal orientated in its relationship system. Mkhize (1988 : 44) gives a broad spectrum of how far the kinship in a black community can extend, we find that the couple is related by blood and marriage to a wide group of kinsmen who intervene in and are of much influence upon their married life. These may include the brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, mothers, fathers (this refers to fathers of the couple and their brothers) nephews and nieces ... all members of the extended family. This close relationship is extended outside the family to include other members of the clan with the same surname. The members of the kinship act as a strong support for the couple, and in case of misunderstanding, they may help to settle the dispute by counseling the couple or by arbitration.

The black socio – cultural milieu has a communal dimension that emphasises unity and solidarity (Goba, in Mkhize. 1988 : 69). Wallunga (1984 : 159) further clarifies this fact

The close bond between members of the same family and the solidarity that unites a clan are undoubtedly important values of the African tradition. Unless a person has been completely excluded, he or she is thought of not as an isolated individual but as a member of an organic whole whose life deserves protection by the entire group. It is thanks to this profound sense of unity that generation upon generation has been able to live out its life and survive in conditions that have often been difficult.

Within the black community the prevailing cognitive model for ordering human relations is one in which there is an emphasis on 'I' and thou or the essential 'we'. This therefore indicates that the quality of self is perceived in group than in individual terms (Wilsworth, in Phorie. 1989: 14 – 15). What I want to add to Wilsworth's description of the black community is that crucial moments in life are marked by community involvement from beginning to end.

In a great many societies the man–woman relationship and the physical unity it involves is reflected in wider social relationships. It is not only the survival of the closer family unit in terms of the production of offspring that constantly is the pre – occupation of the individuals concerned. But it is also the survival of the clan and the community itself. Hence, the involvement of the clan, the tribe and total community in the marriage affair of a young couple. Marriage is not regarded as only a private affair between a man and a woman – it is a matter that involves the total community surroundings, for a good and fortunate outcome of the marriage is to the benefit of them all (Berglund in Verryn 1975 : 4)

The presents offered at marriage by the husband are often made up of contributions given him toward this end by his relatives and clansmen and are not all retained by the girl's parents but

shared among her relatives and even clansmen. The giving of presents is thus a transaction binding two groups rather than two individuals, a fact reflected in such institutions as the inheritance of wives, sororate, levirate and so on (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1969: 941).

Uncles, friends of the family and many others offer gifts to those who are getting married as a way of supporting them as they start a new home and family. Marriage therefore is indeed a community business in the true sense of the word.

The life of an individual becomes a community affair even before it starts. This will become even clearer as we continue in our discussion. The end of that life is also a community affair. Here we can demonstrate that by referring to some major events in an individual's life like, initiation to adulthood, marriage and funeral. Just to give a few examples: at many public occasions in the villages around Sterkspruit, whether it is a funeral or a joyful celebration, speakers in most cases address themselves to the clan and not to the individual. In a case of death they will for instance say something like: *'Sithi kuni Manzolo lalani ngenxeba'*, which means: "We convey our condolences to the 'manzolo' clan, we urge you to accept the situation as it stands", or something like: *'Sivuyizana nani Mabhele'*, if it is a case where congratulations have to be expressed. While the individual will not necessarily be overshadowed or ignored through this way of speaking, he or she is seen to be what they are in relation to his or her clan and family. Personal achievement is attributed to the whole family, clan or community as a whole depending on its degree and benefit to all.

A good example of the fact that African women are not married for an exclusive relationship with her partner, is what I heard at one of the funerals I conducted in

one of our villages, Thabakoloi, under the tribal authority of chief Nkopane. When Mr. Nonjola the brother in-law of the deceased lady addressed the mourners he said:

When Mamosia (The childhood name of the deceased) came into this family, we gave her the name Nonkosi, to show that she belongs to the Xaba clan. We don't have names like 'sweet heart' or 'darling' in this family. 'Waye inkosikazi' (she was a married woman). She never disappointed us as the woman of this family. (Mr. Nonjola at the funeral of Mrs Nonkosi Nonjola, 11 – 08 – 2001)

In his explanation of the levirate system as a support system for married women and their offspring in the case of losing their spouses through premature death, Clement Senekane (1995: 16 – 17), indicates that the African custom concerning widows was to cater for their domestic, sexual and procreative needs within the family community into which they were married.

African marriages had a strong community character. The married woman entered the family community of her husband as a worker and bearer of children for the whole group. She is the wife of the whole community. She was regarded as 'our wife'. This did not mean that any other man, besides her husband, had the right of sexual access to the woman, but it stressed her role in the family. A good number of relatives contributed to the bride's wealth, that was why she and her children belonged to the family as a whole.

The clan immortalises its members by giving names of the deceased members or ancestors to younger generations. This is a way of tracing family and clan lineages. Members of same clan will recognise each other by their names. We know that certain names are found among people of a certain clan, therefore it is easy to discover which people are related.

Some clans give names to the bride and this naming indicates that she is now

expected to mature into motherhood. This already implies that a child is expected from her. If before marriage she was 'Nthabiseng', the Sothos will call her, for example; 'Mmamorena', although 'Morena' is not yet born or will ever be born, she must know that her presence in the new family requires her to be conscious of her motherhood powers and responsibilities. Someone can also get a noble name indicating that she is the mother of the whole clan. Among the Sothos such names would be 'Mmabakwena' (mother of the 'Kwena' clan), 'Mmabafokeng' (Mother of the 'Bafokeng' clan). A married woman is called by her marital name not by her girlhood name. Calling a married woman by her former name is humiliating. The only people who may do so are members of her family or relatives, who gave her that name. Naming marks her belonging to the new family. Whether she bears children or remains childless, the name remains and it is an indication that what is expected of her is to play her motherhood role to the members of the family. She assumes a new title 'Umama welikhaya' (the mother of the house), 'Mmalelapa' in Sotho.

The naming awards a married woman a new status and most of them are proud of these names that are given to them by marriage, as it marks their new identity. This brings us back to the fact that the old self for the married woman dies away and a new self emerges. It is a totally new chapter in their lives. The clan accepts them as truly insiders and no more as outsiders. It invests its future in them, in terms of its continuation to the future through their procreative powers and nurturing of homes from generation to generation.

2. Patriarchal society

In this type of society the male members of the society play a special role in the order of relationships in the community. A brief description of this type of society is given by Deist in his concise dictionary of theological terms (1987 : 125): it is a society in which a father exercises authority over all his descendants for as long as he lives. Men are regarded as heads of families. Males in the community learn this role from their early formative years. They are socialised from a young age to take this role seriously. The climax of the preparation for assuming the position as head of family is the initiation into manhood. Post-initiation males are expected to change their behaviour because now they have a right to be included into any forum that requires the presence of responsible members of the community. They are no longer boys. During the process of initiation into adulthood, it is instilled into their minds that they are assets to their families and to society at large. Not only issues or problems facing their immediate families are their concern but, community as a whole has a right to demand their services. The husband is the head of the household where his wife and his children live. Even if any male member of the family moves out of the household and establishes his own home nearby or far away, it does not make any difference. His father remains the head of the household he grew up in and in certain matters he is still regarded as the head of the affairs of his sons' households especially when it comes to matters relating to customs distinct to the clan.

Berglund (1975 : 3) says that whilst the male has dominion and roles, being the head, there is a marked discrimination against the woman and the role that she plays. She is the inferior, the weak, and in a sense the one of lesser importance, I would not agree with this author fully in the assertion that woman is of lesser importance.

It is true to say that man has a dominant role in matters of the household and the community and the custom invests him with authority to play his role according to the norms laid down by society. But, what is important in this regard is what Whooley (1975: 281) mentions in his attempt to define equality in African marriage between husband and wife. He says equality in our society has a lot to do with roles; in other words, equality of opportunity in respect of jobs and offices that one can fill. It is used a great deal in respect of male and female relationships and roles in that relationship. He further says that asking this question of whether there is equality in marriage to the community of Lumko where he did his study, is in many ways like asking if there is equality between doctors, plumbers, teachers and nurses in our society.

If one is speaking of the roles within the family, the analogy of the doctor and the nurse is very close indeed. One is speaking of complimentary type of equality and there is little common ground. In any case a society has a right to be understood in terms of its own concepts which comprise an intelligible whole. What is being clarified here is the fact that men and women have different roles to play in matters pertaining to the order of life in the family, in the clan and in the larger community.

Our interest in exploring the roles of men and women in marital relationships is based on the fact that we want to focus in a special way on the role of men in a patriarchal society like ours in matters surrounding the institution of marriage and

family arrangement. Marriage is a male dominated affair although women do play some part in it. In the whole procedure of marriage from its beginning to the very end the people who play key roles are male members of the society. Dominant and prominent role players during the negotiation of marriage between families are the male relatives of the groom and the bride.

When I asked Mrs Ndubane, a middle aged Xhosa lady who has a son in law, what role they play as women when it comes to the marriage of their daughters, she said:

We, women we do not take part in the negotiations. We leave that to the men. If ever a woman is allowed into that business, it should be an elderly woman who although present during the discussions will not have an active participation, she will be there only to listen but not to talk. If she has any ideas or personal suggestions to make she is expected to do that on the side, not directly (Interview. 25 - 05 - 2001).

She told me their joy on such occasions is to show hospitality to the visitors by preparing special food to be eaten together after the negotiations. This already shows the spirit of co – operation between the two families. By the mere coming to negotiate lobola and express their intention to take the daughter of the family for marriage is in itself an honour to the hosting family.

There are two platforms in this business. Women have their own platform for raising their opinions on the marriage,. Namely, in the privacy of their home with their husbands or other male relatives representing their side in the negotiations. The other platform is a formal one where only men are trusted to play their role properly. Another role, which they are proud and happy to play, is to prepare the young woman for her future status so that she does not bring shame to her family

by not behaving appropriately as expected. Women participate also in *'uduli'* - a delegation that fetches the bride from her home in a ceremonial and festive way and in welcoming her to the husband's home. The male members of the two families conduct rituals marking the seal of marriage and incorporation into the clan. *'Umshwamo'* is the giving of a piece of meat (taken from the left side of the beast slaughtered for the purpose) to the bride by the male member of her new home. *'Tsiki'* : is the meat that she is given in order to give her freedom to eat any food the family eats as a sign of her acceptance into the family. She is no longer a stranger. Men are not only custodians of culture, they function as officiators in customary rituals. Many men and women are, to this day, still not at ease with the idea of having women funeral leaders. Important rites and rituals are a domain of men. I have tried above to demonstrate what underlines the role of men in the patriarchal society we are concerned with.

3. Patrilineal Society

None of the definitions of marriage in the previous paragraphs in this paper, short of indicating that marriage in whatever variation, is basically linked with the procreation of children. Perpetuation of the human species is a natural result of marriage. It is this propagation of the clan or family that men are expected to be able to do through their spouses in a patrilineal society.

In this system the husband plays the role of the superior of the wife and family as a whole. The supremacy of the husband increases to the extent that the reproductive powers of the woman are considered to be at the service of the husband's kinship group and therefore the children belong to the father's kinship group. A married woman is not allowed extra-marital relations. A child's legitimacy is a vital issue. Moreover the wife's links with her group of origin are weakened. Her descendants are subordinated to the new contract. In this system

(Patrilineal) the woman, to a large extent, is seen as inferior to the man, Clement Senekane (1995: 13 – 14).

By claiming that the children belong to her, the woman would be implying that she begotten them by someone else besides her husband. However the marital difficulties may be, African women will hardly denounce their children's identity with the family and clan of their fathers. They know that the children belong to the family of the husband and the clan. The family community of the husband is expected to contribute to the well being of the children begotten by one of its members and must be ready to assist in the upbringing of those children who carry the name of the family. We can make this clearer by looking at what Senekane says when he affirms the expected collaboration among the members of the husband's family in the rearing of children born of the male member of the family:

"One of the objectives in African marriage was to have a big family. This was based on the belief that children meant wealth, prestige and the blessings from God and the ancestors. The children belonged, not only to the nuclear household but also to the extended family community. As a result, the whole family community and relatives co – operated with one another in educating and bringing up each other's children. It was relatively easy for children to be fostered or loaned to various households within the family community" (1995:15).

I agree with Senekane here because in the African set up, there is no need to look among strangers for a child to adopt. The children in the family community belong to us all. If a child needs a foster care, it is not sent away to live with strangers or outsiders, but one family in the family community or clan will easily take up the responsibility of taking care of such a child. This is a lived experience

within African traditional societies.

This aspect of patriarchal society is well portrayed by Berglund (In Verry.1975: 5)

where he says:

The children borne by a woman are, in the image of the fertility – orientated man – woman relationships, the result of the male's life planted in his wife. Logically, therefore, the children are his, continuing his life. Hence, sons are, to a large extent, more important than daughters. For it is sons that continue the life of the family and the clan. Daughters are essential in that they become the future mothers of to the children of other men of other clans (Families).

Legitimacy of children is an important and sensitive issue. Children should know who they are by means of knowing their clan. The clan is important because it gives children identity. They know where they belong and this gives them a sense of being proud of who they are in terms of relationships with other members of the community. As Berglund has shown us above, in a patrilineal society, lineage is traced according to the family lineage of the father, not of the mother.

Male members of the clan have as the duty to get wives through whom the clan will be able to continue its existence among other clans. The explanation given by Berglund above is sufficient to give us an idea of what goes on in a patrilineal community. This sheds more light on what we have tried to say about the patriarchal society. We have already seen from more than one definition of marriage that children gain their legitimacy through the marital union of their parents. The Xhosa, Sotho and Hlubi people are patrilineal societies.

The 'Amasiko' in Xhosa, 'Maseko' in Sotho (customs) means a lot to them. Children must undergo the 'amasiko' of the father's clan. The ritual of

incorporation of the child into the clan is crucial for the well-being of the child. This ritual is called 'imbeleko' in Xhosa or 'Thari' in Sotho. This refers to the animal that is slaughtered for the ancestors to introduce to them the new comer into the family and the clan. It has to be observed. If it is ignored, people believe that its omission can cause misfortune or some form of impairment to the child, or later in life make one prone to misfortune or bad luck. That is why some adults still undergo it if there is some doubts that they ever got it. It symbolically links one with the side of the parents, which is of his or her clan. It is important for boys who are permanent members of the clan.

Girls, as it has already been said before, are transitional members of the clan, since they will join other clans after some time. It is equally important for both girls and boys, in as far as legitimacy of parenthood especially of the father is concerned. Since all mothers want to have healthy and normal children they take the observance of the 'amasiko' for their children seriously. Mothers, undergo the ritual of incorporation through the '*Umshwamo*' when they are introduced as new members to the ancestors of the family and clan by eating a special piece of meat from a sacrificial beast. Their membership in the family and the clan at this point is no longer transitional. it is permanent. After their death they too will be considered ancestors of the clan.

Some people are so convinced of this issue of children belonging to the clan of their fathers, that they go out of their way to collect children begotten by their sons out of wedlock. Of course, sometimes this phenomenon is influenced by

economic factors like unemployment, difficulty in maintaining the child by the mother or her parents, etc. but others do it purely for cultural reasons as that children are considered to belong to the male partner. If you ask a child, whose child are you? *'ungunyana kabani'* (son), or *'unyintombi kabani'*? (Girl) in Xhosa, the child will mention the name the father first. If the child cannot mention the name of the biological father, at least he or she will tell the name of the male head of the family where he or she is staying at that point in time. This I know from personal experience and from the observations I have noticed in the whole system.

4. Patrilocal community

'Uduli' the ceremony of fetching of the bride from her home by a delegation from the groom's home has been explained above. This ceremony in Xhosa involves the movement of the wife from her childhood home and family to the home and family of her husband. This happens when the *'lobola'* issue is finalised and settled and both sides are happy to bring everything to conclusion. After the sealing of the marriage union by *'umshwamo'* the bride gains a new belonging.

The new family gives her a new name to signify her new status and being. She is no more daddy's girl but wife of so and so, and daughter-in-law of so and so, who will be mother of so and so. She moves to the homestead of her husband's parents where she will undergo training as a married woman. In this context children are born and brought up not within the home of their mother, but within the home of their father. For different reasons and under certain circumstances

they can stay with their maternal grandparents, but they will always be known as children belonging to the father's family and clan. They keep the name of the father and the 'amasiko' of their father. The ideal situation is where the children live in a home where their father is the head and both parents bring them up according to the norms and customs of their clan.

The highlight of the whole marriage occasion is the moment of giving away one's daughter to the other party. This is a highly emotional moment for both the parents and the bride. The bride is the one who undergoes the transfer of membership between the two. Defining marriage as a sociological transition Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 14 (1969: 944) illustrates what I have just said in the lines above in a more interesting way by drawing our attention to the fact that marriage is a crisis not merely in a spiritual sense. It is also a sociological transition, one or both partners often forsaking their families to form or join a new one.

The rupture with the parental family, clan, local community, or tribe is expressed in a number of interesting wedding rites: sham fighting between the bridegroom or his party and the bride's family, or some other kind of resistance made by the latter; the barring of the wedding procession; weeping and other ritual expressing grief and unwillingness on the part of the bride and her relatives; and enactment of capture or abduction of the bride. These serve as dramatic expressions of the fact that the bride has to be torn from her old home, and symbolises a violent, critical and final act.

Marriage in this context as it means change of status and dwelling, it is taken also as a rite of passage for the man and woman according to mkhize (1988:49), as they are they transferred from the group of the 'unmarried' to the 'married' group. For the girl, it is also moving from her family to that of her husband. This involves a number of separation and incorporation rites.

In the case of the Sotho, Xhosa and Hlubi people the rupture with the family and clan is directly affecting the bride. The emotion and its dramatization are found in a number of tribes in Africa and elsewhere in the world. It is not my intention to show in detail in this work how it happens in our area, but my interest is focused on the fact that through marriage the woman breaks the bond with her old family and clan to some extent. She becomes the 'taken one' and most women refer to themselves as such. Breaking the marriage and coming back home will make her a 'returnee', a status that is shameful.

Although some women retain their single status all fathers and mothers have a dream that their little baby girls will be taken for marriage by some good man one day. Women lead single lives and single parenthood in society due to various causes but this is not the ideal set up and it is not encouraged. No parent is proud of a returnee daughter or daughters. What is foreseen here is a life long commitment. That is why in Sotho they say to a daughter: *'Ngwanaka o tla lahlwa ka lelahlo la baditjhaba'* which means: 'My child you will be buried according to a foreign custom'. What is implied here is that our bond with you is broken, don't count us as your own, count those you are joining as your own people.

Indissolubility of marriage is clearly implied. The rupture with their past and with all that it entailed is a concrete reality, a lived experience. A good married woman is the one who is totally committed to her husband, family and new clan. It is not easy for her to let go of what she knows best for what she knows very little about. It is a long process, or journey till her heart and soul are also integrated into the new family. There will be many things and ways that she will find strange and hard to accommodate.

5. Mother in law – an agent of incorporation

There is no doubt that the bride in her new home will interact with all the people in the family and in the community. She will get to know members of the family gradually, the cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and sisters of her husband and will adjust to welcome them as her own relatives. They will also adjust to welcome her as their relative. While she will be obliged to treat everyone of them according to requirements of the specific relationship, the level of closeness to each one will depend on their characters and personalities., as is normal with all human beings. We do not relate to all our relatives in a similar way, some are closer to us than others depending on personal compatibility and so on. But at the same time we know our obligation to welcome and treat all our relatives as brothers and sisters.

Women of the husband's family in all categories: sisters - in-law, aunts, cousin's etc. help the newly wed to settle down in her new home. But the main mentor to her is the mother-in-law. What others can do to the bride or are not supposed

to do will depend on her wish. She is the main person to be consulted in any matters affecting her daughter in law. Like in all spheres of life there are bad and good mother-in-laws, reasonable and unreasonable ones. But what remains as a fact is that the mother-in-law is the official tutor of her daughter-in-law. Besides her husband, the person who interacts closest with the bride is the mother-in-law, whom the bride will consult regularly and directly. She is the person who has the duty to facilitate her integration and incorporation of the bride into both immediate and extended family and the clan. The relationship between daughter-in-law and mother in law is left to the two of them to work out. Husbands trust that their mothers know what to teach their wives. As it has already been mentioned before, the two may have good or bad relationships depending on what type of people they are. Nevertheless, the daughter-in-law shows her respect to her husband by respecting his mother, even if it means tolerating her.

The newcomer will spend some time as a novice in marital relations and duties during the early days of her marriage. This is a crucial time for newly married women as it determines how they will later feel about their marriage, their in-laws and their husbands. This first experience of what the in laws (*'abantu basemzini'* in Xhosa *'ba bohadi'* in Sotho) leaves a lasting impression on their minds about themselves and how a *'molokazana'* should be trained. It is this experience which will influence the way they will in turn train and treat their own daughters-in-law in the future. During this period the newly wed is expected to be attentive to the instructions of her mother-in-law and other senior women of the

clan. She must be submissive and to be a good *'molokazana'*. She should not be argumentative even when she has a different opinion about something. *'Molokazana'* (daughter-in-law) and *'mamazala'* (mother in law) do have fights sometimes in life, but this will not be tolerated at the early stage of marriage while the newly wed is still under her mother-in-law's guidance. She must avoid conflicts as much as she can, because being involved in conflicts at the very early period of marriage will bring her and her family's name into disrepute. She has to learn unconditional obedience through subdued behaviour.

The Sotho saying *'Ha matsale a loya o loye le eena'* which mama Joyce Ndubane quoted to me when she was trying to explain why a newly married should be submissive to her mother-in-law and take her instructions without questioning means that even if mother-in-law is a person capable of as abominable practice as witchcraft, she deserves respect and is the best person to collaborate with and imitate.

There is no doubt that young wives find the first few months of marriage very difficult – they speak about it all their lives. It is not the observance of the regulations that makes it difficult; it is the fact that they do not know what to do or say. Almost every move and every word creates a problem. It is the insecurity that is difficult. "Once you have learned the ways of your new 'Umzi' it is a lot better" is a typical expression of women's sentiment about the early years of marriage. "After a while one finds friends among the other young women and then one is happy again" (Whooley.1975:270).

At this period the young woman cannot make any serious decisions about her life and interests. She refers everything to her mother in law or her husband. She is more a minor than other women who have been married for a longer time. She follows the crowd. She is vulnerable to all kinds of interpretation and if she encounters problems from outside, her defense depends on her mother in law.

The married woman shares some important people in her life, her children and her husband with someone also special to them, the mother in law. The mother in law is the grandmother of her children and the mother of her husband. She is therefore the senior mother to the children, in a sense that she plays a special role in their lives. They are extensions of her son who is her child, her little boy. Together with him they are her children. She has some power over her grandchildren. No mother in law will wish to die not having seen what her grandchildren look like. The young mother is the bearer of her children but she cannot do whatever she likes with them without consulting her mother in law. Because of the patrilineal nature of the society, the two have two different roles of motherhood to the children. The biological mother has her role and duties towards her children and the mother in law has her social role to play in the upbringing of the children and their wellbeing. She refers to them as 'my children' although they are 'abazukulwana' grandchildren.

6. Husband – head and master of the homestead

Men are the ones who should see to the provision of material goods for the family, they are breadwinners and that is why they leave home to look for work. They have the role of seeing to the needs of the family in general. Women look after the children and organise the homes. The wife has the role of preparing food, bearing and rearing children as well as keeping the household respectable (Phorie.1989:23).

This is true. The list of tasks, which are women's contribution to the well-being of the family, is never ending.

Phorie(1989:23) says : "Traditionally there is no equality of status between the husband and the wife in marriage". Another author, Motshologane (in Phorie. 1989:23) says: "The wife occupies the status of a subordinate. She does not have a say in decision making on matters regarding the family".

A good illustration of husband and wife relationship and the respect a wife is expected to show her partner and her marriage is found in UNISA Tutorial Letter (TIC301-B/501/2001), in the story of Thandi a South African woman who grew up in a rural setting and married within the same environment. The husband-wife relationship and daughter-in-law and mother-in-law relationship are well portrayed in that story. It is a story of a young woman whose marriage failed to reverse the unpleasant past she thought it would, but turned out to add more her problems. In the story the way she handled her situation is typical of a black woman of her background grounded on cultural norms of Black society in rural South Africa. She followed the Sotho saying: '*Mosadi o ngalla motsheo*' this is similar to the saying; 'matters in the house are known only to mice' The meaning carried by this saying is that a good wife learns to suffer in silence and keep matters of her house secret. In a traditional house '*motsheo*' is a place where cooking wares are kept. Women are socialised to keep quiet, They think it is right to keep quiet (Putco Mafani – Kaiser Chiefs PRO. in the Felicia Mabuza talk show on violence against women, November 2001),

The implication is that the woman must not contemplate running away from her husband or her marriage, but must remember that even if there a is conflict in the

house, her duty is still to play her role of looking after her family and looking after her husband (by cooking for him is her priority). Thandi of our story endured difficulties of having to tolerate a cheating husband who roamed about while she had to look after their children. Useless as he was to them, he remained their father and that she had to repeatedly welcome him back each time he felt like coming back to her.

Xhosas have a saying that says: '*Indoda ayibuzwa*' meaning that a man in his own household is not supposed to be questioned when he comes home at awkward times like late at night. This saying somehow gives a picture of what kind of socialisation women get in relation to husband and wife relationships.

Mkhize (1988:122) asserts that he had contact with women within the Black families who have pointed out that they can hardly decide on family issues without referring the matter to husbands, for within the Black community the power of decision –making is the prerogative of the husband.

Again Mkhize gives the following description of the family among Black communities:

The family within the Nguni language groups is patriarchal. The man is the accepted head of the family. The rights of the family come through him or any senior male member of the family. On the other hand the mother, though respected, too, does not have the same power as the father. Frequently within the family, the mother tells the children to behave or else she will tell the father, who is the chief disciplinarian of the family. In homes where the father is away most of the time, as the case with migrant workers, his brothers take the responsibility of discipline. All the brothers of the father stand to the family in the relationship to the father. They are called 'father' and must be treated as such (1988:45).

What Mkhize is giving us is the picture of how males in a patriarchal society

relate to the family, the wives or women and children. As chief disciplinarians, they know better as to how members of the family should behave, especially children. This implies that they set the norms that should be followed. They are entrusted with the task of being chief formators of the young ones. Men have in a sense a supervisory role in the family. While the wife or female members carry out other tasks in running the households, some of which are specifically within their domain in an exclusive manner, men remain as the unchallenged point of reference in everything. There is no family that can claim to have no male figurehead playing the role of the father. Absence of the father in the home, whether temporarily due to migrant work, desertion or death leaves no vacuum in as far as his role is concerned. Society has made provision for such situations.

Maqalaka Mahara (Verryn,1975:162) puts equality between husband and wife rather differently when he says when he says:

A woman must find a place among other women of the same clan: "They also have a hierarchy deriving from the social standing of their husbands. In public life the wife is subject to her husband, although privately she may have varying degrees of authority. Equality is not an African concept, at least, not in the way it is clear – cut in other cultures".

He further goes on to say that: "The woman and the man have their respective positions well–defined by tradition, moral codes and customs" (1975 :163). In this sense the husband is the representative of his family in public matters. The relations between his family and other customary and social institutions revolve around him. He is the one who represents the decisions of his family. Women do not influence decision at this platform, they do so in the privacy of their homes with their husbands.

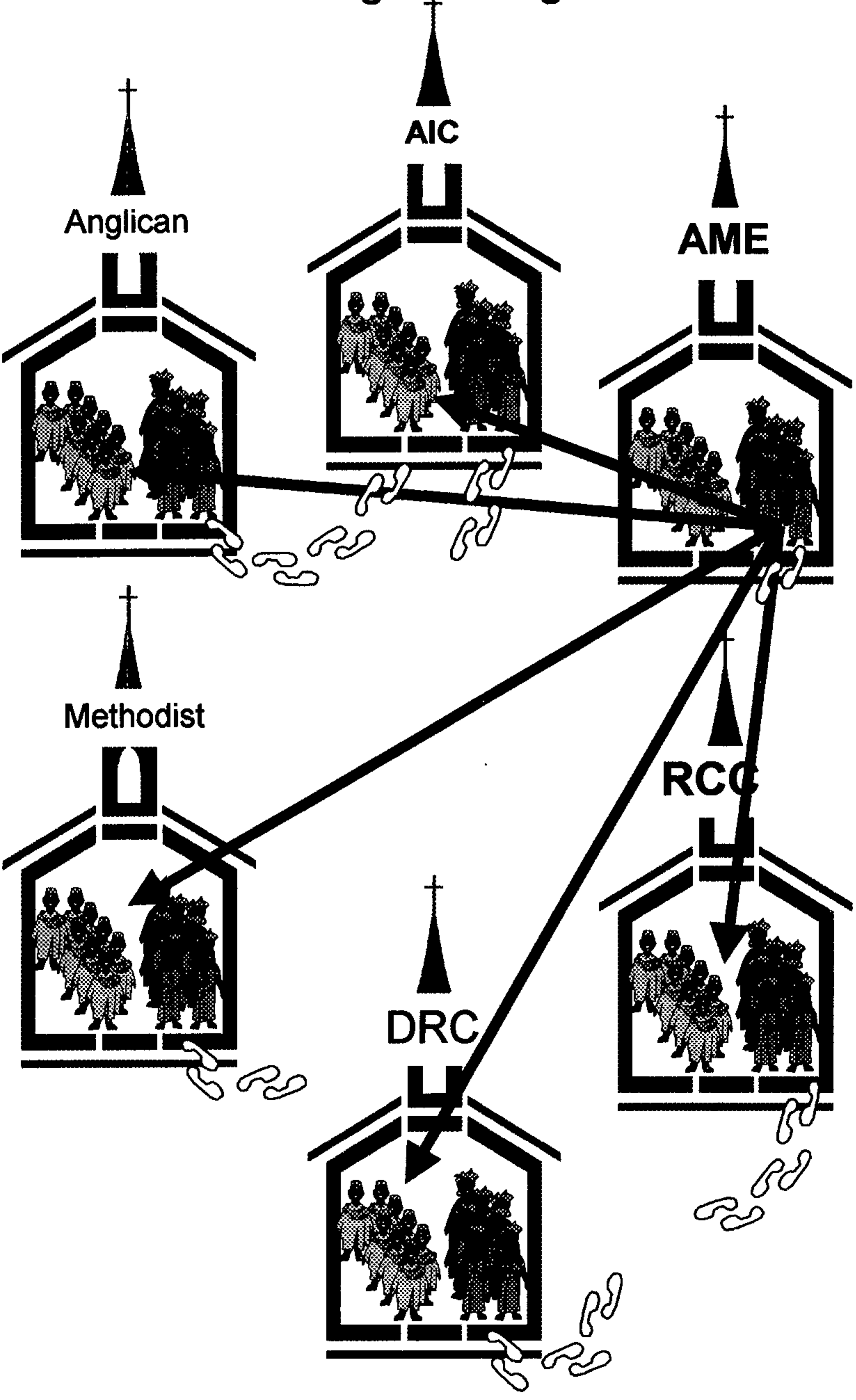
We have weak and strong characters in our societies. This is human. You may find that the woman is a more strong, sound and articulate person than her husband, but in public she will not make it clear that she is the strong one, even though the community may know that fact. The most appropriate way of defining the husband–wife relationship is of seeing it as a complimentary type of relationship based on defined roles played by each one according to cultural and customary regulations. The husband–wife relationship is open to a lot of interpretations and misinterpretations depending on who is doing the interpretation.

Both mother and father take care of their offspring in ways that fit their defined roles. The father provides for the material needs while the mother nurtures them, using what their father provides. The husband is the head of the family and is believed to have a link with ancestral spirits (Phorie, 1989 : 23).

The father of the family '*uTata welikhaya*' is not only the breadwinner, but also the spiritual leader of his family. I have already mentioned that all social institutions touch members of his family through him, his will, his permission etc. Invading another man's household in whatever way is a terrible insult to that man. If you want to provoke an African man, go and disrupt the order that he has placed in his household. This will be an extreme challenge to his manhood. If you survive his wrath, you will not survive that of his kinsmen. Sometimes people fight and die for the violation of the principles they laid down for their households, for their children and wives to obey. Interference with the affairs of another man's

family is a supreme offence and an insult and by doing so one may not have a problem with an individual only, but with members of his family and clan. The wife and her children are under one head, the husband and in an extended way other male members of his family or clan who hold high ranking positions in family unit or arrangement

Figure 2
**Men remain in their churches
while women have to change membership
through marriage**



CHAPTER THREE

Denominational 'path crossers'

Introduction

In this part of our study we look closely at the reasons why married Christian women change their church membership after marriage. In as much as women are presumed to be transitional members of their families, the same can be said about their church membership in this context. The picture in previous page portrays this reality. Male members of the family are permanent in their church membership while female members are transitional. The question is: what does this say to all of us who are evangelizers? our approach to mission and pastoral care of our female and not yet married members of our churches should take this into consideration. This movement is a socio-cultural reality, which touches our field as theologians and evangelizers. In this chapter we get just a few reasons which the respondents of this research gave for their transfer of church membership. They are reasons based on patriarchal norms of our society.

1. Transfer of church membership through marriage is a reality

In the introduction it was already mentioned that the respondents contacted are mostly married women, especially those who transferred their church membership after marriage. All the women and the men interviewed do agree

that transfer of church membership does occur in Black communities after the woman is married. This is the general observation all the interviewees without any exception affirmed. Others said they see it happen even though they do not have a direct experience of it. Simple surveys done during some gatherings of Christian women also indicate that transfer is something expected to happen to a woman who marries inter-denominationally.

Transfer of church membership is a reality in the Black communities. Our purpose is not so much to investigate whether such women are the majority or the minority. It is not the numbers of occurrences of such cases we are interested in. It is the extent of the transfer that we are looking at in depth. The main question is: "Do women who marry inter-denominationally change membership?" If the answer is 'yes' (as we have already seen), then the next important question will be 'why', what does that mean to those who change and those who expect them to change. Finally we ask ourselves what message do we receive from this situation as agents of church mission and God's Kingdom, divided as we are, denominationally.

It is never easy for one to examine or investigate his or her own culture. The reason being that one is so familiar with what is going on in his or her culture that it is not easy to ask questions. Most of the respondents replied to my questions with some difficulty, because they never stood back and asked themselves consciously, what is going on in this particular area of life. Others were surprised that I was asking these questions because being an African myself I was

supposed to know why they changed their membership. For some it was not easy to go beyond the words: *'Ngumthetho'* (Xhosa) *'Ke molao'* (Sotho) – meaning: 'It is the law'. It was like undertaking a process of self-examination, which we all know is not an easy one. Some were so surprised to realise that they have taken this for granted for such a long time. They never thought there could be any question about it. It is so much part of their life that they cannot see how it shouldn't be like that. Both men and women internalise the patriarchal norms and system of relationships to such an extent that any other way of thinking will be totally outside their worldview. Other words used besides *'umthetho'* – *'molao'* are, *'isintu'* (tradition), *'izithethe'* (custom). I had to formulate my questions in many different ways in order to guide the interview towards exploring the reasons behind this transfer business. After changing a question a few times I managed to help them move from the closed answer *'Ngumthetho – Ke molao'* towards open discussion of the matter and in many cases received very interesting responses.

2. Basic reasons for transfer

Christian men and women marrying each other in this rural community are the children of an African society that cherish and follow the patriarchal form of relationship system. To answer the question why women transfer we have to look at the cultural issues that have direct impact on the relationship between husband and wife, the relationship between the wife and her in laws, family members and her husband's clan. We will see from the responses coming from

the interviews that the main underlying reason for transfers to take place is the way our culture and customs determine the way we should interact with each other and how to express our community consciousness trait as a society.

3. Husband wife relationship

The image of the head is used to explain the relationship between husband and wife in the Black society in South Africa. Many of the people I discussed this point of transfer with, told me that the wife is supposed to follow her husband. Meaning that the husband is the one who makes decisions as to how his wife must conduct herself. His will and wishes in matters relating to his wife and family must be followed. This is the way of showing respect to him especially by his wife. In the words of Reverend Buda of the Holy Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, this issue is emphasised in the following words:

“Indoda inelawulo kwinkosikazi yayo” (the husband has control over his wife).
“Kulilungelo ukuya kwinkozo efunwa yindoda” (the wife is expected to go to the church the husband likes). The important person in making decision about what church the family belongs to is the husband. The wife must ask permission from her husband if she prefers to go to a church of her choice. *“Indoda intloko, umfazi asiyiyo intloko”* (the man is the head not the woman). The husband has the right to apply force on his wife. (Rev..A. Buda. Interview on 08 – 06 – 2001 Voyizana).

Many of the interviewees referred to the motif of 'head' when they tried to explain what the husband is, to his wife in their relationship. He is more than a partner, he is also the ruler of his household. This metaphor was used frequently in most of the interviews done with both genders. Some of the women used the expression: *"Ndilandel' umyeni"* (I followed my husband) or *"Ndilandel' utata"* (I followed 'the father'). Xhosa women use the word *'tata'* (meaning father) to refer to their husbands. They use the word *'tata'* to indicate that their husbands are fathers of their children. It is a way of showing respect to the head of the family. One can say it is a title of the one who plays the role of leading the family unit. Apart from using it to refer to their own biological fathers and the fathers of their husbands they use it to refer to the figure-head of their own families. The whole situation is the same with Hlubi and with Sotho women. Sotho women saying: *'Ntate'*. *'Ntate'*, not only of their children but also of all under his care, protection and guidance. When I asked one of the respondents, Mr. Mtseu whether his wife could decide about going to any church of her choice he said:

"Ndim intloko yalomzi, ndim olawulayo" (I am the head of this family, I am the one in control)
Utata uyalawula emaXhoseni" (The father is the one in charge among the Xhosas). (Mr. S. Mtseu. Interview on 20 – 08 – 2001 Mhlanga).

The same sentiment was echoed now and then by some of the respondents, both men and women. Men do not claim to be heads unjustly, society has allocated them that role and members of the society as a whole see them as such. I did not come across anyone who objected to this fact in my interviews.

The relationship between husband and wife as defined by society and described

here and in the previous chapter, is valid enough to make women transfer their church membership. Whether they move to join their husbands and in-laws or remain in their churches, the husband makes the decision. Black women do not like to appear as if they control their husbands. They avoid anything that gives this impression. In my interview with Mrs Khumalo I discovered that she has no in-laws in South Africa but still, she told me that she became a Catholic simply because she is afraid people will think that she controls her husband, because she brought him from Johannesburg and made him settle in Sterkspruit, her home town. By people she meant the general public including members of her own family. To show some degree of submissiveness (my interpretation) to her husband she at least joined his church.

4. Incorporation into the new family and clan

One respondent defended her joining the church where her husband belongs by making the following analysis of the Xhosa marriage and symbols of integration into the family of her husband:

The dress code marking the new status of the newly married include *'ityali'* (a shawl which the young wife wears around her shoulders as a way of showing respect and symbolizing her new status as a new comer to the marital status). It has another symbolism of *'ukunqutha'* (the new identity, which the young woman assumes due to her marital status, is metaphorically compared to wearing a blanket around ones shoulders). One puts on the new identity like one puts on a new dress for a new appearance. Identification with the new family is

indiscriminate. It symbolises the pledge of total allegiance with the new family, which is unconditional. She carries upon herself the good and the bad associated with that family. It is a pledge of loyalty to the family of her husband. This is accepting the identity of the new family like one wraps a blanket around the shoulders. Your old self is overshadowed by what you are now.

Another symbolism is the symbolism of 'Ukudibanisa izinyanya'(bringing the ancestors together by eating 'utsiki' by the bride by the time she arrives at the home of her husband and umshwamo by both husband and wife after the payment of lobola is settled. After this has been done, 'uyalawulwa kufuneka umamel' umthetho' (you do not do as you please, you must obey the law) (Mrs. N. Mtseu. Interview on 20 – 08 – 2001 Mhlanga).

This lady reflected on the meaning of symbols used to mark and bring meaning to marital union according to Xhosa custom. By fully identifying with her new family she does not see the reason why she should maintain any type of allegiance that makes her different from other members of the family.

The period that follows the wedding or 'umtshato' or 'uduli' is a difficult one for the newly wed, as we have already seen in the previous chapter. Referring to this time as a time when newly married women have little control over their lives, Mrs Hilda Makoma says:

'Bomakoti' – newly married women, wear blinkers, they follow everything in order to show their respect to in laws (Mrs. H. Makoma. Interview on 20 – 08 – 2001 Mhlanga).

Knowing what is required of them after committing themselves in marriage, women show respect to their husbands and in-laws by not questioning any forms of allegiances the family has with other social institutions including religion.

In-laws play some role in introducing the new member of their family to the

church that the family has allegiance with. Some of the ladies we talked to mentioned their sisters-in-law or mother-in-law as people who took them to church to be introduced. No one of the respondents mentioned that the husband accompanied them to church to introduce them to the congregation.

5. Patrilineal descent of children

We have discussed in detail what is meant by patrilineal society. Here we want to mention that some of the women indicated that the issue of baptism of children was a deciding factor in their case. If you do not join your husband's church, where will you baptise your children? The women understand that children belong to their marriage and therefore they should be baptised according to the norms and customs of the church that the father belongs to. Stressing this point one of the interviewees Mrs. Fekisi said:

"If the young woman loves my son, Themba, and agrees to marry him, she must know that she will come and join my church. Unless the two leave my house and find their own home, otherwise there will never be another church followed in this house. Even if she stays with her husband somewhere else, they should know that my children will not be baptised in another church" (Mrs. M. Fekisi. Interview on 06 – 09 – 2001).

It is not only this lady who expressed this feeling. Many others mentioned this in our interviews, citing the fact that while they may not force their daughters-in-law to join the family church they would not agree that they take their grandchildren with them. Thee children by right belong to the man's family and the clan, therefore it would be an abomination to remove them from their father's side of religion. This I have seen many times. When we offer preparation of mothers for the baptism of infants and young children, some old ladies sometimes come to

attend classes claiming that they have children to be baptised. If you ask, where the parents of the child or children are; they will say that either they are standing in for their daughters who are far away at work in Johannesburg or any far away urban area, or their daughter in law goes to a different church. Therefore, this gives her the right as the mother in law to see that children are baptised in the church of the family. This is the case in situations where people are not indifferent to their religious allegiance.

Lineage attachment to a particular church is a serious matter. Whether one is convinced of what that particular church teaches or stands for, is another matter. As long as my family predecessors, lineage wise, belonged to that church that is where my Christian allegiance should be. I had an experience with a polygamist who at one stage decided to become a Catholic and unfortunately during the process of his preparation for baptism or reception into full communion with that church died a violent death. Because of his polygamous marriages, and indifference towards any particular Christian denomination, children from his various wives were free to follow the denominational allegiance of their mothers. One son of his who has a wife conscious of church belonging, decided to take his wife to the church which his father had an intention of joining before he died (his brothers and half brothers however belong to the churches their mothers belong to). This man's wife came from a religious family background and she could not see herself not practicing as a Christian. At the same time she felt the obligation to be a member of a church that due to her marriage will give herself and her

children the sense of following the allegiance associated with the head of their family. It was not the mother-in-law who insisted on which church the daughter-in-law must join, because the mother-in-law herself is indifferent about religious allegiance. The woman herself decided that her husband must provide the family with a religious home. His brothers and half brothers belong to churches their mothers belonged to.

6. Unity and harmony in the family come first

Unity in the family is highly valued within the African marriage. Each time I asked the respondents what will happen if the couple does not agree on the question of church membership I was told that there must be *'imvisizwano'* (an agreement and understanding between the husband and wife). If the husband insists on his church as the church of the family all the respondents indicated that the only suggestion they can make to save the marriage is that the wife must compromise. The Xhosa word they use is *'unkunyamezela'* (to tolerate). They insist that she will get used to the new church. The influence of the African mindset, which is very much conscious of community is evident in this regard.

One of the respondents Miss Belebesi, a church marriage counsellor said:

"The language of the house must be one. Denominational differences experienced in one family can brew other problems, which will be blamed on religious differences within one homestead. Friction must be avoided in the family. If the lady says she loves her husband she must sacrifice her interests, because *'sisithethe sakwantu'* that women move" (Miss Pinki Belebesi. Interview. 13 – 09 – 2001).

There is a saying: "The family that prays together stays together". Togetherness and oneness among the members of the family is a priority and a value to be

safeguarded jealously. Anything that brings an element of division should be avoided. Transfer of church membership in this regard serves some purpose, it is done as a sign of dedication on the side of the wife to willingly forego her personal interests in order to contribute towards the cause of unity in her family.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women's Experience Of Membership Transfer

Introduction

Each family has its own way of bringing up its children. In the same cultural setting families still show distinct differences in the way children are raised with no two families being exactly the same. There may be a lot of things families in a certain cultural or social context have in common, but this does not mean that common values will be emphasised in the same way in all the families. When marriage takes place between two individuals each brings along with them unique experiences of living out certain values expected from them by society. Family background is crucial in the way people understand themselves and the world around them. Inside every marriage there is a coming together of two different backgrounds underlined by the way each individual was formed and socialised. It is in the process of our upbringing where we learn something about ourselves and also something about others, either to appreciate or not to appreciate others. Each one of us is a product of his or her social environment.

Adherents of the Christian religion world-wide belong to a Christian culture, which is lived, interpreted, reflected upon and propagated by different denominational families, both large and small. Like all families, which share a common culture, there is among them elements and factors that make one family different from

the other one in its approach to certain demands of the common culture and beliefs. People coming from these different Christian denominational backgrounds bring with them into their marriages varying experiences of understanding and interpretation of certain values upheld by and taught by the Christian religion. Differences that are based on matters related to doctrine, discipline and traditions play an important role in the way they understand themselves and the other party who is from another denomination. In this chapter is to check and to see if the transfer of membership from one Christian confession and tradition to another is any special experience at all for those women who undergo it, not necessarily because of personal choice, but because of social demand and expectation. This will be done under the following headings:

1. Adjustment – did it ever take place and how was it experienced?
2. Non-adjustment - what is the main reason for not adjusting?

1. Adjustment: how was it experienced?

It is a normal thing for human beings to suffer cultural shock when confronted with totally new environments and new ways of doing, and saying things. There is no doubt that a lady who has never been into a particular church will be surprised by quite a number of things when she is exposed to it for the first time, its doctrine, traditions disciplinary methods, and approach to evangelization and mission. The feeling of being a stranger is inevitable. The response I got from the

female respondents who experienced membership transfer is that at the beginning one is lost and finds some of the things confusing and not appealing. Mrs Fekisi told me that she found the prayers recited before and after communion in the Catholic Church too long. Also, the practice of reciting five decades of the rosary after mass prolongs the service even further.

"I did not have a problem with other things in my new church, catechism teaching was 'OK', and also other things, but I protested when they wanted me to go to the river for baptism. That I did not like, but at the end I gave in, because full membership depended on it and I would not be included into communion without having been to the river for rebaptism." (Joyce Ndubane Interview on 10 -02 - 2001).

It takes time to get used to the new family after marriage and it is the same in the church with new church membership. After some time, the ladies say one gets used to the new environment and perseverance is highly encouraged for the newcomers. They all say '*uzakuqhela*' meaning: (you will get familiar with everything and at the end you will settle down). Some women encourage any woman who has a problem of adjusting to the new church to try as hard to accept her new religious home as she does with her husband's family.

This challenge facing women is not handled in the same way by all of them. Some merge very easily with the new church and end up being the most reliable members of the new Christian community, putting their talents and energy to the service of their spiritual home more fervently than those who claim family heritage of the denomination. Most of the respondents however said that it took them a bit of time to get used to the practices and styles of worship of their new churches, but they managed to feel at home after some effort and willingness to

forego the longing for the old spiritual home.

Mrs Mtseu compared transfer of membership with moving from one school to another. One may come from a good school and move to a poorer one or vice versa. She said that when you move from your old school, you will feel lost for some time but that comes to an end as soon as you get used to the new environment.

2. Non-adjustment: Reasons for not adjusting

Some respondents find adjustment difficult and they remain very much attached to their old church, so much so that moving easily into the new church is tantamount to betrayal of their loyalty to their home churches. Depending on the profile they had in their old churches before marriage they find the change in allegiance to certain doctrinal issues and liturgical celebrations too difficult to make.

Some claim that although they are formally known to have been transferred it is only physical and not spiritual. They never crossed over to the other church in the true sense. Therefore there is no genuine transfer mostly because of personal uneasiness with doctrine, disciplinary methods, devotions and some traditions of the new denomination. Some of the women spend most of their time trying to win over their husbands to their own churches. The duty of baptising their offspring into the inherited denomination of the head of the family, payment of church dues and other expected church related business is not a difficulty. Some of the

women fulfil their duty of appearing together with their families in the church their husbands identify with but that does not mean they have any commitment to that church or denomination.

They do this as a way of showing their love for their husbands and respect for their families. It is therefore not a faith matter but a social one. Their commitment does not go any further than fulfilling what is expected of them and that is all. When it comes to religious experience and spiritual nurturing they go to their old churches or any other new church that addresses their spiritual needs more effectively. We have already seen above that the period of blindly following the instructions and expectations of the mother-in-law is short lived and as soon as women settle down in their own homes where they become independent, they outgrow the mother in law's influence on their private lives.

Two of the ladies I spoke to, told me that the way communion is celebrated in their new denominations puts them off and they hardly experience it as a sacred event and this affects them seriously to the extent that they do not participate in receiving communion. Breaking away from doctrinal expressions, devotional practices, certain patterns of piety and missionary activities is not easy for some women who transfer membership due to matrimonial bond.

While doing my research I discovered that some people have a special attachment to certain seasons of the liturgical year. Malefu Lesia, one of the respondents told me that Easter celebrations in her old church mean so much to her that she makes sure that she takes a temporary break from her new

church to celebrate Easter with her old denomination. She found herself in a difficult position because her divorcee husband told her that things did not go well with his former wife because she refused to join his church. Now she finds herself bound to join her husband's to save her marriage. The problem is that she finds it completely incompatible with her spiritual convictions to the extent that she steals some time to visit the church building of her former denomination for a silent private prayer and then on Sundays she joins her husband and children. She mentioned that although she was a staunch member of her former denomination, she couldn't afford to lose her marriage because of church membership.

Another interesting example of this battle for spiritual comfort is the example of two women belonging to two churches opposite the same street in Aliwal North. Mrs. Mokwena is a Catholic by baptism and she married to a member of AME church. She told me that before she returned to the Catholic Church after the death of her mother-in-law who forced to join her church, she used to attend two services on Sundays. The church in town where she stays started early in the morning and she could first attend a Catholic service and then go to the AME service afterwards to please her mother-in-law who held an important office in the local AME branch (church). Her mother-in-law never allowed the issue of church membership to be negotiable. She was convinced that her daughter-in-law must transfer church membership without any question. Mrs Mokwena did that for her mother-in-law and after her death her husband allowed her to go back to her old

church.

The case of Mrs Motjotji a member of the AME married to a catholic did the same thing, she returned to the AME church after a special plea to her mother-in-law who at first was reluctant to allow her to go back to her former church. The AME where Mrs Mokwena could not settle down that is where Mrs motjotji wanted to return and the RCC where Mrs motjotji found it hard to settle, that is where Mrs Mokwena wanted to return.

Another lady, Mrs Tuane who is widowed and remarried, also informed me that transferring church membership in her case is for the sake of peace and harmony in the home, it has nothing to do with deep religious convictions. When I asked her whether she had any personal choice in this matter, she said she had but by expressing her choice she would risk upsetting unity and harmony in their household. Joining the husband in church is the norm and that is what it means as far as she is concerned and nothing else. This is one of the ladies who told me that she has strong feelings and attachment to her maiden denomination.

I had a case where I told some of the women who were being prepared for the baptism of their babies by Mrs Khumalo, one of our female lay leaders, (a Catholic by transfer through marriage), that they had a choice to remain in their denominations if they wanted to, because their husbands although they claim to be Catholics, were not there to participate in the preparation for the baptism of their children. This shocked Mrs Khumalo and she said if a priest had said the same words to her twenty years ago, she would still be a Methodist today.

What I am trying to show here is that this longing to remain in one' church, is not often expressed. It has a lot of implications for individuals and the Christian communities. Let alone mission and evangelization. To many it appears to be simple and is taken for granted whereas it is not as simple as it appears to be. It is a unique experience for people who are serious about faith issues. For lukewarm people or those who are indifferent about their religious beliefs it is nothing.

Religious belief is a serious matter. It plays an important role in shaping people's worldviews and it determines their way of handling their lives and the lives of others. It gives us the reasons for doing things in a certain way. It shapes the way people relate to the rest of creation. It is a foundation on which what we are and what we stand for in life is built upon. Religion is a rock on which our personhood is built. Our '*Ubuntu / botho*' is shaped and maintained by it. Religion prepares people for life situations of all kinds. The stronger it is the more useful and saving it is.

Messing with ones faith is no small matter for some people, it may have unpleasant consequences. In short what I am trying to point out is that although African married women move around the Christian denominations in an apparently easy and simple manner through marriage, that movement is worth thinking about, simply because it touches an area of life that is sensitive. We have to weigh up its value from the Christian point of view and what it contributes and perhaps also what it destroys in Christian mission.

CHAPTER FIVE

Shared Goals And Values In Both The Christian And African Traditional Marriage

Introduction

What we have been preoccupied with up to this point was to show how culture and tradition of the people living in the geographical area of this research study influence church membership or church belonging among the married women. This was meant to provide a wide exploration of what underlines the perception that church membership for a married woman and her offspring is determined by the patrilineal frame of mind of the society or community in question. We have also tried to evaluate briefly how the women themselves experience this movement of women between churches. Some find transfer of church membership not a difficult experience and settling down in a new church not a challenge. Others however find adjusting and settling down in the new church a serious challenge. So far it has become clear that some women appear to be either indifferent to the whole matter or see it as a necessary formality which has to be observed for its own sake. In the paragraphs that follow, it will be good to turn to both the Christian faith and the African tradition and see what they uphold as key issues in areas of marriage and family in human society.

1. Marriage is God's gift to humanity

Genesis 2:2 tells us that out of two individual human beings one flesh emerges. It emerges from the union that takes place out of mutual willingness to embrace the other party and see it as part of you. The actual words of the text are: "A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh". God the creator from the very beginning of humanity gave man and woman a natural call to live together and enhanced this call by giving them procreative power which makes them participate in his work of creation. The human societies of all ages and cultures have marriage as the foundational element of their existence and perpetuation towards the future.

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another. "It is not good that the man should be alone". The woman, "flesh of his flesh" i.e., his counterpart, his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the creator had been "in the beginning": "So they are no longer two, but one flesh." (The Catechism of The Catholic Church, 1994:342).

From the passage quoted above there are a number of things that mark marriage as a gift from God to humanity. Human life requires stability to flourish and develop to its maximum potential. Hence, since married people have as one of their responsibilities as to establish families and create homes, where sharing and nurturing of life takes place, the marital union serves to bind not only the two

together but also society and community as a whole.

Marriage involves interpersonal life. A life filled with sharing and giving. The first aspect of marriage, the interpersonal life between the wife and husband, is primary and merits more extensive comment than the other emphases. The most obvious feature of contemporary marriage is that it is a living together, the sharing of life – supporting tasks between a woman and a man who are married to each other in the eyes of the Church and the community. Their marriage is a result of a decision, freely made by both, to honor, respect and love each other until death (By Komonchak et al. 1996:624 – 625)

A community ravaged by broken unions and families is in danger of disintegration itself and the consequences are always very serious and damaging to life. Another important element in human life is mutual help. It is clear that from the beginning God had in mind that humans have a task to offer to the rest of creation and contribute to life on earth. Woman is presented to man as his helpmate. No human being was created an island. By our very nature from the beginning God intended us to live in community, hence the words, "It is not good that the man should be alone". We can go further and say : "it is not good that the woman should be alone". No human being can survive without the help of fellow human beings. The union between man and woman in marriage is the best expression of the fact that human beings are meant to be helpmates to fellow human beings.

Marriage is not an exclusive union of the two people, but it is also an indication of their commitment to expectations of society. For marriage acts as a healing agent in human society. It brings a community into being both through procreation and through alliances it creates. Thus the community witnessing this marriage has a right and duty to uphold the two persons in their marriage and to facilitate their growth as married people. This is not meant to do away with the personal element in marriage, but it is putting marriage and family life in the context of the group, tribe and society. We read this from Mkhize (1988:97).

Here we see that there is a mutual enrichment between individual marriages and the communities where they exist. There is inter-dependence between the two.

Both categories of human society have obligations and duties towards each other for the good of humanity. If both sides remain faithful towards their obligation to mutual support and play their roles well, both will remain healthy. There is an interchange of gifts and benefits between the two. Communities are at the service of marriages and marriages are at the service of communities. All members of the society whether married or not married must try their best to contribute towards establishment of stable marriages and homes. Social institutions including the Church must challenge evils that attack the institution of marriage and put it into danger.

From the Christian point of view marriage is not only a human affair. God is presented as its author for the good of humanity. Men and women are called to this union. Those texts in the book of Genesis which speak of the origin of human beings tell us about God's plan to ordain marriage for man and woman and this is affirmed by the teaching of the Savior on indissolubility of the marital union (Mat. 19:6). According to this text we are not allowed to tamper with what God has joined. In the eyes of the Christian faith marriage is not only human orientated but it is also God orientated. When we enter marriage, we do not enter only a human affair, and when we respect marriage we do not respect only a human affair but God's affair. In one word we can say Christian faith urges us to understand marriage as a unique commitment among human beings. It should be appreciated as a gift from the very source of life.

The sacramental nature of marriage is recognized by the Church, which sees marriage as a saving state of life for Christians as we shall see in the sub – section that follows. Redeeming grace penetrates the love between wife and husband and builds the foundation for identifying

and celebrating Christian marriage as sacrament. Yet right away it must be noted that the establishment of the sacramentality of marriage requires that the marriage possess qualities consonant with its divine – originated purpose. Founded on the account of the origin of marriage in Genesis and in Jesus' discussion of divorce, where he refers to Genesis text (Mt. 19:4-6), it can be argued that it was God's intent that marriage reflect in part God's faithful and lifelong love for humanity. God establishes a covenant of faithful and forgiving love. The interpersonal qualities of fidelity (being with) and forgiveness (being for) are the hallmarks of Christian marriage and the divine covenant (Komonchak et al. 1996:625-626).

Built on this foundation, marriage in this sense gains a feature that raises it from not just being a human relationship, but something that points beyond itself as a loving relationship.

2. Marriage is a path to holiness

The couple is called to holiness through the married life not only for themselves but also for bringing others closer to God through leading a life of holiness. The marriage contract which demands unconditional love from each one of the spouses, is in a way the reflection of God's unconditional love for the rest of humanity created in His image.

The Christian faith goes beyond seeing marriage as an institution of perpetuation of the life of the spouses, family or clan. Bringing God into the whole picture concerning marriage challenges all cultures to see what could be missing in their perception of this holy vocation.

Shorter (Spearhead No. 48. 1977:46) suggests that Christian couples must, of course, follow their own path to holiness through faithfulness and love throughout their whole lives together. They must also welcome their children as gifts of God and they must teach the Christian truths which they themselves hold to their

Children. In their family life they can offer an example of love and generosity to the whole community and be witnesses to, and co-operators in, the building up of the church.

Again what Shorter suggests in paragraph above, leads us to another responsibility God places in the hands of those who live under the matrimonial bond. The responsibility of the parents is not only looking after their children's material needs but also after their spiritual needs, especially their religious needs. The children need to be exposed to the ways of relating to God their creator and the primary source of their lives. If this responsibility is neglected, children will never see themselves as gifts from God to their families and they will not see their parents as their own gifts from God. Mutual appreciation between children and parents will be weakened if this noble task is overlooked. Education of children does not only stop at knowing how to relate to others, i.e. relatives, members of the clan, community elders etc. but also how to relate to the author of life.

Childhood is really the best time for religious growth because it provides just the right psychological and emotional atmosphere. Parents should use this opportunity to its fullest advantage. It is during this time that the exclusive responsibility for teaching religion to their children belongs to the parents.

The Christian message is essentially a message of love, and this message must show in the lives of the parents. When this love is not present, or when the parents do not live together at all, the children lose something essential in their development as Christians (Shorter, Spearhead No. 48 1977:47).

Parents, as we can see from what has been above, are primary formators of the characters of their children. They give a Christian character to the children God gave to them. Being closest to their offspring they have more advantage than anyone else to impart the faith to the members of their family.

People with strong and solid faith come from families who took this task seriously from the very beginning of their children's formative years. Marriage by its sacramental nature is a holy union, from it we expect holy fruits. Children are not a gift only to their immediate family, but they are also a gift to the larger community and society. For this reason, Christian parents have a duty to offer to the community suitable members, well prepared to fit into the society. By doing so, they will be doing their immediate community a deserved service.

Christian couples are called to be evangelizers. The first people they evangelize are those living together with them in their households. Their life of holiness should spread outside their homes to the neighborhood. The exemplary life lived by the Christian couple should be a challenge to other couples in the community especially those adhering to other religions. It should be a life governed by the golden rule of Christ: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself".

Parents are by their word and example the first messengers of the faith for their children. The father of the family, the mother, the children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized by receiving the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving and by the witness of a holy life, self – denial and active charity. Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and human growth (Catholic African Synod, simplified text. 1995:17)

3. The family is the cornerstone of society

Out of marriages we get families. Whether one lives in context of extended

family or in the context of nuclear family the common thing is that in both systems, there is still a family unit made up of either the couple alone or the couple and its offspring. In this part of the paper we will look into how married people through the role they play in their families can help to build societies influenced by Christian faith and the teaching of Christ.

Couples are entrusted with the task of evangelization suitable to their context and environment. The basic role of the mother Church (father Church) is to witness to the life of the Redeemer, His teaching and also to participate in His mission. The Church plays the role of parenthood to all the faithful. It is the educator and formator of society in the spirit of Christ. Christian families have a share in this task. They participate in it due to the baptismal commitment all believers undertake.

One African writer, Charles Nyamiti (African Christian Studies Volume 16, September 2000: 4) refers to the Church as an extended family of God. He uses the model of affinal relations found in African extended family and kinship.

Affinity is defined as 'the status of being related by marriage instead of blood'. Thus exists between a man and his wife's blood relatives and between a woman and blood relatives of her husband (Nyamiti. 2000:4). Let it be particularly noted that this type of affinity is spiritual and mystical. For this reason it is applicable to any member of the church, irrespective of his/her ethnic or racial origin. Hence, as already noted, the word "affinity" is applied only analogously to this kind of kinship (Nyamiti. 2000:5).

Nyamiti's view of the Church as an extended family of God is used here to highlight the fact that members of Christ body the Church individually and as families must understand the obligation that we have towards members of our own families and society at large in a sense of spiritual affinity. We see

ourselves related to the rest of human societies. Spiritual affinity and the grace of God obtained through baptism urge us to take upon ourselves the duty and willingness to contribute to the well-being of our societies and salvation of all through Christ. How does this happen? We see that in the paragraphs that follow.

The first place where people should live and enjoy the fruits of Christian values is within their own families, in the home. Seeds of the Gospel values are sown in the minds of children by their parents while they are still young. From the documents of Vatican II, we get the following message on Christian education:

"As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society. It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the sacrament matrimony, that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the sacrament of baptism (Gravissimum Educationis No. 3, Vatican II, Vol. 1. 1984:728).

It becomes clear therefore that parents play a special role in forming and building up personalities that will in future offer a healthy and balanced contribution to the well-being of society. From a very early age children are exposed to the values of their culture and virtues that help them to live them up. Virtues and values of the Christian culture for Christians, must be learned and experienced at home. It is the responsibility of the Church of Christ to see that marriages are founded on a solid faith in Christ and the message of the Gospel. If this responsibility is not carried out convincingly, it will be difficult for members of Christian communities

of all confessions to know and appreciate the invaluable role they are expected to play in building up societies that are free of ills that destroy humanity. If Church plays its role with conviction and zealously, the participation of families and Christians in addressing social issues will be in itself, redemptive.

Christian parents must be aware that "fatherhood" and "motherhood" are made part of the saving mystery by having a share in the life of holiness flowing from the sacramental nature of marriage. All families without exemption must be equipped to play their role properly by being exposed to tools of evangelization and methods that are appropriate for their way of life.

The Catholic Church's African Synod presents the African family as a participant in the work of evangelization in the following way: The African Christian family is:

- * A privileged place of witnessing the Gospel;
 - * A true domestic church;
 - * A community that believes and evangelizes; * A community in dialogue with God;
 - * The first cell of the living Christian community and of society;
- A school of the Gospel and of social issues (African Synod. 1995:16 – 17)

This description of a Christian family applies not only to African families but also, to Christian families of all cultures and backgrounds. The good thing about it is that the characteristic of the family as the basis and cornerstone of society for both temporal and spiritual needs of society is clearly defined. The family in this way becomes the bedrock on which the individual's relations with other institutions in society are built.

5. Marriage is permanent

Christianity presents marriage as permanent life long commitment of two persons to one another. There is no reverse foreseen as soon as people enter into the marriage contract. It is important therefore, that those who respond to this call must be people who are fit and suitable for this vocation. The seriousness and demands of this union call for a life long commitment. For Christians marriage is not a casual affair that can start and last any time whenever one wishes. It requires therefore a proper decision and preparation, by preparation meaning spiritual preparation, which will make partners aware of the sacredness of their union. In this case it is clear that marriage is not left at the mercy of individual's whims. Reasons for marriage should be based on nothing else except mutual love and readiness to share life and the fruits of the union and face the challenges of life together. Marriages that lack the characteristic of permanence cannot be trust to be solid foundations for society. Being shaky themselves, they cannot serve the purpose of marriage properly.

Out of marriage a family is born, an environment conducive for rearing of children has to be established. We have already seen from other sections of this study that Christian families have special roles to play among their members and among members of the society. Families will not be able to play their unique role in the development of individual persons and societies, if they lack the characteristic of permanence. This is one of the essential constituents of marriage.

Marriage is not a once for all event. After getting married the couple will take a long time to grow into the marital relationship. This is not by any means an easy thing to achieve. In other words we can say marriage is a journey that the couple follow and take together for the rest of their days on earth. No couple becomes an exemplary couple within a short time. There is still more to be experienced after the couple has settled down after celebrations. That is why the social systems that support the married couple should not fall away as soon as the matrimonial bond is effected. There is still more the young married persons will need to get from the community surrounding them.

When the possibilities of the modern companionship marriage are examined, it is found that sustaining, healing and growth need a framework of permanence lived as continuity, reliability and predictability. Instead of these characteristics being seen as destructive of human happiness, they are in fact the ground on which modern marriage thrives. In order for the contemporary marriage to attain its expectations it needs permanence as the background within which couples and their children realize their potential but this potential needs to be clearly visualized and understood. It calls for effort, motivation and sacrifice from the couples, and for them to be supported by the whole community (Dominian, 1981:89).

6. Marriage is partnership

Sexual difference between men and women does not make any difference in as far as the humanity they share in common as God's creation is concerned. No other party is less human or more human due to one's gender. God created man and woman in one image, His image, and both men and women participate in that image in an equal manner.

When two persons decide to get married, they must do so being aware that they

are equal individuals who will be bound in the same way by the matrimonial bond and its requirements, its duties and obligations. Neither party is bound in a stronger or a lesser way by that bond, they come together as equal partners in this loving and sacred union and they have equal responsibility towards their marriage and their family. Each in his or her own capacity and with his or her God given talents and gifts, is expected to contribute to the welfare of the family.

When people marry they must make sure that they take their partners seriously. The coming together of partners implies that without the other partner what they are building up together cannot be regarded as complete or fulfilled. Mutual respect is crucial between partners.

God has got a place in this partnership, which does not only exist between the spouses alone, but between the couple and their creator. Their partnership reaches its fulfillment by the blessing that comes from God who planned that man and woman should be there for one another as a fulfillment of their humanity.

Fidelity and loyalty to the marital bond is a challenge to both husband and wife. None of the parties is exempted from doing their best to live up to this challenge. Creation of sound relationships in the family is the task the couple is expected to share. In short we can say that the Christian faith explicitly teaches that men and women are equal in the eyes of God. None of them is naturally subservient to the other.

Many people today consider it too difficult to be bound to one person for their whole lifetime.

Many are caught up in a culture, which rejects the indissolubility of marriage. Many even make fun of the commitment of spouses to fidelity. It is necessary to confirm the Good News that your permanent love is a fruit and a sign of the absolutely faithful love that God has for us and that the lord Jesus has for the church (Hadebe, No. 23p in the series: Training for community ministries lumko, 1994:14).

Man is not supposed to abuse woman and vice versa. Relationships between men and women in marriage must remain sound and healthy, free of abuse of whatever type. Married men and women should see each other as partners in a loving union.

Society has traditionally seen woman's role as exclusively wife and mother, without giving her adequate access to public life. Women are equal to men in dignity and responsibility, and have full rights to public roles and functions. On the other hand, for them to truly advance our culture must value more highly their maternal and familial role, must recognise and respect the irreplaceable value of work in the home. It needs to overcome a mentality that honours them more for work outside the home environment.

There is a persistent mentality that sees the human being not as a person but as a thing, an object of pleasure. The first victims of this mentality are women. The bishops and I deplore this, and I ask that vigorous and incisive pastoral action be taken to overcome all such discrimination (Pope John Paul II, 'family life' in Hadebe, 1994:57).

The quotation above sums up what I find to be the meaning of marriage as far as the Christian faith is concerned. A lot of important things can still be mentioned about the Christian understanding of marriage, but what has been mentioned in this chapter is enough to put across the message of this study.

African traditional marriage shows its awareness of the importance of the companionship between husband and wife by never leaving out the session of 'laya' during the final stage of the marriage ceremony. Both husband and wife get advises from elderly and experienced members of their families as to how they should deal with each other in their new status as husband and wife. They are openly told about behaviors that bring problems into marriage and how to

overcome them. All the temptations that could be dangerous to marital relationships are laid bare before them to know them in advance. This is a form of preparation for their life long companionship. Both African traditional marriage and Christian marriage emphasise preparation for marriage. Both see the goal of marriage as a life-long partnership and companionship between two people and therefore see preparation for this state of life as essential.

In chapter two the details of what family means for an African and what belonging to a community means have been given. What needs to be done here is just to mention those values that both African traditional marriage and Christian marriage share in common which our people should see as compatible to both areas of life, religious and traditional that is: marriage is permanent, it is a partnership, families do not exist in isolation but in communion with other families and the community as a whole, marriage has as its purpose procreation of children, their education and well-being. Other important values evident in both African tradition marriage and Christian marriage such as stability, mutual respect of spouses, sharing, fidelity and forgiveness highlight what is common in both traditional and religious way of life for an African Christian woman or man.

African traditional society has its own ways of entrenching these values in the minds of its members, it has traditional methods of training which help its members to internalise these values and pass them on to younger generations. The use of symbolism which is a powerful form of communication in the celebrations of significant realities of life, including marriage, impart to the

individual the sense of *'ubuntu/botho'* which is the spirit of togetherness and sharing. The Christian tradition on the other hand has Scripture as its main source for the values that it teaches on the subject of marriage.

It is good for people to reflect on what is essentially important as the goal of marriage in the eyes of their tradition and also in the eyes of their Christian faith. To know and understand the meaning of the concept of marriage and family according to the tradition and culture under which we belong and also the faith that we share as Christians. Looking at marriage and family from both ends can help those who emphasise transfer of church membership of married women merely on the ground of patriarchal inclinations of male headship or domination to look at marriage and see it for what it is. Marriage is partnership between two people not an instrument of domination. They can dedicate their time and energy towards the support of those who marry cross-denominationally to achieve the main purpose of marriage, which is a life of sharing and giving. African traditional marriage as we have seen above does encourage couples to strive for those qualities of marriage the African tradition shares with other cultures and the Christian faith. This is what really matters in as far as the matrimonial bond is concerned.

CHAPTER SIX

Feminist voices in South Africa: Patriarchy questioned

Introduction

In chapter one it was shown that the cultural background on which the transfer of church membership by women due to matrimonial bonds is based on the patriarchal projection of human relationships. That background and the unfaltering affirmation given by the respondents of this study that the main reason for the phenomenon of transfer of church membership taking place in their communities is basically the cultural norms based on patriarchal values, orientation and interpretation of human relations.

Patriarchy as a system, on which the relationships between male and female are based, is universal. It is a global system that is presently questioned by both secular and religion based feminism alike. Feminist theologians address the issue of patriarchy from the theological point of view based on Scripture and the teaching of the Church. These two global or universal opposites which challenge each other's legitimacy, are discussed in this chapter from the South African point of view which relates directly to our context in this study.

We do mission and propagate the faith among the people belonging to the African culture. It is fitting therefore at this stage, to listen to what South African

feminist theologians think of this culture.

1. Patriarchy is seen as a system of domination and power

The word "patriarchy" is derived from two Greek words "pater" and "arche". Literally the "rule of the fathers, patriarchy has come to mean the government or rule of the male members of society. A matriachal society, or family, would be a society or family ruled by the mothers or women. In a patriarchal society most laws, customs and beliefs favour men. Patriarchy has been dominant in the world for thousands of years... Women's oppression has become so familiar to us it may seem "natural" and is often hidden that people don't even question it. Men are seen as naturally superior to women, and have the major decision-making power in a community. Women are seen as less capable in making decisions for the well-being of community and as dependent on men (Mackenzie in Tutorial Letter TIC301-B/501/2001. UNISA: 21).

Patriarchy is accused of safeguarding androcentrism. Meaning that all that is thought to be universally human is not determined by what women and men understand and experience in common, but by what has exclusively been laid down, described and categorized by men.

In addition to this pervasive androcentrism, theology has also been distorted by explicit misogyny. For example, women have been defined as possessing an inferior and non-normative humanity, to be more responsible for the origin of evil than males, to be more prone to sin than males, to be in a state of subjugation, both as an expression of their lesser nature and as a punishment for their role in original sin, to lack the image of God to be unable to represent Christ and to be unordainable (Komonchak et al.1996:391).

Women from the African continent ask questions to society and the Church about the plight of women on this continent. They ask questions to all structures dominated by men both in Church and society. As they challenge the traditional universal Christian theology based on patriarchy, they also challenge other theologies like: African theology, and Black theology. Both theologies are contextual theologies, which address the issues that are of primary interest to the quest for the emancipation of African people and their liberation both in thinking and in practical day to day life. However, women theologians and feminist

theologians on the continent and in South Africa find women issues not adequately represented in these theologies.

Although African theology emphasises the contextualisation of the Christian Gospel within African culture, it has neglected African women's issues. Women's experiences of God are assumed to be the same as those of men. This is not the case. As Oduyoye has argued, it is now the responsibility of African women to make it clear that although we live on the same continent, the experiences of women in religion and culture are different from those of men it is no longer acceptable to claim that when African men are writing African theology, they are speaking on behalf of all Africans. (Phiri, *Journal of theology for Southern Africa* Nov. 1997 No. 99:69 – 68)

No one can deny the fact that the socio-cultural environment, under which men and women live and are socialised in African societies, makes them experience life differently in different spheres of life including religion.

It is therefore the right thing to encourage African women to reflect theologically on issues that pertain specifically to their life situations. They are the best people to address those issues. African women today have become aware that they are not fully included in theologies that are male dominated even if they claim to be addressing issues shared by Africans in general. They feel under represented in those theologies that focus on the needs of African people. That is why they have established 'circle' (the circle of concerned African women theologians) to deal specifically with issues that discriminate against women on the continent.

In South Africa there is a strong call for a Black feminist liberation theology. The reason for a call for such a theology is that it can enhance and help to speed up the transformation of structures that oppress women in society and in Church. If one may ask, who should undertake this job? Mandew (in Ackermann et al 1991:136) gives the following answer:

The recognition of Black theology as a product of the patriarchal structures of society means that Black theology (as a patriarchal theology) is unable to transform itself into a Black feminist theology until such a time as Black feminist theologians themselves undertake to do this. Black feminist theologians cannot afford to look towards black (male theologians) to insert the Black feminist struggle within Black church to be an integral component of Black theology. Black (male) theologians can only play a facilitative role in this regard, whereas the role of Black feminists is definitive. Therefore the onus rests on them to take the initiative in this regard.

Theology has as its main or essential task to reflect on human situation in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of Christ. This task has the Holy Scripture as its main source. Another source is the faith of the believing community. Black women who belong to the African culture in our country are challenged to take matters in their own hands and challenge structures and practices that degrade their dignity as human beings. Whether they are religious, traditional or cultural. It is good therefore to get a glimpse of what those few Black feminists who dare to challenge patriarchy and its oppressive structures in South Africa. Ramodibe (in Ackermann 1991:15) gives a critique of her culture in the following words:

African tradition and culture present themselves to women as an oppressive system. It has a male-domineering factor. It is a patriarchal system. This oppressive patriarchal system was found in South Africa even before Whites came with their Western capitalistic culture. The patriarchal system has been continued to date by those who see culture as static rather than dynamic. To me, static culture is oppressive culture, and the patriarchal system legitimizes the domination of women by men.

Like Phiri, Ramodibe (:15) asserts that African theology has almost fallen into the trap of idolizing African culture because of its main cause which is the 'culturization' of the Gospel into a culture that is patriarchal and hence oppressive to women. For this reason it runs the risk of legitimising the domination of women. In as far as women issues are concerned, African tradition and culture need a critique that is facilitated by a theology that is free of male-domination. Black theology on the one hand according to Ramodibe (:19) has not taken

women seriously, but has seen theology as a male domain.

All in all we can say there are people in this country who feel that there must be a Christian reflection on issues that affect women within our local culture, tradition and religious beliefs. There is a need to give a genuine and convincing response to women who feel and express the following sentiment about their culture:

Culture has silenced many women in Africa and made us unable to experience the liberating promises of God. Favourable aspects of our cultures, which enhance the well-being of women, have been suppressed. Those that diminish women continue to be practiced in various degrees of our societies, often making women objects of cultural preservation (Kanyoro, in Phiri Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 114 Nov. 2002:20).

The analysis of how our women are socialised or enculturated to belief that they should be subordinate to men in this study has made it clear that women have internalised the culture of suffering in silence in the face of male dominance. This culture of silence which many men and women are aware of in South Africa, needs to be broken not only in our secular society but also our church groupings and in our churches. We have been socialized to be loving, caring, very patient and to be able to tolerate just about anything (Bam in Ackermann, 1991:364). There are negative practices in our churches which leave women as nothing, but minors who should follow blindly what their leaders (male and female) say.

Some parishioners have told me in my present parish in Aliwal North that, in the past they had female Alter servers. Not a single man complained about them in fact they worked with them every Sunday, but to everybody's surprise they vanished without any explanation. Later on it was found out that the members of

the St. Anne sodality (mother union in the Catholic Church) pressurised them to stop serving during liturgical celebrations. Recently I have been informed that the same group is not happy with the few women leaders who lead Sunday service and funerals in the parish. No formal complaint has been launched against these leaders, but there are comments, which have reached my ears stating the same message: "we don't want them there".

In the case of mother-in-law in chapter two and in other parts of this paper we have realised that, women having certain powers allotted to them by patriarchal norms, do their best to perpetuate practices that serve the interest of patriarchy as a norm of male-domination over women. Women in this sense become agents of their own domination. For some women the internalization of the oppressed image of women is so profound that they are unaware of being deprived (Ackermann 1991:99).

What can be done to remedy the situation? South African feminist theologians look at feminism for an answer. They tell us what feminist liberation theology can do for women and men of this country in the area of gender discrimination and all forms of injustices against women citizens of our land. Elaborate responses to this need can be found in the writings of people like: Mncube (Ackermann 1991:358 – 360), Ackermann (:93 – 95), Kretzschmar (:107 –110), Ackermann (Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 99 Nov. 1997) there are many sources for this topic, but here I mentioned just a few which give a full discussion on how liberation feminist theology can assist women to define their own

humanity and take up the struggle against injustices inflicted on them by their "neighbouring sex" as Dorothy Sayers (in Ackermann 1991:92) calls it.

The aim of this chapter was simply to indicate that there are voices against patriarchy in South Africa. Those areas of women domination by men encouraged and sustained by patriarchal norms of our society are not going without challenge by women theologians and feminist liberation theologians. Christian men and women who enforce the practice of the transfer of church membership, through marriage in the Black community as a mere cultural norm, which emphasises inequality between husband and wife; should be challenged to make a critique of their culture in the light of Christian teaching about equality, justice and love of neighbour.

Both patriarchy and feminism are discussed under different perspectives around the globe. They are connected with various human and social issues that it is not rare to find people of all cultures, religious beliefs and backgrounds having some debates about their role in issues like politics, religion, culture, gender relations, oppression, justice etc. In many ways they are under constant scrutiny by both theologians of various religions and secular thinkers from different parts of the world.

There have been many international conferences aimed at discussing negative effects of 'misguided patriarchy, patriarchy which deprives women of their dignity as human beings. At the same time we cannot say feminism is without faults when it goes to extreme claims about women's emancipation. Claims, that

harm healthy relationships between men and women in the societies of our time. In other words there is no way we can condemn patriarchy altogether or embrace everything that is declared to be feminist.

It is therefore good to check which aspects of patriarchy are wrong and harmful to human relationships. The same can be said of feminism. One cannot glorify one against the other. They are two trends of human thinking of our time, which qualify for examination and clarification in the light of what God intended for male and female in His creation of the two genders as manifestation of His or Her life and image.

2. A Brief Analysis of Patriarchy in Our Context

The norms that govern the relationship system of the community we are dealing with here are patriarchal in their nature. Patriarchy as a system whereby men achieve and maintain social, cultural and economic dominance over females and younger men and also as a form of social organisation in which a male acts as a head of a family, is experienced in many societies of the world. Like all other human systems it is experienced contextually. Each particular context can give it its own interpretation based on concrete life experience of a particular society or individual. Fiorenza comes from the Western society and she has this to say about patriarchal:

In the western society women are socialised to self-less love in order to perform unpaid services in the family as well as volunteer services in the public domain. The myth of 'true womanhood' romantic love, and domesticity define woman's nature as 'being for others' and woman's identity as derived from husband and children'. Whereas men are socialised into masculine roles of self-assertion, independence and control, women are socialised to self-denial, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice in the service of others.

Beginning with Plato and Aristotle, western political philosophy has argued that the freeborn, propertied, educated man is the highest of the mortal beings and that all other members of the human race are defined by their functions in his service. Women as well as slaves and barbarians are by 'nature' inferior to him and therefore destined to be the instruments of his well-being. In short, patriarchal society is not society and culture is not only characterised by its sexual and economic exploitation of all women which is sustained and legitimised by the cult of true womanhood, the myth of femininity, romantic love and education to domesticity (1988: 87 – 88).

When one looks at the quotation above one can see already some of the things I have shared in the previous chapters, which I mentioned as the main features of the type of society the community of my study is identified as. It is my belief that although patriarchy is a global system, experienced and sustained in many areas of the world, it is also contextual. Its norms find different expression from one society to another. Customary practices, which reinforce it also, will differ from society to society. In the South African context under which I am discussing it here it touches many areas of the life of the individual, both male and female. It runs deep in the psyche of the community concerned. It explains the being of the individual. This I observed during the interviews and also in other areas of pastoral work.

In the Catholic diocese of Aliwal North, the clergy and the bishop are trying their best to encourage lay leadership in our local congregations. This is open to both men and women. My experience is that our women are often very reluctant to take leadership positions if there are enough men around. We normally ask local communities to elect leaders for various ministries like, communion givers to the sick, Sunday service leaders, catechism teachers, funeral leaders etc. My observation is that the most favoured ministry by women is catechism teaching. As for other ministries especially Sunday service and funerals, we almost have to

beg them to take up those ministries. The reason is that they expose themselves to the public eye more than in catechism teaching. The surprising thing is that some of them are accomplished and competent leaders in the women's movement (St Anne sodality). They are happy and comfortable in leading other women in their movement but not the whole community where men will also be part of the social entity led by them.

Recently the bishop of Aliwal North called regional meetings with the aim to encourage women to become leaders in their congregations. In all three regional meetings he had with the people in different areas of the diocese there were men who opposed out of hand the idea of having women as funeral leaders. Some of the male leaders threatened to pull out if women come forward as leaders. Among many reasons put forward by some of the men was: '*Oomama badalelwe ukuthobela hayi ukuphatha*' (Women are created to be obedient not to lead). When one looks at this type of comment one can see that men of our social context where this research was conducted have a strong belief that men women are not equal. This man spoke like that because of his socialisation that convinced him that women are confined to another level of leadership, not the public level. In communities where there are no men around women participate in almost all church ministries except funerals which is still under discussion in our diocese.

It is interesting to see how women themselves can be patriarchalists. They see themselves as substitutes, not as real role players by right. French (!985:471)

calls women who support patriarchal practices and sentiments 'caryatids'.

The women who can be characterised as caryatids are those dedicated to the feminine principle but opposed to feminism. Many of them are members of patriarchal churches and accept the traditional division of experience as manifestation of natural law and God's will. They are proud and do not consider themselves a second sex; they see their role as complementary to men. They consider procreation and child raising a sacred and essential task; and they are devoted to the qualities of nutritiveness, compassion and community.

She also accuses this type of a woman as being antimale rather than feminists (1985:470)

What caryatids are really saying is more antimale than any feminist statement. They are claiming that things are as they are, you can't beat the system, and men run the system. Women can't win, they can't even break even. Men are destructive children and you cannot expect them to care for the real children, to offer nutritiveness, tenderness and love. You have to force them to do their part in the essential task of raising the young, by locking them out of sex without marriage, by forcing married men to support their families, by making divorce difficult and holding men responsible for their families even if they are divorced.

The women of our social context to a large extent fit the description given above by French. The exception being that they do see themselves as the second sex. Our women are proud to be feminine and have those qualities cited above, the qualities natural to them as women. In the first chapter one can see how some of the things French is saying about women in patriarchal societies go along with what I said mark the real womanhood and motherhood in our community. The mother-in-law as the chief overseer of the process of initiation of the newly wed woman into her new status and her female companions in the clan or family train the young married woman to fit the description given above. The qualities of self-denial, nutritiveness, nurturing, and so on, are what the young woman is encouraged to strive to achieve. By way of analysis we can say the mother-in-law's role is to transmit and instill the patriarchal mentality into the mind of the young woman.

The role of women who prepare the young women for marriage serve the same purpose as the *'laya'* session after the wedding. Every step on the way towards a full blown marriage and afterwards they continue to make the young woman develop and maintain this same type of mindset. Where this is abandoned, everybody will tell you that people lose their identity. There are customary observances and activities, which serve the good purpose of marriage. People without a tradition do not know who they are. Oppression, abuse, discrimination, exploitation and harassment of women in whatever form cannot be excused on account of culture or tradition. Each patriarchal society has within itself certain norms and customs that need to be examined and purified for the sake of the human dignity of either of the genders.

From his earliest age, a child was included in a hierarchical structure based on genealogy. This situation was temporary for a woman since, on being married, she could find herself placed in a very different situation within her circle due to her husband's rank. For a man however, genealogical seniority was, within the framework of the extended family, the access to power and wealth, and a man could never have more power than his father could. The authority of father over son was absolute in all matters, and the curse pronounced by a father places a son in a grave temporal and ritual situation. Further, custom prescribed that an old man could demand anything from a younger, who had to obey or be guilty of grave discourtesy.

Within her own lineage, all of a woman's male relatives were considered as her grandfathers, fathers, brothers or sons, according to their genealogical situation. She had a right to the protection of the men of her lineage until her marriage, after which she came under the guardianship of her husband's lineage (Jassy, 1973:10 – 11)

Each human system of organisation and relationship between individuals and groups and in society at large has specific goals. Hierarchical structures of any tradition or culture basically serve to enhance harmony, stability and orderliness in social groups so that duties can be undertaken without hassles and chaos. Everybody in the hierarchical structure has roles to play, responsibilities to fulfil

and rights to enjoy. In our context women do have authority and powers that society has allocated to them based on their seniority and where they fit in, in the structure defined by their culture. In the example given above by Perrin Jassy, a woman enjoys the protection of her male relatives from her own lineage and from the lineage of her husband. Again she enjoys her share of power in the extended family according to the rank of her husband in his clan or his family. This gives her authority over some people who fall under her supervision and care. Her advice, opinion, and expertise are called for where it is fitting and applicable to do so. In the South African Black traditional society I know from my own experience that women do have power in certain areas of societal, clan and family life. It is not necessary to expound all that in this paper, but it remains one area to be looked into.

Not everything in patriarchal society is wrong and bad for women. Some of the practices are put in place in order to protect women and children.

It is good to make a young man responsible for others but it is wrong to tell him that those he is responsible for are sub-humans. Anything that is done in moderation is usually healthy. All extremes are deplorable. It is good to make men take care of their offspring even if it is through the help of just laws of the society. It is for the good of the family and society to protect couples against the evil of divorce and marriage breakdowns. It is also a good thing when women value their procreative powers and see child raising as a sacred task, this is what Christianity is teaching; to treat all life as sacred including the life of the child. I

agree with French when it comes to injustices against women. In all the interviews all the respondents condemned violence and abuse of power against women. They all emphasised that the man is the head but they don't condone any abuse of the type of relationship men has with their wives. Like all human systems patriarchy is open to abuse and misinterpretation.

3. Areas that need purification in both patriarchy and feminism.

Patriarchy should be stripped of the unfortunate tendencies of treating women as sub-humans and objects of abuse and pleasure. To oppress other fellow human beings simply because they happen to have a different gender is sinful. No one can deny the evils that are associated with mistreatment of women in different societies of the world due to the unhealthy conception of patriarchy. There is historical evidence everywhere around the globe which stand out as proof of how sometimes women suffer oppression and pain due to patriarchal practices that degrade their dignity as human beings. This is a struggle most women still have to overcome even today in some societies that raise men higher than women in their societal hierarchichal structures. It is a healthy thing to acknowledge the evils that are or have been committed against women in history and in the present time in various societies, cultures and religious systems. If all this is denied, it will be difficult for patriarchy to be transformed for the benefit of both men and women to enjoy their redeemed selves in Christ.

There is enough awareness at the present age about the areas of life in all social spheres where changes are required in as far as negative patriarchal

tendencies in human relationships. This awareness is a golden opportunity for many to evaluate the way they conduct their lives within their patriarchal mind set and perception of life and the world around us. There is nothing that is human that cannot change. If we know and see why we should change, why not change? Christ came so that all of us can have life and life in fullness. He came to perfect what is imperfect in us so that we can become truly his and have a share in His life. Any perverted form of feminism needs Christ to save it from self-destruction and destruction of others. A feminism that propagates hatred and hostility towards males simply because they are male is a misguided feminism and therefore it needs redemption. Feminism that is characterised by persecution and ridicule of men as a way of demonstrating its determination to avenge women's suffering and pain under patriarchy would be as evil as patriarchy that dominate and subjugate women to demonstrate its power over them. In Christ we find a proper understanding of others and ourselves. We also find a proper perception of who Christ is to us and to others.

Christ came to redeem human nature, which was corrupted by sin. Corrupt feminism and patriarchy can victimise both men and women. Both are capable of separating us from God and fellow human beings. In Christ Jesus we become a new creation. We acquire a God and other centered masculinity and femininity. We rise to a higher level of relationships between men and women. 'Victim feminism' is dangerous in a sense that it can be antagonistic and arrogant in its dealings with women issues. It can fall into a trap of trying to replace patriarchy

with feminism in a way that can make men feel threatened, attacked, humiliated and unwanted. Whereas oppressive patriarchy on the one hand is also dangerous because it can socialise men to see women as objects, as things needed for use, not as human beings with equal rights and dignity. Here I am trying to give a brief picture of the dark sides of both feminism and patriarchy. It is these dark sides that are undesirable and give a negative impact on relationships between men and women of our time.

4. We need a pro-active feminism and a pro-active patriarchy

Men and women of our time need a new identity, an identity that makes them experience life and the world as males and females. They need to assert their gender in a positive way. God intended men to be male and women to be female for the good of both and all creation.

In the fall, equality and complementarity was replaced by rule and subservience resulting in inequality and even enmity, between the sexes. In this context we, as men, need to acknowledge that traditional teachings based on hierarchialism and patriarchy have been presented and used in a way that has, for centuries, resulted in the oppression of women. Sexism is gender based discrimination, in attitudes and structures, perpetrated by men. This must be repented of because it is a continuation of the fall whereas redemption has already come. In redemption Christ liberates both male and female from having to get their identities from rule and submission, and to find a new identity in the kingdom of God, in the new humanity (Eph 2: 14 – 16). (Venter, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No. 83 June 1993:95)

New identity grants both male and female a new selfhood, a liberated selfhood which is more open to the other gender and accept it for what it is without any fear of domination or desire to subjugate it. There are two factors that destroy the relationship between men and women in patriarchal society, that is 'rule and subservience'. These two are dominant features of the unredeemed patriarchy-

the patriarchy that is distant from God. Venter's article continues to tell us that:

The paradox in this case is that the image of god is simultaneously and full expressed in both male and females alone (single) and together (married). But we cannot discover what masculine-feminine is in isolation from one another, we must "insist on a relational understanding of what it means to be masculine and feminine. The real question is: in what relationship with women will men find their real masculine self (and vice versa)? (:98).

What is said above brings us back to the marital relationship we have already discussed in other chapters. The question: in what relationship with women will men find their real masculine self and vice versa. It is a challenge to all involved in mission to reflect on our relationship with both men and women we minister to. My answer to the question above is that it in relationship with God that men and women can find their true selves. It is true that we cannot discover what masculine-feminine is in isolation from one another. It is in real concrete life situations where men and women interact with each other in day to day life that this discovery of value and worth of each other must take place. It is in struggles of ordinary life that men should discover what it means to be feminine and masculine and find a common bond that binds them together as equal images of one and same God from whom their true identity come. Van Skalkwyk's missiological reflection on Anne Hope's approach to mission and transformation (Missionalia Vol. 29 No. 3 Nov. 2001:470 – 471) makes a distinction between:

Christian feminism that finds a balance between the 'autonomous woman' and the serving woman' whom she calls a shalom woman who is different from the traditional submissive woman who accepts male leadership and domination at a cost to herself and also the selfish woman who is so busy fighting for her own rights and recognition that she tramples on the self-respect of men, and ignores the needs of other men, women and children. The shalom woman who is free and independent, has a strong self-image, and uses her strength constructively and courageously to create a just, peaceful and healed community in her home, in her neighborhood and in greater society.

In this article we learn about various forms of feminism, some of which clearly

play a negative role in male and female relationships and in society at large. That is why I say in order that our life can be meaningful and we can play our roles well as men and women in mission we need to become aware of what needs to be saved in our masculinity and femininity. Both men and women should look at Christ to find their proper image and identity that is reflected in Christ's servanthood. He came to serve and therefore those who participate in His mission must learn and find ways of making His followers male and female to be faithful to their vocation to serve humanity as He served it. A feminism that helps women to become aware of their innate gifts as women which can give a meaningful contribution to building up communities that serve humanity in the spirit of Christ is a redeemed feminism. In the same way a patriarchy that helps men to be conscious of their servanthood in the spirit of Christ is redeemed patriarchy. In our human struggles to become whole, to attain perfection, we need Jesus Christ who became incarnate to bring to a higher experience of what it means to be human. There is nowhere where we can find a fulfilled humanity except in Jesus

CHAPTER SEVEN

Theological Interpretation Of Transfer Of Church Membership Through Marriage

1. What is undesirable about transfer of church membership through marriage

1.1 Estrangement from religion

The most unfortunate thing a forced transfer of church membership through marriage can do is to remove an individual not only from a Christian community of her choice but from the Christian religion altogether. The faith as a life giving gift of God through our lord Jesus Christ cannot be willingly reduced to a mere formality of a human culture, to deprive it of its role of being a way to God and to fellow human beings and the rest of the created reality. Human institutions of whatever kind find their proper perfection and purification through people who have deep roots in their faith and belief in God. Distanced from this one can expect anything to happen. I have come across some women who are no longer practicing Christians because of transfers that they undertook not out of choice but because of the expressed pressure of their husbands or in-laws. There are some who merely bowed to social expectation even though there was no pressure on them to change their church membership. When the door of their former church is closed on them, some never feel eager to enter through another one for the simple fact that most of their lives they have taken their former church as the most perfect church to communicate Christian values. It depends on how

they are related to their home denominations. This isolation leads them to a life empty of commitment to Christian mission. There are such cases across all the denominations.

1.2 Inner conflict

Some have half – hearted commitment to their new churches and this leaves them with some dissatisfaction with a number of things. For them transfer of membership to a new religious home means transfer of all they were used to in their former churches. They will always compare and judge everything according to the understanding they bring along with them. It is worse with people who had some kind of fanatical allegiance with their denomination. Adopting a new tradition and new models of evangelisation and regulation policies put them off. As a result this can put such a person into conflict with the members of the new spiritual home and even with important people in leadership like pastors or ministers.

There are many signs of the inner conflict. Here I will mention just a few. One of them is 'lukewarmness' towards religious practice. Unlike total estrangement, the person goes through everything with little or no conviction at all. Although such a person has some form of bond with a particular church, she cannot be expected to give devoted witness to the Gospel all the time. There will be no joy in participating in the mystery of salvation through active and genuine commitment to the common witness of the religious family she is bonded with. This joy brings personal and unique experiences of the presence of the risen Lord in our

personal lives. You cannot touch others with the saviour's hand unless you feel and see it touching you. You cannot comfort others with His word unless you hear it comforting you. This inner conflict, as psychology can show, makes people to be handicapped when it comes to relationships. The relationship with the Lord is affected as well as relationships with others.

1.3 The sacraments lose meaning and purpose

For some people in this kind of situation the sacraments do not mean what they should mean. They are reduced to mere formalities that are empty of the Gospel message. The sacrament of baptism which is one of the sacraments of initiation into the Christian life is made to play a superficial role of being a means of getting a child a certificate or for establishing for a child a denominational bond or allegiance which has no meaningful role in his or her spiritual formation. It is a sentimental bond but it is not a realistic bond that can lead one to Christ. Other sacraments as well lose their values and opportunities of encounter with the risen Lord present in our personal human history, whether it is communion, marriage etc. People go through them as formalities, which leave no mark in their bond with the redeemer. If sacraments don't speak to us they cannot be moments of grace and transformation from one form of personality to another.

Transfer of church membership through marriage does not have the effect on personal faith of individuals. Many women are happy in their new churches and are very much closer to the Lord as they ever have been. Some find this change even more enriching and exciting. Here we must remember, we are dealing

with people who have little or no deep reflection on the fundamentals of the Christian faith. These are people whose association with the faith is mainly underlined by the regulations and traditions of institutional churches and they cannot easily see what is of paramount importance in our faith beyond the borders of our individual churches, their cultures, doctrinal differences, traditions and missionary approaches and evangelisation methods.

Love and compassion characterised Jesus' method of evangelisation. He did not use power or force to make His mission accepted and understood. He invited and received the weak and the distanced from various sections of His society to join Him in announcing the Good News of the Kingdom.

Our obedience in mission should be patterned on the ministry and teaching of Jesus. Churches are free to choose the ways they consider best to announce the Gospel to different people in different circumstances. But these options are never neutral. Every methodology illustrates or betrays the Gospel we announce. In all communications of the Gospel, power must be subordinate to love (Documents on Mission, 1985:87).

It is important to educate Christians to understand their Christian vocation in a wider sense. It is a fact that many people do have a narrow understanding of what it means to a Christian, a new creation through Christ whom we meet and encounter in a special way in the sacraments and in sharing the word and spiritual gifts flowing from His grace in the sacraments. Transfer of membership should not hinder our women from having a meaningful participation in the

sacramental life of the Church

1.4 Common witness weakened

In the announcement to the world of the reconciliation in Jesus Christ, churches are called to unite. Faced with the challenge and threat of the world, the churches often unite to defend common positions. The common recognition of the authority of the Bible and of the creeds of the ancient Church and a growing convergence in doctrinal affirmations should allow the churches not only to affirm together the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but also to proclaim together the good News of Jesus Christ to the world. In solidarity, churches are helping each other in their respective witness before the world. In the same solidarity they should share their spiritual and material resources to announce together and clearly their common hope and common calling.

It is at the heart of Christian mission to foster the multiplication of local congregations in every human community. The planting of the seed of the Gospel will bring forward a people gathered around the Word and sacraments and called to announce God's revealed purpose. (Documents on Mission, reader, 1985:85).

Christian presence and witness in local contexts is a task all Christians must do together. Members of our local congregations in our respective denominations who are not fully settled in the congregation or local Christian community weaken the bond that binds us together as one people of God called to give witness to the local community. Christ calls all of us to have a share in his ministry. It is not realistic to expect people who do not have their roots firmly planted in any of the local Christian communities to be fully committed to His mission. Transfer of membership which leaves an individual uprooted and unable to be replanted into a witnessing community, deprives that individual of the opportunity to live fully the vocation of being called and sent by the Lord.

It is our duty to encourage participation in the saving mission of Christ and not to weaken it due to any human tradition or social pressure. Christian communities of all confessions must become conscious of the demand of the Gospel that

every believer should not be an isolated entity but, as our human nature dictates we all need a community. Churches must create an atmosphere of peace and harmony where new comers can feel attracted to join and feel at home. Freedom of the individual to belong to a community of her or his choice should not be sacrificed at the expense of her or his true religious experience and personal encounter with the Lord. When we are freed of our prejudices against each other unity among ourselves is possible and our witness to a local community will be more a sign of the living Christ than before.

2. The relationship between Christ and the believing community

2.1 The desired nature of the believing community in an unbelieving world

Congregations or local Christian communities of all denominations should develop a sense of knowing and seeing themselves as missionary communities to the unbelieving world. They should try as hard as possible to rediscover what Christ intended the community of believers to be from the very beginning of His ministry. Deepening their relationships with Christ through prayer and commitment to acts of charity and love, they will understand better the needs of those who enter through their doors seeking the face of Christ and his grace for healing and meaning in their personal lives.

The first part of this chapter gives a picture of the undesirable present scenario in the area of transfer of church membership for married women. This section gives a brief reflection on the ministry of Christ to the unbelieving world of His day and

it also shows how this is a challenge to Christian communities of our time. As we know that these women who transfer church membership according to patriarchal demands of their society move between Christian communities, it is good therefore here to pause for a while and try to understand what it means to be a community that belongs to Christ and his mission. It is only when we know who we are that we can be able to understand others. Those who transfer church membership do have some experience of what it means to be part of a believing community and a ministering community. It will be meaning full therefore to acknowledge this fact and see what benefits it can bring to communities they join and see how their future participation in mission can be secured. If we take ourselves for granted we will take others for granted. It is important for Christian communities to know who they are in relation to Christ and His mission and help others to be conscious of this relationship.

From the beginning of his worldly ministry Christ showed His interest in establishing a community. He created a community that would have a first hand experience of His teaching and ministry. He was always conscious of His role in this world. He did not make it a secret that all He is about is different from the expectations of His audience and their cultural, political and religious practices. In all those areas of life of the wider community of His time, He made it a point that His agenda is clear to everyone to the very last detail. He was aware of where that will eventually lead him to, but He remained faithful to His calling, that is to remain faithful to His mission. He had a transformative association with those

around Him. He encountered the human situation with the aim to bring new realities into it. A creative presence was the goal of His involvement in human situations and life events. Custodians and experts of the traditions and popular customs of His time were always baffled by the way He confronted them and challenged them to make those traditions and customs God – centered.

He touched those around Him in such a way that they could not remain the same after their encounter with him. After His death the community that witnessed His life and mission could not help to follow His way and dedicate their life through thick and thin to pursue His course. Jesus challenged these initial partners of His in mission to have their lives transformed. They started to behave in strange ways to the eyes of their compatriots. They ate without bothering to wash their hands, (Which was against tradition), they ate ears of wheat on a Sabbath and did not fast. Through their experience of Him there was a shift in their understanding of the popular customs and traditions. Traditions empty of love and compassion for the weak and suffering. They were raised above values necessary for the service of humanity.

Christian communities should strive for their own transformation from within. Without the experience of this inner change and transformation they will not challenge human situations to change. The Church needs to be healed of all its divisions and be restored to unity. Members of our churches should be helped to realise the intention of Christ by establishing a community of believers in this world. Each church must take serious steps towards this unity of the community

that has a task of be a leaven to all diverse cultures of the world, large or small.

Thus Christian mission is the action of the body of Christ in the history of humankind – a continuation of pentecost. Those who through conversion and baptism accept the Gospel of Jesus partake in the life of the body of Christ and participate in an historical tradition. Sadly there are many betrayals of this high calling in the history of the churches. Many who are attracted to the vision of the kingdom find it difficult to be attracted to the concrete reality of the Church. They are invited to join in a continual process of renewal of the churches. The challenge facing the churches is not that the modern world is unconcerned about their evangelistic message, but rather whether they are so renewed in their life and thought that they become a living witness to the integrity of the Gospel. The evangelising churches need themselves to receive the Good News and to let the Holy Spirit remake their life when and how he wills (Documents on Mission :84)

The Church as a special community within human communities is entrusted with a holy task. To make holy what is human in society and make that an offering to God. Look for best gifts of humanity and offer them to God in praise and thanksgiving. In its celebration of its special relationship with Christ, the Church must take from what is naturally good and also what has been purified by the gospel from any given human community as fruits of what God Himself has sown. This cannot happen unless the Church appreciates what God has given to it as a community bonded in a special bond of friendship and willingness to share the gifts of the Spirit with the rest of the unbelieving world. The evangelising churches, as it has already been indicated in the quotation above, need to receive the Good News whole–heartedly. Each community involved in mission must have a continuous reflection on its methods to avoid betrayals of this high calling of being a community founded on Christ's saving love and service to humanity by bringing it to its God–intended perfection.

Perhaps the greatest gift, and greatest mission, we can fulfil as Church today is that careful discernment–that looking and listening (and sometimes keeping very

quiet) – with which we can perceive moments of truthfulness, and moments of grace. Our sensitivity to this ‘big’ gracedness of our society is refined and trained in our celebration of sacraments in the life of the Church; it is here that we are daily equipped for the task of ‘naming graces’ in our world.

The naming of graces opens up a mission field, which does invite us into all sorts of non – churchy areas, as well as into places of different belief. In these places we are called to become as Christ, being as well as speaking God's Word. But still, perhaps the most powerful evangelising effect of such a mission would be the realisation that, whilst we were busy working in parish projects and preparing liturgies, the redeeming love of God was, as well, at the work in the wider world of human living and striving, and that He is, there too, building His Church, which is His whole people (Watkins, *Priests and People*, vol. 16 No. 1, 2002:17).

The Christian community as a whole must invite the world to share what it is already enjoying, which is being a renewed society endowed with life giving gifts and values, a society with a challenging identity. It must be able to point out what is missing in the world of today that it has possession of and is able to offer to other communities not yet bonded with Christ. Christians of all traditions and confessions must search for the essence of the Gospel message, remain true to it, evaluate their missionary models and approaches, listen to the Holy Spirit and examine their consciences and humbly ask Christ Himself to purify their motives for the tasks they embark on in His name. Hastings (*Missionalia*, vol. 24 no. 11996:9 – 15) refers to mission as *Koinonia* – fellowship, *kerygma* – message, *diakonia* – service. These three form the nature of a community that is bonded with Christ and becomes His sacrament in the world still separated from God through sin and evil. The unity that this community enjoys is built on Christ as its bond and the foundation of its calling.

The bond that unites all separated elements preserved in all churches that continue to produce saving effects. This bond and center is Christ Himself, whom all Christians

acknowledge as lord of the Church, whom Christians of all communities unquestionably want to serve faithfully, and who graciously accomplish wonderful things even in separated communities by His active presence through the Holy spirit, not by any merit of men and women, but by His gracious mercy alone. (Baum, Concilium Vol. 4 No. 1 1965:41).

Christians must work together to eliminate divisive elements in their missionary endeavours. Elements that dilute the credibility of the Christian calling and discipleship. When all Christian communities are cleansed and stripped of all scandals that damage the relationship between communities themselves with God and humanity, the unbelieving world will be challenged and feel attracted to the same bond with Christ.

2.2 A call to breakdown the walls that keep us estranged from one another

2.2.1 Christ alone is the preached

From the social point of view churches as social entities like all other institutionalised bodies and groups have boundaries and borders that serve to distinguish them from any other social groupings. They have all the characteristics that mark social groups. They can be inward looking instead of being outward looking. Inward looking in a sense that they can go to the extremes in their attempt to safeguard their survival in a given social setting. Like human societies they can suffer complexes that consequently lead to hostility towards other social entities that they presume to be a threat to their survival and expansion in any given community or area.

Boundaries are meant to protect those within them from outsiders. An inward

looking social group is not able to get involved in the affairs that concern other people outside its boundaries. It develops interests that serve only the needs of its members. Fear and mistrust among Christians belonging to different denominations can easily lead to strengthening of boundaries and fortresses that serve only one purpose, to promote division. When people experience Christian communities as entities that are surrounded by fortified fortresses where acceptance, communication and cooperation with others is not possible or at least desirable; they will see others as total outsiders. Christians of all confessions, tradition and place must find education and formation for ecumenical spirit an inevitable step towards unity and cooperation.

Bliss (Priest and People January 2002, vol. 16 No.1:9 – 13) helps us to look back and see how in the twentieth century the churches came to find new ways of understanding what it means to be Church in the modern world. In his article, the writer gives an interesting history of ecumenism and the foundation of the World Council of Churches as the servant of Church unity. He values the ecumenical movement in which many churches participate. This still needs to be part of our pastoral work and care of members of our churches. Coming to the local and grassroots level where our women transfer church membership through marriage, ecumenism can help to reduce tensions and stresses caused by lack of acceptance and cooperation between churches. Bliss gives a very good analysis of how both Catholics and Protestants used to define "Church" before and after the birth of the ecumenical movement as a bridging agent of unity

among Christians. He shows how boundaries started to lose to great deal of importance in defining the Church. In his analysis, Bliss gives an overview of a slow historical journey of understanding of what does "church" mean today.

For the first time in history, communities from a variety of traditions began talking to one another on their respective understandings of the nature of the church. It was a process of great discovery for most of them, and of new and enlightened relationships, which continue today (Bliss, 2002:10).

At heart of the mission undertaken by any Christian community or church should radiate Christ whose life is central to our way to God and to fellow human beings. If Christ is the center of what we preach and what we live, His saving presence in the world will be felt and experienced by all. Christ and His mission comes first in our calling, all others are secondary including our different communions and confessions. Christ, and Christ alone can liberate us from our prejudices, mistrust and estrangement from one another. If our women could experience this liberation within our churches, they could see that what is essential in Christian life is to accept Him as the one preached and the one to be imitated.

At the point when division introduced the destruction of the sign of the Church, the ecumenical attitude would reconstruct it humbly and profoundly in charity. Ecumenism, which is therefore the common effort of Christians to reach in Christ the full visibility of the sign that is the Church, seeks to transcend Christian divisions for a future in God. For this reason it is necessarily interior to the mission (Guilou, Concilium vol.4 No.1 1965:7).

The scandal of division can only be overcome through decisive steps taken by all Christians to love Christ they find in others. We need to become aware that Christ lives and moves among, with and within the two or three that meet in His name, whether in their action in the world, in prayer or in thanksgiving. Ecumenism is centered on Christ and His mission. It brings all of us closer to the

source of our calling and its purpose which is Jesus the redeemer. The twentieth century according to Bliss (2002:10) has seen a new Church.

He says this century has been “dubbed” the century of the Church. A Church which has experienced at least to a large extent the cracking and falling down of some of the walls that separated churches for a long time and the beginning of new paths for fraternity, friendship and cooperation. All these work towards the unity that is required for full visibility of the sign that is the Church in society. Pure human motives for self-preservation and domination of other churches in certain areas can sometimes obstruct or delay the infiltration of ecumenical spirit of our time from reaching ordinary members of our churches. If we can learn to search together for the mystery that is Christ, and His will in all that we preach and do in our churches, all members of this one body of Christ, which is the Church will have a saving visibility among many nations.

2.2. 2 Belonging to Church means belonging to Christ

In his analysis of the historical journey of Christian communities of all traditions and confessions' search for what it means to be 'Church', Bliss (:11) indicates that one way of doing this task was to look for the images that can help to define the meaning of 'Church' for Christians of our time. The images like: Temple of the Spirit, mystical body of Christ, people of God etc. What is of interest for me in this is the fact that the whole thing began as a journey or a process leading to self-discovery of Christian communities. Many more models can be used and will still be used, because the understanding of what it means to be a church

community founded on Christ for all times and places, cannot be defined by one model. That is why I am glad that Van Heerden (PMS Newsletter No. 54 2002:2) offers another model fitting his understanding of the Church: "The church of God - a living star of truth and love".

He finds something missing in what we may call at this point in time the traditional scriptural and theological analogies or models for the Church. That is institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant and the scriptural images like: The pilgrim people of God, bride of Christ, the sheepfold, the vineyard, the body of Christ etc. Michael Van Heerden adds the four marks of Holiness, unity, catholicity and apostolicity to his model of "a living star of truth and love". It would be good for all Christian communities to see themselves as marked by these marks and called to translate them into life in their service to humanity in all its contexts and in relationships among themselves.

There is no doubt that Christ saw His teaching and ministry as the definitive moment in the outreach of the Father's love to the world. This kingdom, that had come in Him among us, he saw as one that would continue to grow until the end of time, one that would grow because the definitive moment would be maintained and preserved in the life of the Church through the fidelity of His followers. A fidelity that would find its fullest expression and discerning moment in the ministry of the apostles and their successors (Van Heerden 2002:2)

I want to adopt this same sentiment or perception of Christ's vision of His mission and definitive moment of The Father's outreaching love and involvement in the world, as a way all members of the Church should feel at home with. The mark of apostolicity can be extended to include the fact that all members share the same gifts of the Spirit, which Christ is able to impart to all who choose him as the way of life. Infidelity to the teaching of Jesus and His ministry should be the only

factor that determines whether one belongs to Church or to Christ. One cannot belong to the one without belonging to the other.

The word fidelity speaks volumes in this context. Church membership should not be perceived only in a narrow sense, but in a wider sense that recognises the participation of all in the life of Christ and His saving works or ministry. The word followers refers to all the baptised, therefore it is healthy when Christians belonging to different churches challenge each other to be faithful to Christ and His ministry. Transfer of church membership through marriage happens and sometimes is enforced by and on people who already share the same character, which is a Christian character, an indelible mark that makes them a new creation through their baptism. Our church belonging should manifest and reflect more our belonging to Christ, who is the Way the Truth and the Life, than our belonging to our diverse denominations. We should be able to look for that which is of Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life in the lives of our fellow Christian brothers and sisters with the intention of encouraging them to allow it to develop and bear fruits that all of us can benefit from. Another aspect I like in Van Heerden's approach is the aspect of the Church's holiness.

The church is obviously Holy because she is founded on the Truth of Christ and is vivified by the living presence of Christ's Spirit made manifest in God's Holy Word and the Sacraments. But she is also holy in the holiness of her members who allow the light of God's gifts to shine forth and illumine the Church and the world. These gifts are varied and numerous and they are expressed differently in the life of each person (:3).

In the final analysis it is holiness which will tell whether a person belongs to Church, to Christ, to the Kingdom or to the world. It is those whom by their way of

life do not belong to the first three that we need to worry about, whether baptised or not, not those who by their way of life manifest the true values and virtues demanded by the Kingdom and Christ' teaching even if they happen not to belong to the same Christian tradition confession or denomination as us. Our mission is to see that all come closer to the Lord in the way they live and deal with one another. In this way the walls that separate us will be weakened and destroyed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Transfer of Church Membership Through Marriage and Other Dimensions of Mission

Earlier on it has been mentioned that the purpose of this study is to give a theological interpretation to a contextual issue experienced at grassroots level by Christian women who marry across denominations – an experience which is taken for granted by pastors and many members of Christian churches. All participants in the discussion on this topic confessed that they never gave this issue any particular attention before I brought it up with them, but they admitted that they found it interesting to sit back and look into it from various angles. It is a mission-related issue as it has already been said before. Mission as we know, has many dimensions and interpretations depending on socio-cultural contexts under which it has to be understood and be undertaken.

Mission is a relevant Christian response to human situations that need Christian involvement and activity with the intention to bring about transformation to such situations. It challenges those who belong to the Christian religion to reflect on their faith and give interpretation to their life situation in the light of that same faith. In this chapter therefore the relationship between transfer of church membership through marriage as a human experience and other dimensions of mission is given a brief exploration.

Marriage is a relationship between two people who are intimately bonded by the

norms of this institution, which is both social and religious. This therefore made it impossible for me not to examine the husband and wife relationship in this community and also male and female relationship in general. The result of this examination leads to the conclusion that the community under study is a patriarchal community, which has hierarchical form of relationship between male and female. Patriarchy as a social system is found all over the world, in both developed world and in traditional societies. There are many voices against patriarchy around the world therefore in a very brief way I tried to make my readers and myself to listen to some of those voices. Voices from outside our borders and those within our borders. Some of these voices are secular and some are religious. To be exact, some are Christian. It is because of this fact that feminism came into this study.

The Christian religion is a religion that is expressed and experienced in mission. Mission which belongs to Christ and to all that participate in His life. Among other things this study stimulates reflection on what is truly Christian and essential for all Christians in as far the following are concerned: Evangelisation, mission, liberation, discipleship, ecumenism, common witness, personal freedom, inter – cultural communication of the Gospel, church growth and understanding of Church as a community built on Christ. It led us also to the examination of the impact of transfer of church membership on women as participants in mission. This transfer of church membership by women when they get married is discussed around two major issues of contention in male and female

relationships today; Patriarchy and feminism and also the new understanding of those areas of church life listed above by all denominations.

In the paragraphs below I would like to briefly show how some of the dimensions of church life and mission listed above are related to the issue of transfer of church membership influenced by marriage. I will select those dimensions of mission, which were not discussed at length in other parts of this paper.

What are people becoming church members for? What are individuals being saved for? Bosch (1991:418) asks these questions. According to Bosch our evangelistic ministry brings out into the open, that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ (:420).

People become Christians for the purpose raised by Bosch above. That is for reorientation of their lives. It is important to be conscious of this fact when we look at those who transfer church membership. Evangelisation has this as its primary purpose. Numerical growth comes as a byproduct. Mission has meaning when reorientation of lives becomes a goal of our evangelisation as local

churches. We must conduct our evangelisation in such a way that people experience this. Members of our communities whether they transfer church membership or not must find this as the main challenge every Christian is faced with. We must find ways of collaborating together in evangelisation efforts to make sure that those who transfer do not lose this essential part of being Christians. Transfer or no transfer one must be helped to remain focused on this.

Inter-cultural communication of the gospel demands that as local Christian community involved in mission, we must be brave enough to evaluate the influence of culture and customs on transfer of church membership for our women. Where unnecessary pressure is put on individuals to join communities where they find it difficult to be fully alive and active in the service of God and His people, it is our duty to help those pressurising others to become aware of what is essential to Christian life.

We must reflect together on our culture and its demands on people to see which elements are worth retaining and those that need to be abandoned for the good of the Gospel. Kraft (1996:66) reminds us that the primary agents in mission are the local people and the Holy Spirit. An effective communication of the gospel depends mainly on these two.

Luzbetak (1988:160) acknowledges the fact that, however misguided, cultures are as a rule a society's honest attempt to cope with life. This is a positive way of looking at culture in any given context of evangelisation and communication of the Gospel. Armed with humility and positive attitudes towards the culture

and context and conditions under which we do our mission, we can convince those who put customary practices above everything including the Gospel to change and respect the freedom of others.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must become incarnate in every culture, while retaining the freedom to judge whether this or that form of religious expression and culture is a help or a hindrance to fullness of life for human beings, who are all created in the image of God (Section IV of report of San Antonio world mission conference 1989:72, in Pityana, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* No. 81 December 1992:6).

How do we make sure that we experience fullness of life fit for human beings as Christians? We can do this by being constantly conscious of who Christ is for all cultures. His Gospel denounces and corrects the presence of sinfulness in cultures; it purifies and exorcises their disvalues, thus establishing a critique of cultures (Pityana :8). The culture of the socio – cultural environment under which the women who transfer church membership through marriage live is based on patriarchy. It has already been indicated in other sections of this study that patriarchal norms sometimes can be discriminative and oppressive to women. Therefore, it is appropriate to bring Gospel in to judge and purify cultural practices that make women miss the joy of finding and experiencing fullness of life as free and redeemed human beings. Another way of engaging into a dialogue with a local culture is by giving theological reflection on its norms and practices, their correnspondece with the values that make other human beings

lesser human. This what I am doing in this study.

Christ is our liberator. He liberates us from all kinds of bondage, whether it is ideological bondage, religious, political, socio-cultural, economic etc. The Gospel gives the truth that sets us free. It gives us freedom to love others as we love ourselves. To recognise in others the image of God which gives every human being the dignity God intended for him or her. We are free to see fellow human beings as our equals in all that makes us human.

I am discussing this topic at time when in this country there is an aggressive campaign for the rights of women. Various sections of our South African society are standing together to fight vigorously the abuse of women and children. These are the most vulnerable people in a patriarchal society. Mission is liberation. It transforms oppressive structures and practices. It actively reaches out to the outcasts the downgraded, and those, whose voices are ignored by powerful structures in society. Sensitivity to freedom and the rights of others is another dimension of mission. Jesus came so that we can have life and have it to the full. If we are not free beings we cannot have life to the full. Liberation has to be effected at three different levels: from social situation of oppression, from every kind of personal servitude, and from sin, which is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings (Bosch 1991:443)

Women who transfer church membership through marriage are people who want to worship God their creator. They are baptised people who through word and deed express their new life in God through worship. The churches they come

from do now and then celebrate their life in the Lord through liturgy or worship. The following are the fundamentals of liturgy or worship which came up in a discussion during a consultation meeting on liturgy organised by the SACBC on November 12 and 13 2002 in Bethlehem in the Free State:

Liturgy involves prayer to the Father through Jesus in the Spirit. It is the worship of the triune God. Liturgy belongs to the Spirit. It is related to the Paschal mystery. It sanctifies time and space e.g. Hour, day, month, season and year. In liturgy we find ritual and prayer. It is a public activity of an assembly gathered together in the name of God. It expresses the faith of the community. It feeds and stimulates the life of the community of believers.

People who regularly go to church on Sunday or any other days of worship, they do so because in worship they celebrate their relationship with God. God of life and love. Liturgy or worship arouses deep feelings about our sense of God's presence in our lives and in us. It touches our inner being and connects us with another level of the reality of our being, the spiritual self. It is a special encounter with one's deepest level of self - awareness and relationship with the author of life. In the fundamentals of worship or liturgy, listed above we see what happens to a congregation or a worshipping assembly moved by the Spirit to acknowledge the greatness of our Lord.

These women who due to commitment to their matrimonial bond change church belonging deserve all that is explained above. It is their right to worship in love and truth. To create circumstances that deny them occasions of worshipping

their God in truth and express their love of Him with sincerity is nothing but injustice. Emancipation of women covers the whole range of what it means to be truly human and truly free. Mission as liberation serves this purpose. To use the Gospel and to live it in such a way that all serve God with freedom and love. Freedom of worship is included in the freedom charter and in our country's constitution (Table of Non – Derogable Rights 1996:21 English version).

From our theological point of view this freedom is based on Christ the liberator. Mission means the participation of all the redeemed members of His body in His service to humanity and creation as a whole. It is from worship that we are stimulated to participate in mission actively. In this way we become living members of His body the Church. Transfer of church membership should therefore be handled in such a way that none of the members of the body of Christ become dead members because this will affect even those who are trying hard to remain faithful to their Christian calling.

To summarise all that this study is all about I would like to say that, it discusses the plight of women in a patriarchal rural black community in South Africa when it comes to religious alliance or belonging along the Christian denominations. It discusses the reality of the divided Church and the effect of this division on those who share common baptism through Christ. We have seen how this division leads to weakening of Christian witness to the wider society.

The church of our day is divided and its common witness largely ineffectual in a disbelieving world. Mercifully, the church of our day is so weak that it does

not have the power to impose its will on the world as it did during the period of missionary expansion. Neither does it have the resources to offer inducements. The church can only rely on its ability to communicate the truth and to live the faith honestly (Pityana :15)

This theological reflection serves to revitalise the urge for unity and co – operation among Christians in areas of pastoral work and Christian mission. It is way of acknowledging the dignity of women as equal fellow human beings with spiritual needed similar to those of their male counterparts. It raises an awareness that patriarchy cannot go unchallenged in our age. At the same time here we once more reinforce our determination to remain faithful to the spirit of ecumenism as a lifetime process among all the believers, which helps to strengthen our common witness to the one faith we all share. This faith makes all of us become servants of the risen Lord in our brothers and sisters. Why ecumenism? Because it is a way of seeing the world differently,

That is from the perspective of the creative and redemptive reign of God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of acting differently in the world. Ecumenical vision and acting ecumenically belong inseparably together. This means more than a narrow focus on the church; for even the search for church unity cannot be separated from a commitment to co – operation in mission and to struggle for social justice, both at home and beyond our parochial and national boundaries (de Grunchy, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 102 November 1998:2).

Marriage by its nature is an ecumenical union. It always brings people who share common nature as human beings, but different social backgrounds, different family histories and so on. In some cases even different religions. This people are expected to live together in life that is filled with love and caring for one another. As it is often the case, some of them come from our different Christian traditions and confessions. It is our duty to sensitise members of different churches to the challenges of transfer of church membership and ecumenical spirit and common witness in mission, in order to avoid unnecessary tensions and putting up a pretext of church belonging. According to the quotation above this will help to act differently at home and in society at large.

CONCLUSION

There are two models of relationships between male and female many people think that should be upheld. These models are opposite to each other and they bring different attitudes and behaviour patterns towards men and women. Some people including committed Christians in all denominations are convinced that there must be a hierarchichal patterns of relationships in our society. Men being at the top of the pyramid. A good example of such people is Reverend Mgedu (of the church of the Gospel of Christ's healing ministry). This minister unshakingly believes that relationships should be hierarchichal.

Ukristu yintloko yootata – Christ is the head of all men.

Oo tata z'intloko zomama – Men are heads over women.

Utata yintloko umama ngumsila – Man is the head and the woman is the tail.

Umama sisitya esiyetheyethe – a woman is a fragile vessel. (Rev. Mgedu interview. 04 – October 2002 Aliwal North).

Rev. Mgedu quoted the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis and 1Corinthians 14:34 to support his claim. Although he does not condone any abuse against women, he is convinced that women are not equal to men. Besides this Biblical interpretation on which he bases his argument, he referred to the payment of '*lobola*' by men to get wives. This makes women their subordinates.

The following distorted Christian beliefs which many members of our churches hold fast to, encourage the sense of inferiority and acceptance of subjugation of women by men as a norm:

The belief that God intends men to dominate and women to be submissive

The belief that women are morally inferior to men and do not trust their own judgement.

The belief that suffering is a desirable quality for a Christian and women in particular have been chosen to be 'suffering servants' and also the belief that all Christians are commanded by God to hurriedly forgive and be reconciled with those who sin against them.

These type of beliefs came out of a discussion focused on why women remain in

abusive marriages, conducted by Heggen (Phiri Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 114 Nov. 2002:21). They resemble the same mentality portrayed in chapter three. The only difference is that these are based on wrong Christian assumptions. Whereas in chapter three the same mentality is based on wrong cultural assumptions that women should be by nature tolerant of all wrongs done to them by men and women who perpetuate patriarchal domination as a sign of good and proper womanhood.

On the one hand there are those who believe in *mutuality*, which is defined as the reciprocal interdependence of equals. This basically means that men and women should relate to each other as equals. Mutuality is concerned with the feelings, needs and interests of the other (Ackermann Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No.102 Nov. 1998:18). As we have seen in chapter six, there are voices against inequality between men and women from all fronts of interaction between the two sexes. The national constitution of this country does not agree with gender inequality, therefore since this compatible with the Christian teaching, the Church must bet the forerunner in abolition of domination and subjugation of women.

What was discovered through this study is that:

Some pastors or church leaders know very little about other denominations. The problem here is that it is not easy for ecumenism to take root among us. When we are ignorant of what other churches are all about; cooperation will be difficult among us.

Many pastors or church leaders take transfer of church membership through marriage as a normal norm. Therefore there are no measures taken to help women who have difficulties around this issue.

In a patriarchal society, women use power over other women as much as men negatively use it over women.

When we give Christian formation to female members of our churches, we must remember that they are foremost the ambassadors of Christ in the world than fanatics of any particular church. This will help them to get involved in Christian mission wherever they are.

Women have rights and therefore it is important to help them enjoy those rights including freedom of religion.

Most important insights acquired through this study is that:

It is important to be aware that those who ask for a 'remove' or hand one to us, are human beings; they should be treated with respect. Both the woman bearing a 'remove' in her hand and the one who is receiving it belong to Christ and together must seek the will of God in what they are doing. Hemming (Priests and People March 2001 Vol. 15 No. 3:94) tells us what a pastor is supposed to be to the one he or she is pasturing:

The pastor, surely, is called to act in the person of Christ in order to lead the person pastured into a relationship that will never end, that indeed is the

deepening of a relationship already constituted through baptism.

At no level can this relationship ever be professionalism; it puts me at risk, or rather actually draws attention to my own distance from perfection, my own inadequacy in the face of another's need, and so my own absence of skill, or ability to resolve or close things. This inadequacy is my own distance from redemption – my own need of sanctification and holiness, experienced at the hands of another person – indeed, one who comes to me for help.

We need to find Christ in all issues of life. Church leaders must help those who transfer church membership through marriage to find Christ in that act of changing church membership. Pastoral assistance in this matter is valuable. Endogamy is far from being a solution to problem of mixed marriages, it is infect not ethical, because by emphasizing it we can lead people to exclude other people from loving relationships on account of their faith or religion and that is something sinful. While transfer of church membership through marriage continues to take place across different denominations it is of paramount importance to educate and inform our people that:

The ecumenical challenge entails that Christians must never be satisfied with being Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians or any other denomination. They must strive to move on until the world see one body of Christ in the one household of the one creator God. In this context ecumenical relations should be seen as a clubbing together of peoples of every tribe, religion, denomination, gender and age to work for the dethroning of Satan and his

works (Makhulu in Amanze Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 105
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APPENDIX

AIC Ministers Interviews

- Rev. Ayos Sixabhayi Buda aged 65yrs [The Holy Christian Apostolic In Zion]
His view: Indoda inelawulo kwinkosikazi yayo – The husband is in control.
Inviziswano phakathi kwabo is important.
- Rev. Elias Adoons 50yrs [United Church in Zion]
His view: Makubekho inviziswano phakathi no myeni nenkosikazi yakhe.
- Rev. Vakunjani Ntshinaxu [ZAC Church]
His view: inviziswano
- Secretary. Nama [United]
His View: Umntu makhonze apho makangahlali phantsi, makaye kwinkonzo akholwa kuyo kunoungakhonzi. Xa indoda isaphila umfazi uphantsi kwe phiko le ndoda.
- Gosa. Thembinkosi Ntunja [United]
His view: Free choice.

Mainline churches ministers

- Rev. Dinga Anglican
Rev. Mrubata AME
Rev. Olifant AME
Rev. Motaung Donkey (Methodist Church in Africa)

Catholic male marriage counsellors

- Mr. Tau Elia
Mr. Mangaliso

Membership transfer survey undertaken during a retreat for St. Anne Sodality.

Results from a brief questionnaire

Participants: 134
 Transferred : 107
 Transfer is a must : 85
 It should not be a must : 8
 Husband does not practice : 27
 Those who have daughter in laws : 38

Daughter in law

Daughter in law from another church : 13
 Son and daughter in law practice together : 5

Own daughter

Daughter changed denomination through marriage : 31

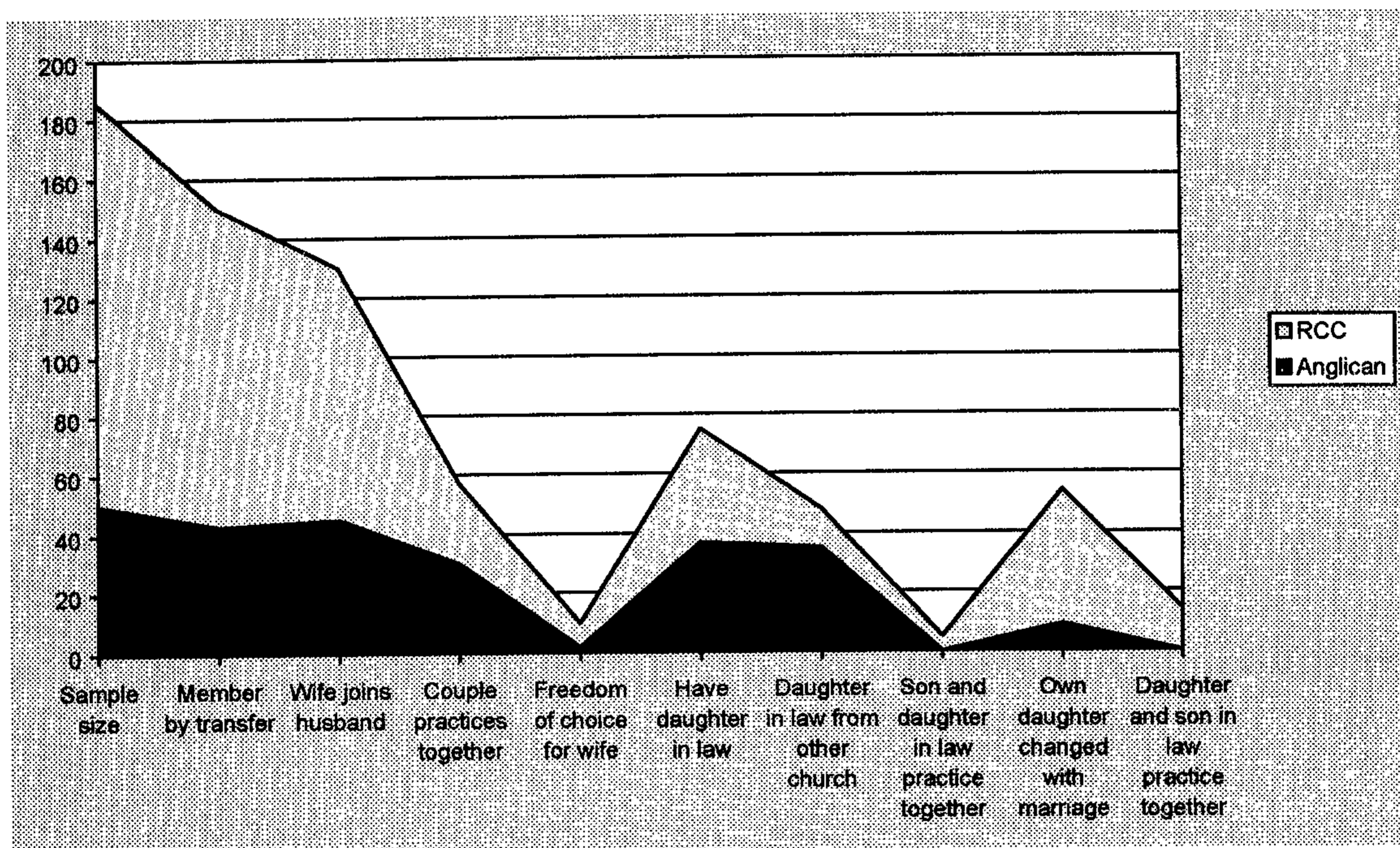
Interviews with women from different denominations

NAME	HOME CHURCH	NEW CHURCH	PERSONAL VEIW
Mrs Nyesi. Aged 42 Married for 19 yrs. Student of Catholic schools. Had interest in Sisterhood.	Catholic church. Former member of Children of Mary sodality	Methodist. Member of MothersUnion. Active in church choir.	Catholic priest refused to give her a church marriage. She was married by a Methodist minister hence she became a Methodist thereafter.
Mrs Fede 50yrs married in 1980	Catholic, from childhood. Attended a Methodist college.	Methodist. Active as fundraiesr.	College experience helped her to adjust easily in her new church. She is fulfilled as, a lover of spontaneity and lively liturgy in her new church.
Mrs Rantsane. Born 1963. Married 1985.	Methodist.	Catholic Church	Introduced into the Catholic Church by sister in law. Husband is not practising at the moment. She experienced no coecion into becoming a Catholic.
Mrs Moloinyana. 30yrs. Married in 1994.	Methodist.	Catholic Church	Followed the normal practice of following the husband and the in-laws.

Mrs Molema. 30yrs. Married in 1990.	Zionist.	Catholic Church	Embraced all that is practised in her new family including religion. It was hard at the beginning, but out of respect tried her best.
Mrs Fikizolo. 53yrs. Married in 1966.	Dutch	Catholic Church	Followed, her children she wanted to have them baptised in the church their father belongs to.
Mrs Fekisi. 45yrs. Married for 20yrs	Anglican	Catholic Church	She found it automatic to join the new church through marriage. Baptism of children was the main concern. She is active in her new church. She had three solemnisation of her marriage, due to the problem of ministers not recognising the function of each other.
Mrs Mokwena 45yrs	Catholic	AME	Returned to her old church after the death of mother-in-law who was influential for her transfer of her church membership.
Mrs Motjotji 47yrs	AME	Catholic	She found it difficult to remain a Catholic after her transfer of membership through marriage, she returned to her old church after requesting a special permission from her mother-in-law.
Mrs Motsewu 34 yrs Married 1999	Methodist Member of church choir, member of umanyano (Amatombazana) 1 yr training: Probation, Bible study & Preaching	Catholic Member of amantliziyo	Church transfer is similar to school transfer. The word of the Lord is the same. The procedure is the same in churches. Tsiki plays an important role. The symbolism of ityali:ukuqutha yonke into yasemzini. Umshwamo: indibaniso yezinyanya symbolised by slaughtering in both sides challenges one to decide to join the family church.
Mrs Hilada Makoma 46yrs married 1980	Catholic leader of Chiro	Methodist. 5yrs in mothers union, no special position.	Respect for marriage & parents (In - laws) Lobola, marriage commitment: "isifungo zomtshato". Blinkers for bomakoti: they follow everything. Some degree of disappointment with her new church. Still visits her old church. Time has changed bomakoti are more free now. She is more independent now she cannot be dictated to. Her children are Catholics.
Mrs Nomission Godla Born 1939 married 1959	Rhabe. Familiar with Catholic church through school & parents.	Methodist	Isintu sithi! In the former times choice was limited. Catholics are the only ones who had a problem about transfer of membership. Roma now has changed. Umfazi ulandela umyeni (Intloko).
Mrs Mohlabanyane Aged 59 Married in 1960	Dutch Reform Baptised as a child Attended Sunday school	Catholic	Strong belief in following customary marriage requirements to the letter. She was rebaptised and confirmed. It took her time to adjust into the new faith. Her grand children will never be baptised in another church.
Mrs Taule Aged 57 Married 1964	Anglican	Catholic	Acknowledges Zwelonke movement. Church identity is regardless. Mother in law played a role in her case. Rebaptised and confirmed. Missed home church.
Mrs Tuane 50yrs she transferred church membership twice because she married more than once.	Anglican	Dutch reformed	She misses Sunday services of her old church, she does not participate during communion in her new church. It doesn't inspire her to pray. She does not like the way it is received.

Malefu 40yrs married in 1996	Catholic	Dutch Reformed	On special occasions like Easter, she visits her old church. She compromised on transfer of membership it broke the first marriage of her divorcee husband.
Mrs Khumalo	Methodist	Catholic	No in-laws in RSA. She transferred her church membership due to fear of public opinion.
Miss Pinki Belebese			Single
Miss Zodwa Ntaka			Single

Comparison between Anglican and Catholic women's opinion on membership transfer.



Simple survey form for researching transfer of church membership through marriage in the villages around Sterkspruit

PARTICIPANTS

No. of participants (.....)

No. of those who are transferred to this church through marriage
(.....)

Those who say ' *Utata makandelwe yinkosigazi yakhe*' the wife must join the husband's church(.....)

Those who practise together with their spouses, if the husband is still alive or they practised together till the time of his death
(.....)

Those who say wife must be free to choose the church she likes
(.....)

DAUGHTER IN LAWS

No. of those who have daughter in laws (.....)

Daughter in laws from other churches (.....)

Son and daughter in law practise together (.....)

OWN DAUGHTER

Daughter changed church after marriage (.....)

Daughter and son in law practise together (.....)