

**MARITAL PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUSLY
MIXED MARRIAGES AMONGST THE
VHAVENDA PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA :
AN AFRICAN-CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE.**

BY

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BY

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PROMOTER : PROFESSOR G.J.A. LUBBE

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DECLARATION

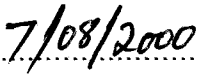
I declare that

**MARITAL PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUSLY MIXED MARRIAGES
AMONGST THE VHAVENDA PEOPLE OF SOUTH
AFRICA : AN AFRICAN-CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have
used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged
by means of complete references.



N.S. PHASWANA



DATE

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this thesis to my father,
Who - Philemon Tshibalo Tshilimandila

SUMMARY

Marriages with differences in religion are a source of misunderstanding, friction, and disharmony, and as a result, such marriages are exposed to a breakdown. Religion is not merely a set of beliefs, but a way of living and thinking. When this differs, it causes misunderstanding in the family and may cause marriage failure as adjustments to each other becomes complicated. Divorce is much more common in mixed marriages whether of different culture, religious or socio-economic background than when the backgrounds are similar. Religious similarity is linked to marital durability.

The researcher wanted to indicate through this work that the increase of marriages between people of different religious faiths does not really matter to people any longer. It is proved in this research that the outcome of such marriages is in most cases disastrous. Mixed marriages are the object of attention in every society because of their life meaning. Marriage is more than a relationship between individuals. It involves many more people. It is suggested in this study that African traditional methods like mahundwane (camping or a miniature village), betrothal and the giving of thakha (bride wealth) in marriage should be used to prevent both mixed marriages and marital problems which usually leads to marriage breakdown.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 Aim of Study

The thesis aims at investigating marital problems, especially divorce in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people in South Africa.

1.2 Hypothesis

*An African-Christian perspective on marital problems, especially divorce, may bring a positive contribution to many ethnic groups in South Africa.

1.3 Research Problem

*To what extent does the presence of two religious traditions in a marriage lead to divorce?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

To undertake a study of marriage is to begin a task that has far-reaching implications and touches on almost all other aspects of a person's life. For the understanding of any aspect of the social life of an African people - economic, political, or religious - it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of their system of kinship and marriage (Blum, 1989:20).

In speaking about marriage, John Mbiti also stresses how "marriage is a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects, which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another" (Mbiti, 1969:133).

Marriage is a topic that can easily arouse the interest of almost anyone, because everyone's existence has been vitally influenced by the marriage of two or more other persons. The familiarity and closeness of marriage to each one of us can sometimes blind us to the fact that it is very much based upon specific cultural factors, that can vary greatly among diverse societies (Blum, 1989:20).

Mbiti (1973:47) acknowledges that marriage in Africa is one of the institutions most shaken by modern change. This is an informed statement from someone who according to Asana (1990:15) wrote from the position of an African Christian thereby balancing the traditional values with the Christian.

The aspect of African society, which a Westerner, probably, finds most striking is the importance that group membership plays in an African's life. Besides helping to determine a person's role and status and place of residence, his or her group can influence his or her basic approach to marriage. For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence (Blum, 1989:23).

In order to understand non-western forms of marriage and family life, a person from one cultural background must not presume that the forms of marriage or family life that he or she has known in his or her own culture are the only possible - or even the best possible - forms of marriage and family life. He or she must seek to understand how and why other forms

of these institutions arose in other cultures in the past, and why they continue or persist even today (Blum, 1989:25).

Where the structure of a society is based upon kinship groups, such a society will follow clearly delineated customs and traditions, guiding the selection and acquisition of new members: by specifying how marriage partners for its members are to be chosen (Blum, 1989:29).

A clan that seeks a spouse for one of its members, not only considers the qualities of the prospective spouse, but, likewise, the descent group to which he or she belongs. Marriage establishes a relationship, not only between the spouses and their partner's descent groups, but also between the two lineages or clans (Blum, 1989:44).

The customs of parents and kin bringing pressure to bear upon their children in regard to the choice of spouses, or even in arranging marriages for their children, become much more understandable in such a cultural milieu, in which the concerns of the group are paramount (Blum, 1989:69).

The choice of a marriage partner is not only subject to the economic and political needs of the clan, but also to certain traditions that can vary from tribe to tribe. In some instances, it is possible or even preferable to marry from one's own clan or lineage. Each tribe has its own way of determining a forbidden or a preferred spouse. Such customs, if strictly observed, can limit the choice of possible mates and create hardships, not only for the individuals, but also for their descent groups. Marriage was looked upon as a process. In the light of the above considerations, we can see that traditional marriage in Africa was not something left to chance, nor was it the result of a haphazard choice (Blum, 1989:45).

According to Bambawale (1982:62) the cultivation of a religious faith is generally associated with the better prospects of marital success and happiness. Religion helps in reinforcing children's identity, and gives them a firm anchor by providing a certain sense of psychological security. It also serves as a vital link between family and the community. This religious pattern is maintained through many of the forms of worship and by the observance of rites and rituals, and festivals (Bambawale, 1982:62).

Marriages with differences in religion are a source of misunderstanding, friction, and disharmony, and as a result, such marriages are exposed to a breakdown. Religious similarity is linked to marital durability (Radebe, 1983:109). In her discussion on marriage stability and religious similarity Radebe (1983:110) explains that religion is not merely a set of beliefs, but a way of living and thinking. When this differs, it causes misunderstanding in the family and may cause marriage failure as adjustment to each other becomes complicated. Divorce is much more common in mixed marriages whether of different culture, religious or socio-economic background than when the backgrounds are similar (Radebe, 1983:110).

For a society to function smoothly and harmoniously most of its members must share the same culture. The members of the society, either implicitly or explicitly, must come to some consensus about culturally accepted and patterned ways of behaviour (Blum, 1989:119).

1.5 Analysis of the problem

Some of the things that I want to prove is that the presence of two religious traditions in a marriage usually leads to divorce.

In the old South Africa, that is, before the 1994 democratic elections, "mixed marriage" meant marriages between Whites and Africans or between Whites and the so-called Coloureds (Furlong, 1983:1).

Used in general terms "mixed marriage" was more racial than religious. In this study the term "mixed marriage" will exclusively be used to mean marriages between people of different religions and religious traditions across racial divide.

There is a continuing debate amongst educators, religious leaders, social workers and politicians over the choice of the best approach, in either treating or preventing mixed marriages and ultimately marriage breakdown.

The increase of marriages between people of different religious faiths does not really matter to people any longer. The adjustments necessary in any marriage are, of course, made more difficult if major differences in religious economic, educational, and cultural levels are in the background of the marriage partners. These differences also affect the acceptance of the marriage by in-laws and friends. In mixed marriage the attitude by the community also complicates the adjustments. Religious differences plays a negative role. Marriage in South Africa suffers a high rate of breakdown, irrespective of the divisions of race and class.

According to research by the Human Sciences Research Council published in April 1994, South Africa's divorce rate is amongst the three highest in the world: (South Africa Institute of Rate Relations, Race Relations Survey 1994/95).

The fact of the matter is that South Africans, the Venda people especially, are in a stage where couples are legally married, stay together, eat and drink together, share a bedroom, drive to work together, but when we go closer we see that they are long "divorced".

The veneer is really much more a thick crust of what you know. You are living on this crust that separated you from something sort of unspeakable.

That which disrupts the normal flow of life, either of an individual or of the group as a whole is in Africa and in South Africa (Venda) regarded as evil and must be avoided if possible. If not, the cause must be ascertained and remedy sought (Thorpe, 1991:113).

Intermarriage with a person of another religion, colour, class or ethnic group is far less unusual in these days than it was but a generation ago.

Today's families are increasingly urban and mobile. The degree of in-group solidarity is less marked. Families have grown smaller. It seems less necessary or desirable to live within neighbourhoods that consist entirely of one's own ethnic or religious group. Opinions and decisions with regard to major issues involving the individuals within the family are seldom, if ever made by the parents alone. Not only are such decisions the result of family discussion, but decisions made by young people are frequently quite independent of opinions held by parents, what is even more important, they are respected even if parents do not agree with them.

The family, in an earlier day, an integral part of the community, "fixed in a framework of numerous links and knots that held each individual within it in his place" has been succeeded by the family that regards itself as quite independent of all the families. As the generation continue here in Africa,

we have evidence to support the thesis that the social control of the family are shifting considerably in their emphasis.

Social control of the parent with respect to the children, and particularly the maturing youth, has actually weakened. Where, in past generations, the goals of the individual, broadly speaking, were determined by one's peer. Parents certainly have far less control of their children than they had but a generation ago. The family as an institution has weakened to a marked degree. And that weakening confronts us with serious religious and family problems.

A marriage and a funeral were congregational events. That is why when the wife was unfruitful (barren) it was not only the husband's concern but also the whole "family" and ultimately the community. In Africa divorce is like cancer. When a person's finger is cut off from the body it is not because the body feels good about it. It is just to say that in order to save the whole body let us do it. Before colonialization the situation in Africa was not so.

The ethnic group is a human group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity. The Vhavenda people is no exception. Here a high degree of loyalty and adherence to certain basic institutions, such as family patterns, religion and language, prevails. The ethnic group often possesses distinctive folkways and mores, customs of dress, art and ornamentation's, moral codes and value systems and patterns of recreation. There is usually some sort of object to which the group manifests allegiance, such as religion, language, or a territory.

Above all, there is a consciousness of land, and a 'we-feeling'.

The African family, generally regarded as the most cohesive of all family groups in contemporary times, is weakening.

Burger (1996:73) is close to the truth when he says that most of us, black or white, have grown to accept the correctness of responding in some violent manner to somebody else because we have seen significant authority figures exercise violence.

We are to identify the source or root cause of the problem namely divorce, not the symptoms. One way of the inflicting harm on others is to do something which result in their being harmed, the other, is to fail to do something the consequence of which is that they are harmed, in short, to fail to prevent harm. If we are responsible for harm which we could have prevented and if we believed that we should not harm others, we will find ourselves committed to a morality which challenges many of our basic beliefs and one which makes disturbing demands.

Whether or not all persons look upon religion as essential to a well-rounded, meaningful life is less important than the fact that society, through the past centuries up to and including our own age, has agreed that the proper kind of religion can influence men and nations for good. To deprive a child of his right to obtain a religious upbringing, which can be a source of security and inner strength is to commit a grave offence against the child and the future adult. It is equally unfortunate to confront a child with two different religions within the same household for this substitutes insecurity and uncertainty for security and a sense of identification.

To fail to provide a child with a religion because parents of different religions have, in the interest of compromise, forfeited their own individual heritage, is wrong. It is important to recognise the fact that no greater

abilities have ever emanated from people who have assimilated and given up their own identity, than from those who have maintained their identity (Gordon, 1964:352).

For an adequate understanding of the urgency and character of practical steps desirable to secure the orderly development of African family life, a comprehensive appraisal of the present position is required. Such an appraisal demand, in the first place, an impartial survey of the very considerable body of scattered and largely unassimilated material on religious aspects of this problem.

It would also disclose the gaps in our knowledge and prepare the way for a program of intensive field studies in those areas in which further research is likely to yield the most valuable results.

1.6 The Vhavenda People

1.6.1 Traditionalists

The whole social organisation of the Vhavenda shows that they had a very advanced type of culture for an Africa people. Unique for South Africa is the high position given to women in this society both in administration and in religious ritual. No account of the functional and the capacity of women in Bantu societies will henceforth be complete which does not take account of the responsible and efficient work which is being done by women among the Vhavenda (Stayt, 1931:ix).

The black Africans have their own philosophy, and look at the world, as all other people do, through their own spectacles (Wessmann, 1908:97).

Raluvhimba is the mysterious, monotheistic deity of the Vhavenda, and has been identified by them with Mwari, the Mashonagod, who reveals himself at Mbvumela in the Matombo Hills of Matabeleland.

The Vhavenda credit Raluvhimba with all the power of Mwali, and, although it is probably that at one time they were two separate deities, they have now become so completely identified that they are referred to indiscriminately by either name. The name Raluvhimba is peculiar to the Vhavenda. Raluvhimba is connected with the beginning of the world and is supposed to live somewhere in the heavens and to be connected with all astronomical and physical phenomena. The word "Luvhimba" means eagle, the bird that soars aloft, the Vhavenda have a very real idea of this great power travelling through the sky, using the stars, wind and rain as his instruments (Stayt, 1931:230).

Raluvhimba plays a secondary role in the religious life of the Vhavenda. The direct relationship with their dead ancestors is a much more personal factor in their lives and it is the basis of their religious ideas. The relationship between an individual and his ancestors is by its very nature essentially a family affair, and the spirits are only concerned with the members of their own families (Stayt, 1931:241).

Further, there are provincial gods, village gods, and sometimes even house gods. In the immediate neighbourhood of the larger kraals of the chiefs there are a so-called sacred forest where the gods dwell, and are not forgotten on special festival occasions. The provincial god of one district is a large snake, in another, the mountain-monkeys take the place

of gods. These often come down from their mountain and pay visits to the people in the village, having become very tame, as they must not be killed. As house gods Vhavenda use big stones, which they fetch from the river and erect near their hut, or a red flower, which they plant in the surrounding space.

The weapons of their ancestors are also looked on with reverence, and on a long journey they use them as guides. Some of them also carry patron saints hanging from a cord round their necks, or on their legs, mostly consisting of small bones of wild animals. Now and then one also meets with some sacred domestic animal (Wessmann, 1908:81).

The Vhavenda do not only expect protection from their dead, but fear their influence, as they think they might do them harm. The Vhavenda people believe in a future life after death (Wessmann, 1908:82).

1.6.2 Venda Christians

The Vhavenda were most antagonistic to European settlement, and until 1872 no missionary was allowed to settle among them. Yet even prior to this date, they made use of the white man for their own ends, in spite of their hatred of him (Stayt, 1931:19). According to Crafford (1982:341) the Lutheran Church was the biggest in Venda around 1872.

Their first missionary station was set up at Ha-Tshivhasa. This station was later renamed Carl Beuster. In 1874 the Honourable Erdmann Schewellnus started another station at Tshakhuma. With the help of prominent local community leaders a strong foundation was laid by missionaries. Under the leadership of the late Prof, Hugo du Plessis, a

mission station of the Gereformeerde Kerk was set up in the Nzhelele area in 1928 at Siloam. A hospital and a school were also established here at Siloam. In 1944 another mission station was set up at De Hoop. From 1961 the Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk van Nederland worked hand in hand with the Gereformeerde Kerk in this area. The church also established a Bible School at Giyani. A chain of book shops bearing the name Mbeu (seed) were built. The New Testament Venda version was translated in 1926 whereas the Old Testament appeared in 1936 (Crafford, 1982:343). Mention must be made that the Roman Catholic Church also started its missionary work around 1928 in this areas (Crafford, 1982:341).

Around 1900 the Skotse Prebysterians Kerk started its missionary work at Goodville, north of Sibasa. The Donald-Frazer hospital was started by this church. A number of schools were also built around the station (Crafford, 1982:341).

According to Crafford (1982:341) the impact of the Anglican as well as the Methodist church in Venda was minimal. A number of African Independent churches also played a role. The Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God, Baptist Church, Full Gospel Church, Church of the Nazarene, Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists is growing at an alarming rate.

The following table shows a picture of how Christianity was growing in Venda around 1980:

Church	%
African Independent Church	11.6
Lutheran	6.0
N.G.K.	2.5
Roman Catholic Church	2.0
Prebysterian Church	1.8
Apostolic Church	1.5
Gereformeerde Kerk	0.9
Anglican Church	0.6
Methodist Church	0.6
Other Churches	3.8
No church Affiliation	68.5
TOTAL	100.00%

(Crafford, 1982:341)

Chief Mphaphuli also invited missionaries into his territory. In 1958/9 Rev. Louw assisted towards the establishment of Nthume mission which means "send me". Apart from Mutshaeni who worked in the Nesengani territory as minister, at Tshilidzini Mission Station, E M Madzivhandila was also sent to Turfloop to study ministry (Crafford, 1982:347).

Considering the qualitative side of Christianity in Venda, Laurenti Magesa (1977)'s words come to mind. Writing the foreword in Michael C Kirwen (1987)'s book: "The Missionary and the Diviner" he asserts that some African converts to Christianity have tried to discard their pre-baptismal world of religious belief and embrace the missionary Christian one in its entirety.

According to Magesa these are very few in number and the success to which their endeavour had led them is open to debate. The preponderance of empirical evidence shows, on the contrary, that among the people who have accepted baptism in black Africa, the great majority have neither wanted to abandon nor succeeded in abandoning completely many aspects of their traditional religious outlook. To my opinion his view largely holds true for Venda Christians as well.

1.7 Marriage amongst the Vhavenda People

1.7.1 Traditional Marriage

Marriages are often, arranged in an entirely arbitrary way between the parents. Sometimes a man betroths a child, or even an unborn baby, to a man from whom he has borrowed cattle. Sometimes a man is attracted towards a certain girl and arranges to meet her in secret. If his feelings are reciprocated he asks her father to arrange a marriage between them, which he is often willing to do in the usual way. It may happen that the girl in question is already betrothed to someone else, and in that case this third party must be taken into consideration and compensated. Genuine love affairs of this kind, generally complicate matters considerably and usually end in elopement. As a rule the marriage arranged between parents are accepted by the young people without demur, although, if the girl expresses a strong dislike to the chosen man, her feelings are sometimes considered and new arrangements made, subject to the consent of the man to whom she is betrothed (Stayt, 1931:145).

A young couple often elope together. As with regular marriage, the girl is obliged at first to live with her mother-in-law, where she is watched very strictly for a month or more to ascertain whether she possesses the qualities necessary to make a good wife. A Muvenda is always ashamed of possessing a woman acquired in these circumstances (Stayt, 1931:151).

All married people, and those held in esteem for other reasons, are addressed by the form "vhone". Respect is always shown by using this form - e.g. school children will address their teachers as "vhone" even if they are not yet married (Giesekke, 1970:181).

Every Muvenda woman desires to bear children, and if she does not become pregnant shortly after marriage her mother-in-law inquires the reason and advises her son to take his wife to consult a medicine-man (Stayt, 1931:83).

To die without getting married and without children is to be completely cut off from the human society, to become disconnected, to become an outcast and to lose all links with mankind because nobody will pour out libation for you.

To lack someone close who keeps the departed in their personal immortality is the worst misfortune and punishment that any Muvenda person could suffer (Van Rooy, 1971:54).

Marriage is also founded on the principal of life in that Africans see it mostly as the custodian of all human life. Childless marriages are therefore lifeless (Manci, 1995:54). Marriage is regarded as primarily an institution for procreation.

Among the Vhavenda people, for instance, elders do sing something like:

"Matakadza Mbiluni ndi nwana !

"Vhakalaha vho dzula ndi nwana !

"Vhakegulu vho dzula ndi nwana !

"Matakadza mbiluni ndi nwana !

meaning that "nothing gives full joy and happiness than a family which is blessed by a new born baby - especially when elders are seated at home."

Although it is the desire of every woman to have a great many children, the size of the average Venda family is small, as a woman may not bear a second child until after the first one has been weaned, which usually does not occur for three or four years (Stayt, 1931:84)

1.7.2 Christian Marriage

According to Kirwen (1987:67) the Christian view on marriage is that, marriage is a personal matter between two people. Christians feel that the rights of a unique person cannot be subordinated to the rights of the community, whether it be the clan, the society, or even the family. Marriages are not arranged. The two people discover each other as suitable marriage partners through a process called "courtship" in which they meet and share a relationship. When they are ready to make a permanent commitment to one another as husband and wife, they notify their families and friends of their marriage intentions. Their families rarely try to stop the marriage.

In marriage, the partners make a binding commitment to live together against all odds, with the determination and hopes of mutual support, procreation and companionship. Marriage here is seen as a social arrangement which has received a religious dimension and is viewed as God's means of organizing society, if the rules are kept. From a Christian perspective, marriage is seen as ordained by God for lifelong companionship of wife and husband and as the legitimate channel of procreation (Asana, 1990:7).

When the husband dies, Christians believe that the widow becomes free to establish a new household and found a new family - hence "till death do us part".

In principle, death is seen as the only way to dissolve a marriage so that the living partner can marry again. The death of a spouse frees them to remarry (Kirwen, 1987:70).

1.8 Divorce amongst the Vhavenda people

1.8.1 Divorce amongst traditional Vhavenda people

Divorce is unusual. A man cannot return his wife to her parents and receive compensation unless she has had several abortions, committed incest, become an habitual adulteress or thief, or been designated a witch (Stayt, 1931:152).

1.8.2 Divorce amongst Venda Christians

Divorce files dating from 1979 when Venda became independent from the old South Africa to 1999 after the re-in corporation, which the researcher managed to peruse and study shows that nine out of ten couples who married and divorced, were Venda Christians. Secondly, 27,5% of all married persons who responded to the question "Have you at any stage thought of divorcing him/her?" said "YES" whereas 72,5% said "NO". This findings suggests that the rate of divorce is high amongst Venda Christians realising that 85% of all the respondents were Venda people (see Questionnaire No. 1 Question 5: To which of the following groups do you belong?) and that 77% of these were Christians (see Fig. 4 Questionnaire No. 1, Item 1).

1.9 Methodology

Some methodological problems in studying family violence may be obvious. Acts that are considered deviant by the population, are difficult to measure with any degree of accuracy, especially considering the primary of the arena where they occur. In this thesis, the researcher decided to use questionnaires as a data collection instrument.

Leedy (1993:187) contends that at times data lies buried deep within the minds or within the attitudes, feelings, or reactions of men and women. He further argues that a common place instrument for observing data beyond the physical reach of the observer is the questionnaire. It has the added advantage that it can be sent to people thousands of kilometres away whom the researcher may never see. It is also relatively easy to be administered by an unseasoned researcher. The researcher appointed assistants who were trained individually and helped to distribute

questionnaires to respondents and dealt with questions that arose during the process.

They also helped respondents, some of whom were illiterate, in the completion of the questionnaires.

An additional problem of asking people about sensitive or stigmatised behaviour is the tendency of respondents to attempt to please interviewers by giving them socially desirable answers, which may not be the exact truth.

It is very common for a Muvenda person to give a stranger, whose intention he does not know, a wrong name and address, so that on a sudden accident or misdeed happening, no suspicion may be cast on him, whether he be really innocent or actually guilty (Wessmann, 1908:98).

According to Wessmann (1908:99) the Vhavenda are good at telling every person what he desires to hear irrespective of whether it is true or not.

In Venda, for example, for a Venda person to tell a lie to a white South African is not regarded as something serious or wrong. It is only serious if you lie to your fellow Venda (or at times black South African).

A note concerning the interviews

Interviews with the intermarried were secured in an effort to obtain what statistical information and observation alone might not make sufficiently clear, the success and failure, the challenges and the problems that are so often directly and indirectly associated with mixed marriages.

These personal and family histories make it obvious that even though not all intermarriages need to be regarded as clear-cut instances of success or failure, the partners to such marriages believe that they need to "work much harder" to achieve happiness than do those who marry within their own religious, ethnic or racial group.

The same series of questions, prepared in advance was asked each of the persons interviewed, with such modifications as the special circumstances required. These interviews were semi-structured in that they allowed those questioned full freedom to formulate their answers within the framework of the outline used by the researcher.

They were, of necessity, rearranged and edited to eliminate personal elements that might identify specifically those persons who so generously shared their experiences with me. The heart, the essence, and in most instances, the exact manner of speech was captured and retained. In no instance were either successful marriages or those that were failing deliberately sought out.

Three groups of people were interviewed. Firstly the researcher interviewed college students, university students as well as youths in different formations e.g. church denominations and political organisations. The researcher took advantage of the fact that he is a college lecturer and a part-time tutor at the University of South Africa. Married persons and divorced persons were also interviewed. Once more the researcher took advantage of the fact that he was the Gender Convenor (SADTU Dzanani Branch in Venda) for more than five years and that he is a Regional Gender Committee member. The third and last group was that of traditional healers, Health Care Workers, Magistrates and High Court Officials. The above mentioned groups of people also completed the three questionnaires (see Annexures A to C).

Although personal histories cannot tell us all there is to know about the persons who intermarry, they serve to remind us of the varieties of experiences encountered by the intermarried and, in that relationship, they prove especially valuable.

They help also to explain the attitudes and opinions of the intermarried. The social situations in which these people find themselves help us to understand them even when they do not understand themselves.

1.10 The Researcher - Who is he ?

The Venda customs, culture and religion is like photographs which record things not looked for at the time, things not even seen because the observer had not the eyes to see, but which become plain afterwards in the light of wider knowledge.

The researcher will take advantage of the fact that he is not only a Venda person (i.e. Muvenda) but also a member of a well established patriarchal family and community.

The researcher is a Muvenda man by birth. He went to Mururduni (initiation school for young men during which they are also circumcised). When getting married to a Muvenda woman after observing all the basic steps e.g. Luambiso (betrothal earnest), involving the nendila (agent or intermediary), he gave thakha (equivalent of lobolo) in the form of money and livestock. The researcher gave misho (betrothal gifts), witnessed some rituals performed when the bride was brought home, and finally went to the magistrate to get a marriage certificate. Please note the

African-Christian link i.e. the first part is done the African way followed by the Western way.

Having been born at one of the most remote and rural place, Tshibommbanani (Tshipise) the researcher is skilled in gaining the confidence of old folks and a number of educated Africans (Vendas) who do not want to throw away the heritage of their mother tongue, nor break completely with the legacy of the past.

A great deal of what is recorded here is from numerous older people whose confidence no stranger could have won in time. If you are not "one of them" you are either shunned or told "why don't you go and read it from a book?"

(Knowing that there is nothing or very little written) or you may be told "we don't know" even when the person knows whatever you are asking for.

The researcher is also a lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences, Makhado College of Education, where he teaches African Religion, Christianity and other world religions.

1.11 Limitations

Reference to "an African-Christian perspective" in this research needs clarification, for surely the intention is not to cover the entire African continent, an attempt which would be too pretentious. Geographically the immediate context would be the author's Southern African country of South Africa. While certain common elements run through Africa when one examines culture and tradition, the vastness of that continent also illustrates the variety found among the different peoples that populate it.

That is why no one should consider the entire area as a unit, with a common marriage system. The researcher's intention is not to cover all the material available in Africa. Our treatment will involve a selection of major works and examples which represent, in general, the area mentioned. Such materials may include unpublished articles, published books, journals and other papers. They will be materials written on Africa by Africans and non-Africans who have shown interest on the continent about the subject in question. Selected western materials will also be used to the uniqueness of the African situations, since similarity does not imply a loss of identity. The western materials will give us a picture of modern trends in material problems in religiously mixed marriages, which directly or indirectly affect the changing African context.

The study was conducted within Venda area, and Venda is only a portion of the Northern Province of South Africa. Also, not all the churches, magistrate courts and hospitals in the province were included in the study due to the fact that the number of the population would have been too large to handle, and the researcher had both time and financial constraints.

In view of the fact that no one single piece of research can address all the areas in which traditional African marriage life interacts with the Christian religion, I specifically limited my study to investigating marital problems, especially divorce, in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa. I am aware of the thousands of ethnic groups in South Africa and in Africa as a whole and the many cultural variations. Therefore, conclusions are restricted to my data and generalisations are only relevant to subjects similar to the sample of my study. In-depth interviews, participant and unobtrusive observation, case-study analysis, and questionnaire techniques provide the material analyzed below.

1.12 Conceptualisation

Because concepts are symbols of meaning, they will be defined to show their connotative (sense) and denotative (reference) meanings. The process of operationalization will involve compiling a list of real characteristics

denoted by the concept for the purpose of measurement (Mouton, 1990:65). It is difficult to deal with cultural symbols, values, and ideas in a foreign language. It is very easy to fall into a trap of using a concept which does not specifically mean what you intend to say.

1.12.1 Mixed marriage

Definitions of a "mixed marriage" involve considerations of a great variety of factors and values differently weighted in varying cultures.

The term "intermarriage" is generally applied to those married persons whose religious, racial or ethnic background is or was different from each other's, either prior to or after their marriage. Even if the marriage partners differ from each other in only one of these three categories, they may be said to be intermarried. Inter ethnic marriages involving persons of the same religion and colour but differing with respect to national and cultural backgrounds are also said to be intermarriages.

If one of the parties to the marriage has not formally converted to the faith of the other, such a marriage is more properly termed a "mixed marriage". An interfaith marriage is one in which the parties to the marriage were born or reared in families, each of which has identified with a different religion.

If, prior to or following the marriage, the parties continue to identify with their separate religions, they are not only intermarried but are parties to a "mixed marriage" as well. We shall refer to an "inter ethnic" marriage as one in which each of the parties to the marriage was reared in a cultural and national environment which differs from that of the other (Gordon, 1964:1).

In our context the terms "intermarriage" and "mixed marriage" will be used alternatively and interchangeably.

1.12.2 Culture

In society, people carry within themselves certain patterns of thinking, behaviour and feeling which are learned through their life time. As soon as some of these patterns of thinking, behaviour and feeling establish themselves within a person's mind, "culture" is formed (Nkumane, 1999:17). This might be the reason why some scholars view culture as "learned habits". Odetola (1983:1) defines culture as: "a man's social heritage, all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills acquired as a member of society".

Hofstede (1991) compliments Odetola by also stating that culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live within the same social environment, which is where it is learned. It is a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

Both definitions highlight that culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from the social environment, not from one's genes. Culture influences the way people think because the sources of one's mental programmes lie within the social environment in which one grew up and collected one's

life experiences. The programming therefore, starts within the family; it continues within the neighbourhood and in the living community (Nkumane, 1999:18).

Hofstede (1991:5) describes Western culture as culture which has to do with modern civilisation. From the above one may argue that mixed marriages are modern or western culture practices that are learned and not inherited.

Although we may not speak of one common Western or even African culture (Considerable culture diversities can be observed even within one national group) it will suffice to state that Western culture(s) which in our context came together with Christianity, caused unresolvable conflicts within African marriage systems specifically among the Vhavenda people of South Africa.

In any given cultural context, male and female behaviour patterns are fixed by norms and values of society. In most African societies the personality of an individual is significantly interwoven with culture factors. Anyone trying to break these rules can expect to meet with serious problems in an African or specifically Venda community (Nkumane, 1999:118).

Intermarried couples usually find themselves in a real dilemma because of these two very different and contradicting cultures. According to Nkumane (1999:168) culture determines the nature of the interpersonal relations involved in every family unit or community. Thus, culture interacts closely with social organisation in the working out of family relations with a man, his wife and their children. As in most societies, patriarchal and cultural challenges are not warmly welcomed by the Venda society (Nkumane, 1999:12).

1.12.3 Traditionalists

There is also a group that we may refer to as “traditionalists”. Some of these are simply theorists, but there are masses of people in Africa who hold to the traditional religious beliefs and practices of their fore bearers to the exclusion of the missionary religions. Their religious customs blend with their social life and are at the base of all their institutions and festive celebrations. It is their religious beliefs and practices that we designate as “African” (Nwachuku, 1992:58)

1.12.4 African Christians

This is a group of Africans who do not see any contradiction in holding a mixture of both African and Christian beliefs and practices. According to Nwachuku (1992:52) a living Christian faith in Africa cannot but interact with African culture. In fact, there is being developed an interpretation of Christianity and specifically for Christian Theology that one may describe as African (Nwachuku, 1992:59). The point is that an African is becoming a Christian within his or her social and religious milieu. An African Christian therefore balances the African traditional values with the Christian (Asana, 1990:50).

1.12.5 Christians

In his "World Christian Encyclopaedia" David Barrett listed three types or categories of Christianity, namely:

(1) Fundamentalists, who still carry on the founding spirit of the Fundamentals and insist on the seven fundamental doctrines of authentic Christianity: inerrant verbal inspiration of the Bible, virgin birth, miracles of Christ, physical resurrection, total depravity of the human being, substitutionary atonement, pre millennial second coming;

(2) Conservatives, who want to carry on the intent of Fundamentalism but in a more open, critical style; most of them belong to the World Evangelical Fellowship;

(3) and the Ecumenical or New Evangelicals, who are moving away from insistence on the absolute inerrancy of the Bible and affirm, rather, "a limited inerrancy", or the "infallibility" of the Bible in matters of faith and practice but not necessarily in questions of history or science. They claim that Evangelicals in the past have been socially and politically naive and have aligned themselves with the oppressive status quo. They insist that political involvement and efforts for liberation of all the oppressed is part of the living gospel (Knitter, 1995:77).

1.13 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 deals with the "mala" (marriage) system of the Vhavenda people. In this chapter important issues like choice of a spouse, thakha (bride wealth), marriage and married life is discussed in detail.

Chapter 3 deals with biblical data on mixed marriages from an African-Christian perspective.

Chapter 4 is about marital problems associated with mixed marriages.

Chapter 5 will deal with data analysis and presentation.

Chapter 6 deals with concluding remarks.

Recommendations are also given.

CHAPTER 2

THE MALA (MARRIAGE) SYSTEM OF THE VHAVENDA PEOPLE

2.1 Introduction

There is no way that we can justifiably speak about mixed marriages and family problems (especially divorce) in the Venda community without understanding how they proposed, got married and how they led their marriage lives. Marriage among the Vhavenda people is regulated by a complex legal, religious and social system.

2.2 Choice of a Spouse

2.2.1 Marriages desirable or permitted:

2.2.1.1 Cross - Cousin (Muzwala) marriage obligatory.

According to old Venda custom, a man ought to marry his cross - cousin, i.e. the daughters of his maternal uncle, and his "little cross cousin", that is, the daughters of his male cross -cousin, and in fact those girls of his maternal uncle's family (lushaka), whose fathers his mother calls "brother" or "brother's son". A makhadzi's (father's sister's) daughter is also a cross - cousin whom a man may marry. Should a man marry such a girl, she will be the mother of his heirs. She

ranks higher than a cross-cousin who is a maternal uncle's daughter, because she makes sacrifice to the same ancestral spirits as her husband. However, the marriage of a man to his makhadzi's daughter is commonest in royal families (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:29).

2.2.1.2 Marriage with non-relatives.

Inter marriage with non-relatives is common. Here they carefully inquire into the matter of mitupo (sib or clan names), lest they marry "sisters" after all, or get mixed up with clans with which no intermarriage is possible, such as of the Vhangona (aboriginal inhabitants of the country) who are supposed to marry amongst themselves.

It is also important to note that in olden times the Venda did not like to intermarry with people to whom they were not related, for fear of getting mixed up with wanderers from afar. The main reason for avoiding non-relatives was the fear of becoming connected to evil persons, wizards, thieves, simpleton, those suffering from bad diseases, and members of hostile tribes (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:27).

2.2.1.3 Marriage of women to women.

A woman also may marry a woman (NB. Not a man marrying a man!) There are women who acquire cattle by the sale of maize, and these cattle may increase until they fill a kraal. Seeing them do nothing, the owner arranges with a certain family to take one of the daughters, and if this is agreeable to her parents, the cattle are handed over to mala her. In olden times this did not matter, for the big consideration was to get hold

of cattle. Since the girl could not choose her own husband, any place where the parents could get cattle would be a home for her. Nowadays the custom is not so common because most parents want their daughters to be married to men (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:33).

2.2.1.4 Divorcees and runaways.

When a woman has deserted her husband and the thakha has been repaid, and she returns to her father, she becomes a mbuya-vhuhadzi, that is, a divorced woman who is again treated as a child in her own family.

When a woman runs away to a man, the Venda say it is his good fortune, in other cases they say it is trouble-making "moeilikheid soek", if the woman is the wife of a relative or friend of his. Only if she comes from far away should the lucky man accept his good fortune. If he has the where withal to pay he should mala her and make her his wife. If on the other hand there is promise of trouble, the woman should be sent away before anybody has heard about it (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:35).

There is one religious aspect mentioned above, viz. the point of bringing tensions/feud to a family, which should not go unnoticed. Under no circumstances could a woman bringing tensions and divisions in the family and community not be sacrificed.

2.2.1.5 Marriages of chiefs.

The great wife of a chief, she who will be mother of the future chief, was in the past never taken from amongst the Vhalembethu, nor amongst ordinary commoners, but always from the households of other important chiefs, so that any son born to her might indeed be of noble descent (and not merely be called prince on account of his father).

Therefore, for fear of being despised, a chief even today fills his village with wives from other chief's households; commoner wives are not numerous.

A chief also usually marries his cross-cousin. Some chief even marry daughters of minor wives of their fathers, that is, their half-sisters. The object of these virtually incestuous marriages of chiefs is to ensure that the sib will continue to live together in one spot, and that a relic of the "sacred kinship" remains intact. Another reason for chief's intermarrying is that people brought up in a musanda (royal kraal) have learnt secretiveness. Secretiveness is one good characteristic of African religion. The argument is that it is not good or proper for people to divulge everything to strangers. Dirty linen was and must never be hang out there for the public to see. A mulopo (talkative person) is detested.

2.2.2 MARRIAGE PROHIBITED OR UNDESIRABLE

2.2.2.1 Intermarriage with members of other tribes.

Marriage outside the religious or racial group represents a threat to the survival of that group. This is particularly true of minority groups. When the problem of survival as a group appears to be particularly great, emphasis upon the importance of in-group marriages is magnified (Gordon, 1964:366).

Non-relatives and people that one does not know too well are not often intermarried. Witchcraft is the danger feared most.

A woman who is a witch is not wanted in a household, for she might bewitch the people there. The non-relatives and strangers referred to are not only Venda. The Shangaans, Lemba, Sotho, Zulu, whites and other tribes are also considered strangers. What makes the Venda hold the Tsonga/Shangaans in contempt is their lack of manners. A Tsonga is an uncouth stranger who has no upbringing, for he does not losha (salute by going down on his knees) even in front of a chief.

That is why they nickname such a person a "log", on account of his lack of respect for exalted personages, because he just stands there like a piece of wood. From an African point of view u losha is regarded as very much important. No ritual can be conducted without people saluting in this prescribed way. Another reason for the contempt in which the Tsonga (and other tribes

e.g. Zulus and recently whites) are held is the hostility of former days for these tribes are comparatively recent immigrants into the country or that

they were and are treacherous and cruel. In short, they do not have *vhuthu* (*ubuntu*).

The other thing for which the Tsonga are despised is the fact that they eat the flesh of fish and cats, which to the Venda are abominations, not to be eaten by anyone. And so it was with other nationalities/tribes like Zulus and Europeans.

Though nowadays some men have begun to marry Tsonga women, they and their families are the subject of criticism and contempt because of these despised people. Moreover, when men marry Tsonga wives it is usually because there is something wrong with them, such as witchcraft, thievishness and other things, that prevents them from getting Venda wives, and so they go and marry Tsonga women because they have nothing to lose (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:41).

Sotho, Kalanga and Zulu also count as strangers, but they are not despised. The only thing which in the past made it undesirable to intermarry with them was the fact that they come from too far away, so that one might unwillingly get a witch or a thief into the family. It was also feared that inter-marriage with them would give them the chance of spying out the land, so that one day a raiding party might unexpectedly appear on the scene (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:43). Marriage between forbidden clans provokes the ancestors into sending suffering - and even death - until the immorality is corrected.

According to Kirwen (1987:29) there are marriages which are tantamount to incest. Today many people defy local custom and still marry in a government ceremony. In most cases such couples are warned that such a union is immoral and would have terrible consequences.

They may insist and continue with the union relying on the protection of the government. Formerly they would not have been allowed to live in such union; the people would have taken the matter into their own hands. By breaking sacred marriage laws of the clan couples do tempt anger of the ancestors (Kirwen, 1987:29).

2.2.2.2 Marriages with some relatives.

Amongst commoners it is not usual to marry daughters of one's fathers brothers. The reason is fear of causing strife in the family, by making a paternal uncle one's father-in-law, and his sons one's brothers-in-law. For one's father's younger brother has great authority in family matters. Once he has become a father-in-law, he can no longer have a say; they can no longer discuss matters with him because an outsider through his daughter's having been married in this way (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:31).

2.3 The mala (marriage) system of the Vhavenda people

2.3.1 Betrothal

Marriage constitutes the most important of the transitions from one social category to another. The change of residence is marked in the ceremonies by rites of separation, always primarily focused on the territorial passage. Furthermore, because of the number and importance of groups affected by the social union of two of their members, it is natural that the period of transition should take on considerable importance. This is the period commonly called the "betrothal" (Van Gennep, 1960:116).

There are two methods of betrothal. One way is for the girl to be named by the suitors, who say they want the daughter named so-and-so, of such and such a hut. If all parties agree and they bring the thakha, it is understood that it is to mala that particular girl. Her family cannot change this and when she grows up it is she who will be fetched to be married.

The other method of betrothal is that of not naming any particular girl. This is when the suitors think highly of a particular wife's household, and reason that therefore its daughters must be of meek disposition (a very strong principle of African religion and *vhuthu/ubuntu* in general). Or they see a wife's family is industrious, and conclude that any daughter from that hut will be a hard worker (Van Warmelo, 1948:53).

It is a young man's parents who know all the relatives who live far away, who gave a good reputation, who are known not to practice witchcraft, and to have no blot on their name.

These are the things feared most. A young person does not know where to select a wife, and might easily choose from amongst murderers or thieves, and thus bring misfortune upon his family. For this reason all matters of betrothal lie in the hands of his parents, for they know where to mala with safety.

Where the father has several wives, the suitors indicate from which hut they want a daughter. For one hut is not as good as another; one hut is suspected of witchcraft, another is lazy, another has fine daughters.

Therefore suitors tell the head of the family that they have come for a calabash dipper (*tshiashi*) (a polite phrase used in bride-seeking) from such-and-such a hut, and he consults his nearest relatives as to which daughter shall be given in marriage. (Please note the element of African

religion and *vhuthu/ubuntu* viz. that the head of the family is not to act alone but must consult his nearest relatives especially his paternal aunt (*makhadzi*) and his paternal uncle (*khotsimunene*).

Agreement on the *Kalym* or bride wealth is observed by a communal meal, followed by reciprocal visits between the families and an exchange of gifts given by relatives, friends, and neighbours (Van Gennep, 1960:120).

Offering the other something to eat or drink; eating together (communion, *confarreation*); being wrapped in a single piece of clothing or a veil; sitting on the same seat; drinking each other's blood; eating from the same food or dish; drinking from the same liquid or container; massaging, rubbing, anointing (with blood or clay); washing each other; and so forth - are essentially rites of union (Van Gennep, 1960:132).

Some rites are both individual and collective; the acceptance of a gift places a constraint not only upon the individual who accepts it but also upon the groups to which he belongs. It is often the first rite of the betrothal (Van Gennep, 1960:133).

2.3.2 Modern betrothal.

The practice of having one's wife betrothed for one is still the usual one in families adhering to Venda customs. Even today many young men go to town to work, leaving property with their relatives with instructions to find them suitable wives. Others send money home from town for the same purpose. Their relatives at home hearing this look around for a girl, and if

she can be found, give thakha for her in marriage and perhaps even fetch her to her husband's place (i.e. vHINGA her).

Nowadays a young man often sees a girl and proposes on his own, only then to go home to inform his parents that he has come to an agreement with a girl, and request them to find out from the parents how they feel about it. In other cases a youth meets a girl at school, college or university and tells his family that he would like them to arrange a betrothal, whereupon messengers are sent to hear what her parents have to say.

There is this African view that the family is the pillar of every marriage and that the blessings of both families is more than a "marriage certificate".

2.3.3 Family discussions.

If a man has no elder and younger brothers and sisters, and his son has to be provided with a wife, it is his next youngest brother and his eldest sister, together with his mother and his makhadzi (paternal aunt) and khotsimunene (paternal uncle) who must of necessity attend such a meeting to decide this matter. If there are elder brothers, they are all called.

But much younger brothers and sisters are not allowed to attend, being considered children. From an African religious point of view each one of the above is having a role to play during betrothal, marriage, married life, or when the newly-wed couple is in a crises, e.g. when going through divorce. When deciding on questions such as these, it is the makhadzi (paternal aunt) whose word carries most weight, and whose opinion is most readily accepted. If she says the young man should mala at such

and such a place, the rest usually agree to what she says. Sometimes the makhadzi can after doing her "field-work" i.e. going deep into finding more about the girl, the girl's parents, their conduct, their nationality, etc., disapprove a marriage irrespective of whether the young man is educated, financially stable or not. In such instances a makhadzi may politely say "Take time to know her" without mentioning the problem to the young man but to his father and khotsimunene.

2.3.4 Intermediary (nendila).

When it has been decided in the family where a bride is to be sought, a messenger is dispatched to the home of the girl whom it is intended to mala. The young man do not go there on his own. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, it is out of respect for the in-laws. Secondly, there is a possibility that he may be bewitched. Thirdly, by so doing he will be undermining his own family - something which will not be tolerated in the Venda community.

The messenger is termed nendila or nzhendedzi. As intermediary from now on until the wedding he will have to travel to and for often. A non-relative is commonly employed, lest later on, if there is a dispute, he/she stand by the other party. The nendila must be a person of address, and must be known to the girl's people.

A near neighbour or an inmate of that village, without being a relative, may just do. The nendila is a sort of an ambassador or local representative of those on whose behalf he is acting. When the nendila reaches the village in question, he enters like any other visitor. He has some seniors of the place called and explains that he desires a word with

the father of the girl he has come to seek in marriage. The girl's father will usually tell him/her that the matter will be referred to family elders and that the nendila is to come again on a certain day. (There is no hurry).

2.3.5 Luambiso (betrothal present).

After a girl's family has consented to her betrothal, a luambiso (betrothal present) must be given to the father, mother, and the girl herself. These presents are given to make the contract valid and to establish relationship. Unless luambiso is given, the girl's father will not really believe that the suitors are in earnest.

Luambiso, opens the way for more cordial relations between the two families. If a girl is betrothed but no luambiso is given, other suitors may still be allowed to mala her. In this way the luambiso is like a thorn-branch which closes the gate, so that none other may enter the village. The last statement is allegory. There is a religious symbolism and meaning behind these words. In the olden days, before money was known, for example, the luambiso was a sheep for the girl's father, a female goat for her mother, and the girl herself was given a young she-goat. Without going deep into details we need to mention that all these domestic animals viz. a sheep, a female goat, and a young she-goat, symbolises something.

There is some form of religious importance attached to each one of these.

2.3.6 Murula (Consignment of beer).

The consignment of beer sent to a mukwasha by his makhulu are numerous. But those that matter are only the two first ones. The first murula is that which is sent after the marriage negotiations have been satisfactorily concluded and is termed "that of the bride when she comes to see the home of her future husband and to be introduced to his family". She herself comes with some lesser woman of the household and companions, whilst her mother stays at home.

The second murula is that which is accompanied by the mother also. This murula is called "that of the mother-in-law, who comes to see the home of this young man who has become engaged to her daughter."

There is very strong religious elements attached to murula not to be missed. The man who is dispatched with the women and girls who carry murula is called tshivia-mbudzi (goat skinner). He walks in front. Before the crew reaches their destination, they put their calabashes down to take a rest. As they are resting, older women instruct small girls to take off their maredo (loin-cloths) and to slap each calabash in turn with them, shouting while older women trill.

This is to encompass magically that things shall be favourable for them yonder at their destination, and to ensure that their calabashes do not break before arrival. Van Warmelo (1949:83) thinks that this is a fertility rite. I do not think so. Surely this is an ancestor cult. It is a way of informing the ancestors that they are just about to arrive.

On arrival one calabash is taken around the village to the rear where three sacred stones stand. This beer is for the spirits. The head of the

family will then take Khavho (a calabash dipper), fill it with beer, pour a little on to the three sacred stones and venerate the ancestors. He will request the ancestors to drink and to rest in peace. A request on behalf of every member of the family is made so that nothing should go wrong. When he has finished, ululations resound. They drink the beer left over. Another characteristic of the African traditional marriage is that it is the order of the sacred and the religious. There are no secular marriages. Right from the beginning, oracles are consulted to seek the mind of the ancestors and the will of the gods. Sacrifices are made for the protection of the would-be couples.

In fact, all the essential steps of marital negotiations take place in a religious and sacred atmosphere. Parents bless the couple offering prayers on their behalf on the last day of the traditional ceremonies. This is an important aspect of the marriage rites and no young woman dares leave the home without this blessing for fruitfulness (Madumere, 1995:113).

It is a rule that one calabash for a libation must be taken from a murula before any beer is drunk. For ancestor spirits also rejoice over what their descendants on earth receive.

If beer is brought, part must be given to them to taste. Whoever fails therein break the law and provokes their anger, and misfortune and grief will dwell in his village. To avert all these misfortunes and family violence, the ancestor spirits are given a taste of the makhulu's gift (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:85).

When the beer drinking in public is over, the parents of the young man, their younger brothers and the family makhadzi (parental aunt) get up and join the bride's party inside a hut (which, like the village and the cattle kraal, is round i.e. a circle, thereby symbolising unity, peace and harmony). All the visiting girls prostrate themselves in the most abject

obeisance and make greeting to all those present. After repeating the purpose of the murula visit, the group will then drink beer from the calabash concealed for this occasion.

Today things have slightly changed. Christians who fear their missionaries disapproval of beer parties usually use soft drinks for the same purpose. Libation is poured early in the morning before the "formal" ceremony.

Only a little-bit of beer is brought for the purpose. Here again, just like "utibula tombo" "the bringing back ceremony" which is conducted some few months after the death of a family member, we have what I call "two-in-one" situation. Two-in-one in the sense that here an African will be trying hard to be a "born again" christian. Trying to run away from what he was told to be paganism viz. African Religion. The same person would like some members of his family (no nuclear family, but extended family), to perform all the basic rituals on his behalf.

At times family elders do involve couples without explaining to them the meaning of each action done. For example, the cool drink which is served means nothing to an uninformed person, but an informed person will know that people do drink for something, and to symbolise something. He will also know that in the case of Vhavenda people, the ancestors drink first and that by doing so we are venerating them.

That is why hot drinks like tea or coffee is not served, the host will make sure that before his guests go, stable food is prepared for them at the end of which cool drinks or water (a symbol of life) is drunk.

The importance of murula cannot be stressed enough. It is more than a "toast" conducted by well-wishers. It is religious in nature. It is also one of the pillars of the marriage-to-be. That is why if the marriage

arrangement comes to nought, and the return of thakha is demanded, all the gifts given by way of thanks for these two important first mirula are also claimed.

2.3.7 Thakha or equivalent of lobolo (something given to mala a wife).

The transfer of property is essentially of a token character.

This transfer of goods from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride, which used to be called bride-price, and is now sometimes called bride wealth and sometimes the marriage payment. However, the subject deserves more consideration, because it is this transfer of wealth that has led people to speak and write of "buying wives", "servile marriage", "bond-wives" and so forth.

These descriptions completely misinterpret the nature of this custom.

Traditionally it was a good practice. It gave spouses prestige within themselves and in the eyes of society and family.

Formerly this used to be called "bride price". But, since the word "price" connotes a purchase, "bride wealth" is now used to describe the marriage gift or dowry made by the groom to the family of the bride. This serves as a public demonstration or testimony of the existence of a valid marriage. This act is normally the seal of the marriage contract.

Bride wealth, when given, established the legitimacy of the children to their father and serves as a stabilising factor for the marriage. It is a symbolic demonstration of the groom's ability to take care of his new wife (Madumere, 1995:29).

In a marriage which is made legal by the transfer of cattle, the woman has to give her consent before there can be any discussion of cattle. Any suggestion that the transfer is made without her consent and puts her in a position in which she cannot refuse is completely false.

We ought to examine the significance of the marriage payment more closely, because it has given rise to some quite erroneous ideas about the status of a wife in Africa. A good many people have assumed that any transfer of goods must imply the purchase of something, and that in this case the object that is purchased must be a woman. On this false premise there has been built what I might call a mythology of misinterpretation. To understand this we have to try and transport ourselves in imagination from a monetary economy such as we live in, where almost anything can be bought or sold, to a subsistence economy, where almost nothing can. In a monetary economy you can get what you need by paying for it; both goods and services have a price. This kind of transaction takes up so much of our lives that we tend to forget that even we sometimes transfer goods or even money in relationships that are not those of buying and selling.

We call this making gifts, and we usually make gifts in recognition of some relationship, like family presents at Christmas, or in recognition of some service done, such as hospitality or perhaps help in some crisis (Mair, 1958:5).

In a subsistence society people get what they need through the co-operation of their friends and neighbours; and they repay services with gifts. This is not a legal obligation, but it is a moral one, and people suffer if they don't live up to it.

If they don't make the right return for a service done them, they will find that it will not be done another time. But all the same the gift is a gift and not the payment of a price. In subsistence societies this exchange of gifts and services is what keeps society going; it does so because all co-operation is given in virtue of some personal relationship, and the transfer of property creates and maintains such relationships. The transfer of cattle is particularly important, because cattle-people remember the history of every beast, and so the cattle become living symbols and records of the occasions on which they have passed from one herd to another. If we look at the transfer of cattle at marriage in this light it takes on a very different appearance from what it has for people who see it as a purchase of the wife. It creates an alliance between two groups of kinsmen who were previously separate, the bridegroom's and the bride's.

According to Mair (1958:6) it is also, a return to the kin of the bride for doing the bridegroom the greatest service which it is possible to do him - namely giving him a woman who will be the mother of his children and so continue his line of descent. We have to remember that all African peoples have traditionally attached enormous importance to the continuance of the line, for both material and spiritual reasons (Mair, 1958:6).

Where there are many children, and have been through several generations, there is a strong kin group which can defend its rights against outsiders; people look to their children to support them in their old age; and a man who has no children cannot be remembered and worshipped as an ancestor after his death. So, in the traditional circumstances of African life, to die without children was a disaster (Mair, 1958:5).

Thakha (cattle payment) also creates an even more important relationship, that of legitimate filiation between the husband and his wife's children, and this is its essential legal effect. Among the peoples who make the cattle payment, a man cannot have legitimate offspring except by transferring cattle to the kinsmen of a woman. So if we are to be compelled to interpret the payment as the purchase of something, it would have to be a purchase of unborn children. From a legal point of view, cattle payment establishes the legitimacy of the children; Thakha (cattle payment) makes a woman a legal wife. African women do not regard it as an indignity but the reverse. Perhaps the best way to dispel such misconceptions would be to describe the way in which an African marriage is arranged (Mair, 1958:6).

If the girl's kinsmen are willing to have him as a son-in-law, then, and only then, they begin to discuss the payment. Here there may be argument of a kind that some people, would call haggling - But if it is haggling, it is emphatically not bargaining; that is, the argument does not turn on any question of the value of the woman in relation to the payment to be made. A man who wants to marry is expected to pay as much as he can afford, and the argument is concerned entirely with the question how much he can afford (Mair, 1958:7).

Her husband may be entitled to beat her, but he is definitely not entitled to sell her, as he could if he had bought her. Another very significant point is what happens to the cattle received at a woman's marriage. They are not kept to increase her father's herds. They are expected to be used as soon as possible to make another marriage. There is no commercial element anywhere in the transaction (Mair, 1958:7).

A payment is not necessarily a price, and can be made in many transactions which are not commercial (Mair, 1969:5).

Because of the reasons which I am going to provide below, I have decided not to westernise this important African institution. I am not yet convinced that "thakha" or "lobolo" is bride price or bride wealth as it is claimed by scholars like Currie (1994:46-168); Van Warmelo (1948:97); Radcliffe-Brown (1950:239); Grace Kanjo (1994:21-22) - to mention just a few. The majority of these scholars maintain that "thakha" is paid over. They are entitled to their opinions, but in the Venda community (and most African communities) thakha is given, not paid in the modern economical sense of the word. It is a gesture full of meaning. Unlike other betrothal gifts thakha is a ritual in itself. It is a fertility rite. The cattle given as thakha are not to be bulls only (out of eight at least six must be cows).

Thakha is given after cordial relations between the two families have become established, that is, after betrothal gifts have been made and both sides have begun to pay one another visits. Usually thakha is given before marriage, but it is also given after marriage.

If the girl has conspired with a young man to run away to him without her parent's knowledge, for instance, thakha can only be given after she is married.

Thakha should now be viewed as the beginning of marriage through purchasing a woman but as one of the end-products of the marriage institution. This issue of thakha brings us to the most important question, viz. when does marriage in the African communities start?

Although this and many other questions will be still be answered in the coming sections it is imperative to state here that as soon as the bride's family have in principle approved the betrothal earnest (luambiso) marriage has started - not after the payment of thakha or when the woman leaves her household to join her in-laws. That is why a woman can be married even before she is born (this is called tshikunwe). The Venda people do see thakha as a blessing to the marriage. It is something which pleases not only the two families, but the ancestors too. That is why when the woman cannot bear children they (the ancestors) are consulted i.e. reminded of the murula beer they drank, and the cattle placed under their jurisdiction.

2.3.7.1 What constitute thakha?

All sorts of things are given as thakha, viz. cattle, a flock of sheep or goats, hoes, food in times of scarcity, elephant tusks, and in modern times, money (Van Warmelo, 1948:99).

These gifts of cattle, goats, sheep, money, clothing, blankets, and even pots and pans represent the life inheritance of a particular person and show how the customs that cement the marriage bond are important and sacred.

Indeed, to live with a girl without paying thakha is not tolerated in the rural areas even to this day. A young man in such a relationship is seen as a thief. Children of such a union would be seen as bastards, without identity, without roots, without family, and of no advantage to the group. However, the giving of bride wealth is not the buying of the bride.

Thakha (bride wealth) is so necessary that if it is not paid, the marriage is not considered real or respected and the woman is not a wife. According to Kirwen (1987:61), bride wealth is compensation to the girl's family for expenses incurred in raising her. Likewise, one of the bride's brothers uses the bride wealth to marry his own wife. This creates a special relationship of trust and respect between them. The bride wealth also ensures that any children born of the union belong forever to the lineage of the father (Kirwen, 1987:61).

Thakha (bride wealth) is a gift, a pledge of friendship, a sign of a real marriage. After giving thakha, the new bride comes into her husband's family with the goodwill, expectation, and joy of the whole community. Everyone works to help integrate her into the life of her new family (Kirwen, 1987:62).

Not any type of beast may serve as thakha. There are certain rules to be observed concerning the age, sex, build and colour-pattern of the animals tendered. Thakha consisting of males only is not accepted. As mentioned somewhere above, thakha should largely consist of female animals, the males being but few. Red cattle do not often mala, because it is the colour of murudili cloth (a variety of red cloth, taken as omen that the two families will fight and therefore undesirable).

The person who determines what is to be given as thakha is the father of the girl or whoever has taken his place after his death (Van Warmelo, 1948:105).

2.3.7.2 The position of thakha today.

Christian teaching has condemned beliefs in ancestral spirits and in magic, and practices which express these beliefs.

It also condemns polygamy and the initiation schools, and some churches have condemned all forms of marriage payment (Mair, 1969:19).

More pervasive than any direct attack by authority, religious or secular, has been the impersonal influence of modern economic conditions. Certain effects follow wherever a money economy is substituted for a subsistence economy. The close interdependence of the members of a family breaks up when any one member has the opportunity of meeting his own needs by producing something for the world market, and as it is usually the younger generation who are alive to the new opportunities, they become independent of their elders, and their elders may actually become dependent upon them. Money takes the place of goods in all kinds of exchange, and the transactions into which money enters take on a more and more commercial character.

Since there is no limit to the amount of desirable goods which can be obtained by money, persons whose position entitles them to demand gifts tend to raise their demands higher and higher.

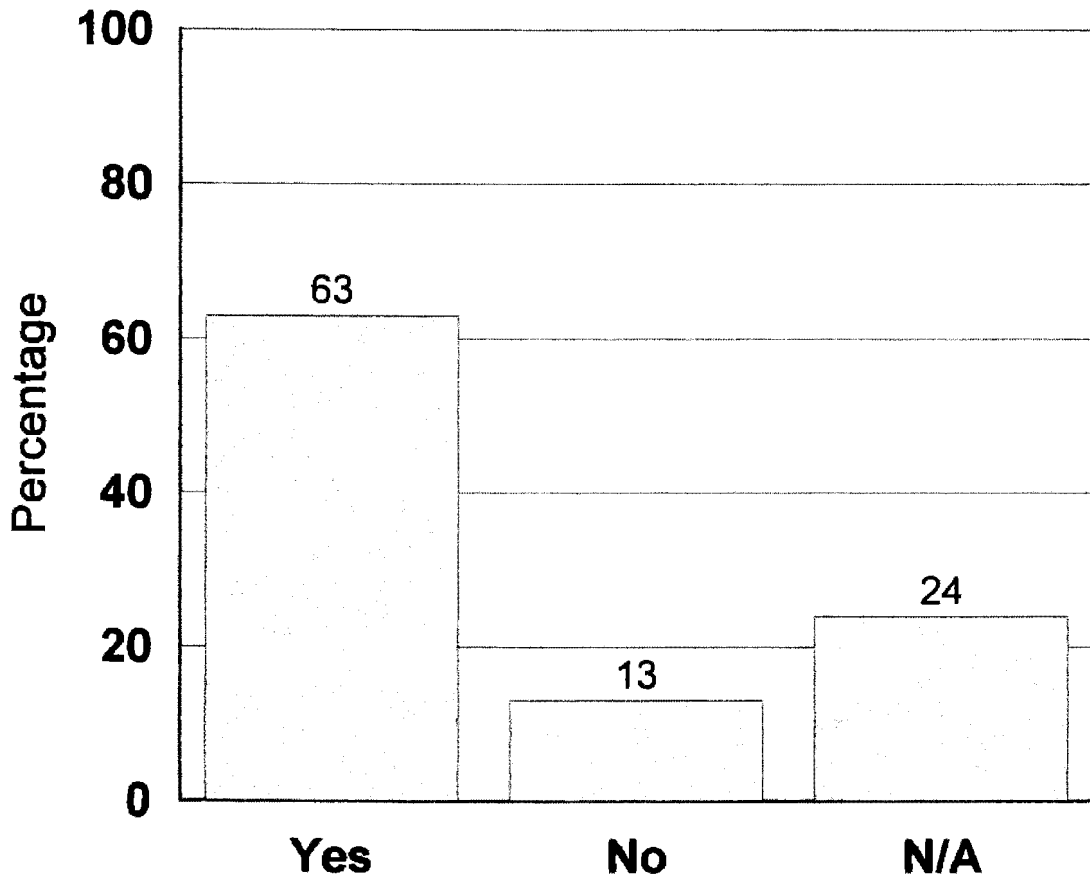
The range of possessions regarded as necessities, and still more those regarded as essential to respectability, constantly increase.

These changes have a direct effect on the organisation of the household, and also on the economic exchanges associated with marriage (Mair, 1969:19).

Over the course of this century, there has been a steady decline in all forms of marriages among the lower peasantry - who have long given

poverty, unvarnished and unqualified, as the reason. Conversely, there has been a notable rise in informal unions referred to as “Vat en sit”, Afrikaans for “take and settle” and in female-headed households. The implication is obvious: those who lacked property found it well-nigh impossible to achieve “proper” person hood for themselves and their off spring, either in the civil or in the religious domain. Without the necessary assets it was and is difficult to marry formally (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997:386).

Despite this criticism, the institution of lobola or thakha continues to be popular in the black community.

FIGURE 1 (Questionnaire 3 item 16 col. 19)

When you marry will you give thakha / bride wealth?

From Fig. 1 it is clear that 63% of the respondents were prepared to give thakha (bride wealth) and that only 13% of the respondents were not prepared to give thakha. These findings suggest that the institution of thakha (bride wealth) still enjoys a popular support amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa up to this day and that there is a good reason for that. Suffice to mention that thakha involves both families and that the selection process becomes long enough to avoid and prevent all unwanted obstacles to a happy family life e.g. mixed marriage and religious and cultural differences.

There are various reasons for the continued popularity of thakha. Firstly, it is religious in nature. Secondly, it had a number of legal functions. Its ceremonial transfer from the husband's to the wife's people was evidence of the establishment of a new matrimonial relationship. It validated the conclusion of a marriage and marked the formal creation of the husband's marital power over the wife, affording him exclusive access to her.

This gave the husband parental power over the wife's children whereby they became legally affiliated to him (Dlamini, 1991:78).

Van Warmelo (1948:99) is of the opinion that among the Venda people, only payment of the thakha demanded, established a marriage. This is not true. Dlamini (1991:78) correctly says in his unpublished thesis that black people in general cannot conceive of a marriage as valid if lobolo has not been given/paid or agreed upon. It is interesting that thakha/lobolo continues because it has the support of both African men and women.

Black women do not regard it as a sale or as derogating from their dignity. For the average black person the giving of thakha is evidence that he or she is married in the full sense of the word.

Currie (1994:161) like many Europeans e.g. Comaroff (1981); J Fabian (1990); Said (1989); and Ferguson (1990) state that marriage with lobolo/thakha is to be understood as the alienation of a set rights to a woman's productive and reproductive capabilities in exchange of legally sanctioned rights. This is their interpretation of thakha/lobolo based on their presupposition.

Although I do not want to comment about rights or no rights I want to state it clearly that their interpretation can never be accepted by an ordinary stay-at-home *muwenda*. Many black people regard thakha as a unique African custom giving them a distinctive cultural and religious identity as against white people (Dlamini, 1991:79).

It is true that the institution of thaka/lobolo is facing problems today. The traditional function of the marriage relationship as a continuing bond between two kinship groups, liable to give rise to further consequences of a still indeterminate character in the future, is being lost to view.

The contract is tending to acquire the finality of a "cash transaction". Under modern conditions the bride-price tends to assume a more mercenary aspect than it usually bore in the past.

Exorbitant demands are often made, and the resulting dissatisfaction on the part of the younger men raises a new threat to the continuance of the bride-price system. In some parts of (South) Africa there is a growing and

no longer negligible, agitation, not merely for the limitation of current rates, but for the abolition of the institution itself.

Excessive amounts which are not guided by social, cultural, economic or religious principles are demanded. Operating in a money economy, as it does today, thakha tends to acquire mercenary features which then discredit it because it takes on the appearance of the purchase of a woman (Dlamini, 1991:79).

Whatever interests were served by bride wealth (thakha) in its original pre-capitalist forms, it is clear that the custom has not survived the impact of colonialism and industrialisation unchanged. The most visible, and perhaps most important change has been effected by the penetration of a cash economy among what remains of pre-capitalist society. Whereas immemorial custom required that thakha be paid in cattle, it is now established beyond doubt that it can be paid in cash.

This transformation has cultural, economic and religious implications.

As for the cultural and religious implications of the replacement of cash for cattle, it is clear that money does not bear the same symbolic charge as do cattle. In most Southern African societies cattle are regarded as having a significance not possessed by other types of valuable goods (Currie, 1994:165).

Among the Zulu, for example, cattle which were the main means of ilobolo (thakha) were very closely linked with the ancestral spirits and the clan. Besides, ilobolo cattle could be used as a means of communicating with the spirits of the ancestors.

It is a truism that colonialism brought about the irrevocable transformation of older economics, cultures and forms of sociality. Old ways of life were destroyed, often violently, and new ones took their place. Individuals were uprooted from the communities that had sustained them and were forced to negotiate their own survival in the capitalist marketplace (Currie, 1994:159).

The abolition of lobolo/thakha is a denial of culture and tradition. A community without a history and without its own culture, has no identity.

Though money has become the usual means of payment of lobolo (thakha) obligations, cattle remain the units of account. A cash payment is taken to represent so many head of cattle (Currie, 1994:165).

It is clear that a number of social, economic and religious factors have encouraged the persistence of thakha in spite of the efforts of reformers and the effect of industrialisation.

There is a need for South Africans to go back to those responsibilities which were put into place before a person can marry. The giving of thakha should, therefore, not be abolished. Trial-marriages which do not have any chance of survival must be discouraged. By preserving this institution we may curb a lot of domestic violence e.g. divorce.

2.3.8 Bringing of a bride to her husband's place (u vhingá).

To vhingá a girl means to bring her to her husband's place, and to this extend u vhingá can be taken as equivalent of "wedding" or "marriage" (Van Warmelo, 1948:187). When a bride leaves her home, there is no celebration to which all relatives and strangers are invited, where goats and cattle are killed, where beer is brewed. This is not Venda custom, nor was it ever customary in the olden days, because they think this will summons together wizards and evil magic to the harm of the bride. It would draw the attention of all evil-wishers and is considered to be simply asking for trouble. The only persons to be invited are makhadzis and other important elders of the family, who come to see the bride leave home. But it remains a private matter, of no concern to the rest of the country side. They only depart after dark, unseen by anyone, and next morning the neighbourhood learns with surprise that such and such a girl has gone to her husband (Van Warmelo, 1948:187).

The girl may put up a commotion showing how much she loves her family -not to do so would be disgraceful.

On the day fixed for her departure, the women of the village, co-wives of her mother, take all the girls of the party down to the river for a bath. Clothes are washed and they anoint themselves with fat. This is a ritual in itself. When they bath there is this belief that everything bad will be washed away by the river.

After the bride has been anointed with fat, the old women take her behind the huts in the private part of the village and lay her on her back to ascertain whether she has not been seduced by young men. These old women have a means of knowing whether a girl has been deflowered, even though no pregnancy resulted.

A girl was not to be deflowered. Among some tribes girls were examined periodically by their mothers or other older women to see if they were virgins, and the virginity of a bride was a matter of great moment (Mair, 1969:11). If after inspection they find her intact they raise shrill ululations there where they are behind the huts, trilling which are responded to by the other female relatives who have been invited and who have remained in front. Thereupon her father, overjoyed that his daughter has not shamed him before his *vhakwasha*, seizes a sable antelope horn and dances around blowing it there in the enclosure, all the family trilling the while. After this they take her into a hut and dress her in finery. She is anointed all over with red ochre, hung with tassels, and her *thahu* and girdles of beadwork's are put around her waist. Whilst the bride is being dressed up like this, the old women outside take a little calabash and pierce it, remove the contents and plug up the hole again with wax of cow dung. This calabash the girls will take with them to the *mukwasha*'s parents as dedication that the girl is a virgin (Van Warmelo, 1948:189).

If the old women find the girls has been deflowered, they raise no ululations of rejoicing for her, but go back dejected and scolding. And the calabash is not plugged up, but is sent to the *vhakwasha* with its hole open, to let them know that she is not intact, but has been seduced. If upon inspection they find her not intact, they hold her down and question her as to who seduced her. If it proves to have been her own betrothed, the *nendila* is immediately told that the *vhakwasha* have done wrong and must pay a beast to make amends.

If the seducer is some other young fellow, even though no pregnancy ensued, the bride's people send a sheep with her to her husband as a preliminary gift to make amends, and send an explanation through their agent.

Then they mulct the offender in damages, namely a beast, and send it after the bride as *beletshedzo* to make good her being no longer a virgin.

In some instances the *makhulu*, owing to fault or to shame, sends the calabash with its hole plugged, but when the girl is inspected at the *vhakwasha's* place, the old women find her not intact. They then pierce the calabash afresh and return it thus, together with the girl herself, so that her people can see for themselves. The latter inspect her again and pay a sheep reconciliation which is sent through the go-between, to make amends for the wrong they have done. The culprit must then be found so that he can be made to pay damages. A bride who is found to have been deflowered has to be doctored and cupped to draw all the dirt (in a magical sense of course) from her body lest she cause the death of her husband (Van Warmelo, 1948:191).

The question is : why all these trouble? Is the giving of *thakha* not enough? Of all animals why the sheep and not the goat when it comes to reconciliation? Van Warmelo (1948:191) is of the opinion that virginity in itself is not valued and that what is feared in a deflowered bride is that her seducer perhaps had some other disease, or that abortion was produced by her own family. I partly do not agree with him, especially on the point that virginity is not valued. Van Warmelo is missing a point here. Although Van Warmelo went into details about how and when certain actions were done, the meaning behind the whole scenario remains hidden for him. The gist of the matter is that this was done to prevent well in advance, family problems especially divorce.

The Venda people went into all that trouble because they knew from an African Religious perspective that marriage was, and is something sacred and holy. They believed that a happy marriage did not only please the family, but the ancestors who were involved through murula and other rituals like a libation of special "mpambo" beer poured out on the sacred stones for them (ancestors) right from the beginning. When the family lives in harmony, peace and stability rituals of thanksgiving are performed for the ancestors. When there is turmoil it is believed that the ancestors forgot their children and grandchildren. Another point not to be missed is that in principle sex before marriage was not allowed.

A bride who was not deflowered was not only her husband's pride but the pride of her in-laws family, i.e. both the vhakwasha and makhulu were proud of her. She is respected by all family as a symbol of purity. The reason being that her husband is not full of hate and grudge against the seducer.

In this type of set up problems are amicably resolved and domestic violence prevented. This is possible because the bride will not be regarded as a liar and instigator of problems. She is supported by her husband's family. They will be asking the husband : if you don't want this woman, who do you want? If the husband was beating or sending the wife away, his mother may threaten to go naked in public or hang herself - something which both the family and the community will not approve.

A bride who was deflowered was treated differently. She was regarded as a liar and was seen as full of deceit. If they find her no longer intact, no ululations are (a very sad experience for the family). They spit at her

as if she were a dog and she is sent back to her parents (Van Warmelo, 1948:197).

As stated above, even if she is ultimately married, she will be treated with hostility. When her husband beats her, for example, it will always be assumed that she may be having an affair with someone or the person who seduced her. There is a Venda proverb which says "ya kanda kanwe i a rewa" meaning that if a person does something wrong once, there is a good possibility he/she may do it again. And for this reason the deflowered bride will always be looked at with suspicion. This may easily lead to domestic violence.

When the bride is handed over to her husband her mother-in-law will say "This is your husband, look after him". To her son she says, "Here is your wife, look after her in every way; if you have troubles, tell us. She is your wife, care for her". There is a lot more meaning behind these words than it may appear. The word "child" is used to show the bond or relationship existing between the bride and the family henceforth.

Please note that even after the marriage is formally announced or finalised, the mother-in-law still says "if you have troubles tell us". This means that the "new family" will not be operation in isolation as a "nuclear family" but will be backed by the entire extended family, the latter serving as the former's "shock absorbers" in times of need.

Another sign of the slackening hold of tradition is seen in the curtailment of the procedure for celebration of a marriage, extending sometimes to an almost complete abandonment of the customary sequence of rites and observances.

The gap is sometimes partially filled by adoption of the external accompaniments of a European wedding, often at the cost of substantial and disproportionate expenditure on display and entertainment.

Such developments are particularly evident in areas where new communities of Africans are growing up in detachment from their tribal associations or where, as a result of the migrant labour system, African workers spend long periods away from their homes - i.e. in urban and industrial areas.

The picture as a whole is one of instability and of greater laxity of morals, consequent upon the weakening of old sanctions and restraints.

2.4 **MARRIED LIFE.**

Traditional African society had its own rules concerning the obligations of spouses towards each other, rules which governed the co-operation of daily life and were supported by a system of values enshrined in religious beliefs (Mair, 1969:1).

Indeed it is through marriage that one becomes an adult, that one takes responsibilities before the community for passing on the gift of life, the greatest gift that one has received from the great creator.

Life is not a personal possession that one can manipulate for one's own purposes. Life is a shared reality received from the ancestors to be passed on to the next generation. For one not to take this obligation of passing on life seriously implies that one is not an adult, that one is still a child, untried and without identity. In Venda you cannot properly greet an unmarried adult. There are no words to identify an older person who is not married. For one not to have a family is seen as selfish and unsocial behaviour.

2..4.1 Obligation of the wife

A Venda wife shows deference towards her husband in everything. She uses towards him the respectful plural "vhone" (as in German Sie, French vous), also calling him by name, e.g. Vho-Nekuvule, Vho-Tshilimandila (not just Nekuvule), and "father of so-and-so", naming a child of her own or of her co-wife. In speaking of him in his absence she calls him "the respected one of our place", or "the respected one of my household".

If she passed near where he happens to be, she sinks down on her knees until he acknowledges her greeting and she can go on. If she wants to sit down where he is, she first kneels to make salutation (Van Warmelo, 1948:257).

A married woman must be clothed and provided with ornaments by her husband. He must supply her with bedding and with clothes to wear. After a girl is married, her own people are under no obligation to clothe her. If they give her something it is merely out of kindness. There is a proverb which says, "A dog that has an owner can be recognised by having a collar", meaning that a woman with a husband is recognisable by the ornaments she wears (Van Warmelo, 1948:303).

A husband's neglect to supply his wife with clothing and suitable ornaments is proof that he is not fond of her, and may bring about a divorce.

2.4.2 Obligations of the husband.

A husband must provide his wife with all she requires. He must build a hut for her, a hut for her children, grainbins and granaries, pens for goats and fowls, and supply the household utensils as well. The latter comprise a mortar, pestles, wooden platters, plaited trays and winnowing baskets, stirring sticks, spoons and baskets. Large vessels for cooking beer must also be bought by the husband. If a husband neglects to provide his wife with any of these things he gets a bad name and sometimes his wife deserts him (Van Warmelo, 1948:313). A husband's responsibility towards his wife does not cease until her death. A wife may not upset her husband.

2.5 Conclusion.

Marriage in Venda as in other societies was probably the most important public event in common life. It did not take place at one single moment of time, but came into being across a series of meetings, negotiations, and ceremonies. In this too it conformed to the traditional character of marriage in nearly every society of the world. The ceremonies of marriage, beginning with careful negotiations between the two families and culminating in the birth of a first child, were normally confirmed at every stage by big or little presents. In principle the essence of a valid marriage would be seen to have consisted in the consent of those involved and their guardians; the handing over of gifts, particularly from the bridegroom to the bride's guardians; the blessings and ceremonies surrounding the handing over of the bride to the bridegroom and culminating in their official cohabitation.

The process of marriage as a human experience was one which certainly took time - months if not years - in the course of which it could indeed be interrupted; but the further the process had gone, the less lightly could this be done. When the consent had been fully manifested, the gifts exchanged, the blessings pronounced, and bride and groom officially bedded in a hut together, then the marriage was traditionally in being (Hastings, 1973:31).

Among nearly all the peoples of Africa marriage was in general intention lifelong but was also in principle dissoluble; however, as has already been suggested, divorce was very far from being equally common. Where bride wealth was of high social importance, divorce was in fact a very rare matter; it would involve its repayment and this would be against the interest of many including the ancestors. Amongst the Vhavenda people this act is equivalent to vomiting what one has eaten, hence the saying "Vho tanziswa thakha ye vha la". The ancestors are also not pleased because they "ate" the offerings made through rituals. They also blessed the marriage.

There can be many reasons for an increase in the breakdown of marriage. One is undoubtedly the greater mobility of the population compared with that of traditional society; this is particularly true where there is much, long-extended, migrant labour. A second is that, as polygamy grows less acceptable, childlessness is more likely to lead to divorce. A third is the greater independence of the individual, particularly of women. One important reason for more divorce is precisely a new sense on the part of women of their own dignity. In many places the large majority of divorce proceedings in customary courts are now begun by wives, and a chief ground for divorce appears as physical ill-treatment : beating one's wife is still considered by many men as the normal

prerogative of a husband, but it is increasingly seen as sufficient reason for a divorce by women.

The same sort of thing makes many, particularly educated girls, reluctant to marry at all. Strange as it may seem, they feel that unmarried they may be well treated by men, in marriage they won't.

These points provide us with the groundwork beneath the wider characteristics of marriage in Africa. It is not true to say that young people never had any choice as to whom they were to marry; it is not true to say that some form of compensation or bride wealth was paid in all marriages; it is quite untrue to say that all, or even most, Africans were in fact polygamous.

But it is true that marriage was seen more in terms of the group than of the nuclear family; that in many cases the choice of the partner was made largely - in some cases wholly - by parents or other senior relations;

that the marital transfer of cattle or other goods was of great significance among many peoples; that childlessness was often a reason for either taking a second wife (perhaps the sister of the first) or for dissolving the first marriage; that polygamy was widely practised and still more widely admired, being indeed the norm for the powerful and the rich (Hastings, 1973:29).

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL DATA ON MIXED MARRIAGES FROM AN AFRICAN - CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Introduction

Anytime the "unholy" is mixed with the holy, God will remove His blessings (Ogilvie, 1987:138). It does not matter whether the unholy is from an African or Christian background. Whatever is mentioned here about King Solomon or Samson is just a tip of the iceberg. Many more people, both in the Old and the New Testaments, were in one way or another involved in mixed marriages.

Today it is quite acceptable for people to read the Bible through their own eyes and their own experiences. However, for Bible translators, the question of being faithful to the original messages, original forms, original authors and audience still presents quite difficult problems. Yet it is no secret that in reality, it is almost impossible to translate or interpret a text without colouring it, sieving it, or moulding it through our own entire network of beliefs, reality, and language.

Motlhabi (1983:23) correctly argues that "just as black American Theologians have referred to their past religious heritage for the early manifestations of Black theology in their country and for the present inspiration, so therefore, it seems, must black South African theologians also examine their traditional religions for the unique, religious cultural contributions that can be made by them to the Christian teaching and Black Theology."

Asana (1990) and Masenya (1996) also supported this idea, seeing it as one of the first tasks of African or Black theology the "reconstruction of the christian faith in Africa which takes seriously the fact that God revealed himself in the traditional religions and that by a selective process African theologians can use this revelatory content to throw light on the message and meaning of marriage and of Jesus Christ."

According to Motlhabi (1983:23) for many Africans conversion to Christianity has "not meant the exchange of the indigenous religion for the new one but rather an amalgamation of the two". If this claim is true, we must find out exactly what aspects of the Christian teaching were assimilable into traditional religious beliefs and how this was done to suit the African understanding and his/her religious expression. This however, cannot be successfully attempted until we have gained better insights into African traditional religions themselves (Motlhabi, 1983:23)

Questions may be asked as to whether we want to see "inculturation" taking place. The answer to that question depends much on what we view "inculturation" to be. Prof. Simon Maimela describes "inculturation" as an approach which is characterised by the attempt to marry Christianity with the African world view, so that Christianity could speak (to Africans) with the African idiom and accent (Amoah, 1995:27).

The researcher is no exception. He is a member of the Church of Christ (Fundamentalists). It is apparent from the above, therefore, that some general characteristics and principles of fundamentalism will apply in the researcher's interpretation of scriptures.

3.2 King Solomon's love for foreign women : 1 Kings 11:1-4

The author begins his portrayal of Solomon's decline by mentioning Solomon's love for foreign women - Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites and the daughter of Pharaoh - "from the nations of which YHWH said to the Israelites : "You shall not have sexual relations with them nor shall they have sexual relations with you; truly, they will turn your heart after their gods":

The issue seems straightforward : Solomon flounders because of his violation of an established divine command. 1 Kings 11:1-4 raises both exegetical and thematic issues. Mixed marriages, often considered to be a distinctly post-exilic problem, are pivotal to Solomon's demise (Lewis, 1994:121).

To be sure, the Yahwist (Exod 34:11-6) and the authors of Deuteronomy (Deut 7:1-4) prohibit exogamy, but solely with the autochthonous Canaanite nations. However significant the variations in these rosters may be, only in early Judaism does an absolute condemnation of intermarriage with all non-Jews emerge (Lewis, 1994:122).

In the book of Kings, Solomon ostensibly becomes an example of the negative repercussions of intermarriage with Yehud's neighbours. Mixed marriages are supposedly not an issue of real consequence until post-exilic times, the era in which Israelite religion becomes Judaism (Lewis, 1994:123).

Extending and expanding the deuteronomic interdiction against mixed marriages with native Canaanite peoples, the Deuteronomist employs mixed marriages as a topos to explain two major regressions in Israelite history : the era of judges and the divided monarchy. Close analysis of

select passages in the Deuteronomistic History therefore suggests that the development of the prohibition of intermarriage with all Gentiles is more complex than has been previously recognized (Lewis, 1994:124).

Solomon allegedly had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3). 1 Kings 11:7 describes how Solomon built a big place for Chemosh, the god of Moab, and for Milcom, the god of Ammon.

1 Kings 11:8 elaborates, declaring that Solomon did this for all his wives. Ahijah's royal oracle to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:33 avows that Solomon worshipped Astarte, the deity of the Sidonians, Chemosh, the deity of Moab, and Milcom, the deity of the Ammonites.

The author of these verses claims that Solomon built high places for all of his wives and even presents some fluctuation in the deities Solomon worships and enfranchises with sanctuaries. Yet, 1 Kings 11 also manifests a particular interest in Solomon's devotion to the gods of the Ammonites, Sidonians, and Moabites (Lewis, 1994:126).

Nehemiah recalls Solomon's liaisons with foreign women as grounds for prohibiting such unions in his own time (Neh 13:23-27). Nehemiah's rhetorical question, "Was it not on account of such things that Solomon King of Israel sinned? (Neh 13:26), would only have force if the account of Solomon's paramours was already well-known (Lewis, 1994:127).

To call attention to Solomon's involution, the author draws a series of contrasts with the first period he posits in Solomon's reign. In the first part of his tenure, Solomon followed the practices of David his father (1 Kings 3:3); but in the second part of his tenure, Solomon "did not follow YHWH completely - as did David his father" (1 Kings 11:6).

Prior to building the temple, Solomon sacrificed and burned incense at the high places (1 Kings 3:3). When the temple was completed, Solomon regularly sacrificed to YHWH there (1 Kings 8:5, 62-64; 9:25; 10:5). Yet, in the second part of his tenure, Solomon burned incense and sacrificed to foreign gods at the high places he built for his foreign wives (1 Kings 11:8).

Now, that is the crux of the matter. There is a very strong possibility here that if Solomon did not have anything to do with foreign women he would not have infuriated YHWH, as he did.

3.3 The laws of Deuteronomy 7:1-6 concerning mixed marriages.

The laws of Deut 7:1-6 exhibit some curious features. Israel is told to annihilate the autochthonous Canaanite nation, leaving no survivors (Deut 7:1-2a). Israel is also instructed neither to ratify a covenant nor to intermarry with any of the autochthonous Canaanite nations (Deut 7:2b-3).

Presumably, the latter instructions would not be necessary or even possible if the former was accomplished.

The authors of Deuteronomy construe the mandate for abolishing those cult symbols which they associate with pre-Israelite nations - altars, asherahs, standing stones, and images - as critical to preserving Israel's special character, "because you are a consecrated people to YHWH your God. Of all the peoples of the land YHWH your God chose you to be for him a treasured people" (Deut 7:5-6).

The proscription of spousal relationships with select peoples is therefore consistent with Deuteronomy's concern with preserving Israel's distinctive identity (Lewis, 1994:129).

By renewing the Yahwist's prohibition against intermarriage (Exod 34:16), the authors of Deuteronomy not only accord intermarriage with explanatory value for understanding the past, but also structural importance for confronting the present (Lewis, 1994:130). The Deuteronomist also considers intermarriage to be an important issue. Like the authors of Deuteronomy, he associates mixed marriages with Israelite decadence (Lewis, 1994:130).

Having depicted how successful Israel was when it obeyed divine stipulations, the Deuteronomist is faced with a problem. How will he explain the metamorphosis from the triumphant Israel of Joshua to the organized and troubled Israel he knows preceded the rise of the united monarchy of David and Solomon?

He will he explain the survival of peoples Israel was to have eliminated? The Deuteronomist prepares his readers for a change of venue in Joshua's farewell speech (Josh 23:2-16).

Joshua celebrates the *Manalia Dei*, yet admonishes the Israelites about the challenges they face in finishing the conquest. His speech recalls the prescriptions of Deut 7:1-6 and adapts them to the circumstances of Israel's life in the land.

Joshua implores his audience not to engage in sexual relations with the remaining nations, nor to invoke the name of their gods, swear by them, serve them, or worship them (Josh 23:7). Instead, Israel should continue to cling to YHWH (Josh 23:8). As part of his parenthesis, Joshua renews the deuteronomic ban on mixed marriages (Lewis, 1994:131).

Joshua's admonition is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, he alludes to the prohibition of Deut 7:3, but embellishes it by explicitly referring to both marriage and sexual intercourse (Josh 23:12). Second, Joshua extends the original interdiction against marital unions of the invading Israelites with the native residents of Palestine indefinitely. Third, the author is not to intermarry (Lewis, 1994:131).

Near the end of his introduction to Judges, the Deuteronomist includes a notice of Israel's failure to annihilate the indigenous nations of Palestine (Judg 3:5-6). The setback recalls the warnings in Joshua's farewell speech (Josh 23:11-13) and replicates in history what Deut 7:3-4 forbids. Judg 3:5-6 mirrors Deut 7:1-4 in its register of nations, its description of marital unions between the Israelites and the aboriginal Canaanite nations, and its depiction of the consequence of these actions.

Intermarriage has social, and religious consequences. According to the Deuteronomist, mixed marriages were the means by which the Israelites forgot their God and begun worshipping other gods (Judg 3:6-7).

As in the case of Solomon, Israel's actions infuriate YHWH, who delivers Israel to Cushan-rishathaim, the first of many deuteronomistic perspective, Israel's apostasy verifies Moses' interdiction against mixed marriages by demonstrating the negative consequences of Israel's conjugal unions with Canaan's indigenous inhabitants (Lewis, 1994:132).

Both Joshua's extension of Deuteronomy's taboo on intermarriage and the rationale that Israel's failure to observe this taboo eventuated in Israel's worship of foreign gods show that intermarriage was a matter of considerable concern to the Deuteronomist.

To be sure, the Deuteronomist blames Israel itself, and not these nations, for Israel's troubles during the period of the judges. In the transition from the golden era of conquest to the regression of the judges, intermarriage plays an instrumental role (Lewis, 1994:133).

In fact, the deuteronomistic presentation of Israel's metamorphosis from a victorious people to a harassed one in Joshua - Judges illumines the role of Solomon's foreign wives in his demise. In the time of Solomon, Israel experienced peace and rest (1 Kings 5:17-18), Solomon received wealth and wisdom (1 Kings 3:4-14), and, to the delight of all Israel, Solomon build the long-awaited central sanctuary (1 Kings 6:1-9:3).

Given this unmitigated string of achievements, how does heteropraxis reappear in Israelite life? Solomon departs from the policies he himself followed with great success by embracing the gods of his foreign wives. Solomon's amour for foreign women catalyses a reversal of his erstwhile love for YHWH (Lewis, 1994:134).

As with Israel in the time of the judges, the Deuteronomist blames Solomon, and not his wives, for perfidy. The topas of mixed marriages explains a reversal in the course of Solomonic rule, but does not excuse it. Solomon's foreign wives catalyze his decline, but YHWH becomes enraged with Solomon, and not his wives (Lewis, 1994:135).

According to Coffman (1988:85) it is this exclusivism of Israel which preserved Judaism throughout the centuries. Coffman (1988:85)'s assumption that perhaps the young people of Moses' day said "But we will make Israelites out of those girls!" still apply today.

Deuteronomy 7 is essentially a sermon about religion and culture and about what it means to be an Israelite instead of a Canaanite. The sermon is particularly relevant for Moses' audience, which is headed for Canaan, but it is also applicable to anyone who wants to live an authentic faith in the midst of a culture, that may not share that faith, or even offers radically different alternatives to it (Mann, 1995:64).

3.4 Samson the Nazarite (Judg 16:4-20).

Samson, the sixth major judge and the twelfth and last of the total group presented in the Book of Judges, was a superman in every way. Physically his name is synonymous with tremendous strength. Potentially he was the chosen one. Mentally he was intelligent and alert. Spiritually he has this unusual relationship with the Holy Spirit. But, in spite of all this, he was an utter failure (Hunter, 1975:99).

The place of Samson's initial contact with the Philistines, when he married the Philistine girl, was Timnah. He became infatuated with the girl and asked his parents to arrange a wedding. They properly objected because the girl was not an Israelite (Deut 7:3-4) but then did as he requested when he insisted (Wood, 1975:309). Samson should have remembered God's marriage restrictions and not let himself fall in love with the wrong person. How crushed his parents must have been in view of his request to marry this Philistine; especially when they had placed such high hopes on him (Wood, 1975:312).

According to Wood (1975:313) the Philistines could not be trusted. The thirty companions who were supposed to be his special friends throughout the wedding occasion, turned against him by forcing his bride to learn the secret of his riddle; and his bride really did the same in carrying out their demand.

If the thirty companions had been true men, they would have admitted their defeat and paid their debt. If the bride would have been a true wife, she would have shared the threat of the thirty with Samson and then done all possible to protect herself and her father's house (Wood, 1975:313).

Samson now became infatuated with another woman of Philistia, Delilah. The Philistine leaders came to Delilah and offered her the large sum of "eleven pieces of silver" each, if she would learn and tell them the secret of Samson's strength. She agreed. At first Samson was able to resist her entreaties that he tell her what made him strong. Three times he told her falsehoods. Each time Samson told a falsehood, Delilah had someone come and do to Samson the action described. But Samson never lost any of his strength. Samson finally told her that he had been a Nazarite all his life, so that if the hair of his head were cut off he would be as weak as other men. Delilah cut off Samson's hair as he slept, and the Philistines then seized him and found him helpless in their grasp (Wood, 1975:329).

The humiliation and consequent remorse of Samson as he was led away helplessly to prison, could only have been great. Suddenly he was no longer able to break ropes and chains, he could no longer slay encountered enemies; he was as weak as any other man.

As he was actually placed in the prison, with all its attendant miseries - for prisons were the most wretched of places at that time - and with a few days having passed in which to think, he must have felt extreme sorrow and regret for the terrible sin he had committed. He had sold himself and God's all-important blessing for a few moments of pleasure with a daughter and wicked foreign woman (Wood, 1975:333).

3.5 The Book of Ruth.

The Book of Ruth implies a more favourable attitude toward intermarriage, a view later severely opposed by Ezra the Scribe. Ruth, a Moabite woman, is married to an Israelite. When he dies, Ruth shows uncommon loyalty to her Israelite mother-in-law and deep devotion to the God of Israel. In the end, she finds a new husband among her former husband's relatives, and through this marriage becomes the great-grandmother of David, Israel's greatest king.

The story of Ruth combines the custom of the levirate with the duty of redemption which fell on the go'el. The law of Deuteronomy 25 does not apply, for Ruth had no more brothers-in-law (Rt. 1:11-12). The fact that some near relative must marry her, and that this obligation proceeds in a certain order (Rt. 2:20; 3:12), no doubt indicates a period or a milieu in which the law of levirate was a matter for the clan rather than for the family in the strict sense (De Vaux, 1961:38). In any case, the intentions and effects of the marriage were those of a levirate marriage, for it was made "to perpetuate the name of the dead" (Rt. 4:5,10; 2:20), and the child born of it was considered the son of the deceased (Rt. 4:6; 4:17). People are influenced by the deity they worship. The Moabites had stopped worshipping the God of Abraham and Isaac, and had started worshipping Chemosh or Molech. This worship included offering children

as human sacrifices; a practice strongly condemned by the Israelites as barbaric and ungodly.

3.6 The Law of Moses (the Deuteronomic Law) and divorce

The deuteronomic law presupposes that divorce has become a common practice among Jews (Bligh, 1975:89). It attempts to limit the number of hasty divorces by laying down that when divorcing his wife, a man must present her with a written document, and that once he has done this, he cannot take her back. Far from implying approval of divorce, the law tries to prevent it as far as possible (Bligh, 1975:89).

The first thing to notice is that in the old Mosaic dispensation the word adultery is not mentioned in the matter of divorce, for a good reason that under the law of Moses the punishment for adultery was death (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:254).

Anybody who was found guilty under that old Law, was stoned to death, so there was no need to mention it. The marriage had come to an end. It was not brought to an end by divorce but by punishment, by death (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:254).

What then was the object and purpose of the Mosaic legislation with regard to divorce?

Lloyd-Jones (1959:254) is of the opinion that the whole object of the Mosaic legislation in this matter was simply to control divorce. The position had become entirely chaotic. In those days men generally held a very low and poor view of women, and they had come to believe that

they had a right to divorce their wives for almost any and every kind of frivolous and unworthy reason (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:254).

If a man, for any reason whatsoever, was anxious to get rid of his wife, he did so. He brought forward some trumpery excuse and on the basis of that he divorced her. The Mosaic legislation, therefore, was introduced in order to regularise and control a situation that had not only become chaotic, but was grossly unfair to the women, and which, in addition, led to untold and endless suffering on the part of both the women and the children (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:254).

The deuteronomic Law laid down three great principles. The first was that it limited divorce to certain causes. It was only to be permitted henceforth when there was some natural, moral or physical defect discovered in the wife. All the various excuses which men had been using and bringing forward were now prohibited (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:255).

Before he could obtain a divorce a man had to establish that there was some very special cause, described under the title of **uncleanness**. He not only had to prove that, he had also to establish it in the sight of two witnesses. Therefore the Mosaic legislation, far from giving a number of excuses for divorce, greatly limited it (Lloyd-Jones:1959:255).

It dismissed all the frivolous, superficial and unjust reasons, restricting it to one particular matter.

The second thing it enforced was that any man who thus divorced his wife must give her a bill of divorce (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:255). Before the Mosaic Law, a man could say he no longer wanted his wife, and could turn her out of the house; and there she was, at the mercy of the whole

world. She might be charged with unfaithfulness or adultery and this be liable to being stoned to death (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:255).

Therefore, to protect the woman, this legislation provided that she should be given a bill of divorce in which a statement was made that she had been dismissed, not because of unfaithfulness, but because of one of these reasons which had been discovered. It was to protect her, and the bill of divorce was handed to her in the presence of two witnesses whom she could always call in any case of need and necessity.

Divorce was made something formal, something serious, the idea being to impress upon the minds of those people that it was a solemn step and not something to be undertaken lightly in a moment of passion, when a man suddenly felt he dislike his wife and wanted to get rid of her. In this way the seriousness of marriage was emphasized.

The third step in the Mosaic legislation was a very significant step, namely that a man who divorces his wife gives her a bill of divorcement, is not allowed to marry her again (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:255). Deuteronomy 24:4 prohibits a man who has dismissed his wife from marrying her again.

The wife is to be protected against the arbitrary whims of the husband. Here, as so often, the Deuteronomic Law manifests its humane attitude (Schelke, 1979:27). The whole force of this enactment is to make people see that marriage is not something you walk in and out of at will.

It tells the first husband that, if he gives his wife a bill of divorcement, it is a permanent enactment. The old Mosaic legislation is very far indeed from being what we thought it was, and especially what the Pharisees and Scribes thought it to be (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:255).

3.7 The Deuteronomistic Law versus the teaching of the New Testament.

3.7.1 The teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes.

Schelkle (1979:29) is of the opinion that in New Testament times monogamy was by far the usual practice in Israel. It was accompanied by the practice of successive marriages after divorce.

The teachings of the Pharisees and Scribes during the New Testament, and especially during the time of Jesus, were biased. This is evident from the interpretations held by the schools of Shammai and Hillel (Keener, 1991:32).

There were two opinions concerning divorce at this time among Jewish scholars, viz.

3.7.2 The school of Hillel.

These were followers of the school of Hillel who taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason, basing their belief on Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

This more liberal school of Hillel would accept any reason, however trivial, such as the charge that a wife had cooked a dish badly, or merely that the husband preferred another woman (De Vaux, 1961:34).

If the husband could find someone better-looking or if his wife does not obey him at a signal and a glance, it was enough reason to divorce her (De Vaux, 1961:35).

3.7.3 The school of Shammai.

There were also those of the teaching of Shammai who taught that fornication was the only reason for divorce. They also based their belief upon Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The Pharisees and Scribes said that the law of Moses **commanded** a man to divorce his wife under certain conditions. According to Lloyd-Jones (1959:256) the Law never said anything of the kind.

He is of the opinion that the Law of Moses never **commanded** anybody to divorce his wife. All it did, was to say to a man : If you do want to divorce your wife you should do so only under these conditions. But the Pharisees and Scribes were teaching that Moses commanded divorce.

The next step was that they were again demanding divorce and insisting upon their right to it, for all kinds of inadequate reasons. The Pharisees interpreted **uncleanness** as cited in the old Mosaic Law, to their own advantage.

They actually taught that if a man ceased to like his wife, or for any reason found her to be unsatisfactory to him, that, was in a sense "**uncleanness**" (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:256).

Lloyd-Jones (1959:256) is of the opinion that they were avoiding the law as well as in principle in letter. By putting the Mosaic Law upside-down, so many injustices were again being done to many women who were being divorced for most unworthy and frivolous reasons.

There was only one factor that really mattered to these men, and that was the legal one of giving a bill of divorce. In emphasising this, they were failing to see the real meaning of marriage or to consider this whole

question of divorce, and the reason for it, in a true, just and righteous manner (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:256).

The Scribes and Pharisees were avoiding the Mosaic law and circumventing it with their "**clever**" interpretations and traditions which they added. Such was the perversion by the Pharisees and Scribes of the Mosaic teaching (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:257). The spirit of Ubuntu does not approve of someone trying to play big or becoming wiser than King Solomon.

3.7.4 Jesus' interpretation of the Deuteronomic Law.

By Jesus' time it was being debated in the rabbinical schools whether in such cases a lapse on the part of the woman is in mind or whether she possessed some repellent quality.

The Law refrains from giving a real reason for the negative decision. It contents itself with the very archaic comment that to remarry this woman would be "an abomination before the Lord". Thus the legal decision rests on very ancient cultic conceptions (Von Rad, 1964:150).

The Pharisees and Scribes said to Jesus "**Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?**" (Mt. 19:3).

Jesus says that what is subject to debate is not the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, but rather the very claim of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as a legal ground for divorce (Hendrickx, 1979:72).

Jesus' word is in the first place an attack on the legally protected privileged position of the husband. Every man who claims this right

commits injustice (Mt. 5:32a). According to Hendrickx (1979:72) Jesus is speaking up for women. Jesus knew the weakness of the Mosaic law, its cruelty to women, its corrupting influence on the men whose supposed masculine rights is safeguarded (Wright, 1927:142).

Jesus ignored everything else in the old enactment, disregarded all the controversies of the rival Jewish schools, and brought into the light of day the simple humanity which had long stood as an ineffectual witness against oppression (Wright, 1927:142). According to Lloyd-Jones (1959:257) Jesus goes back beyond the Law of Moses to the law that was given by God at the very beginning. When God created the woman to be a help mate He made that great pronouncement : **"The two shall be one flesh". "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."** In Mark 10:7-8 and Matthew 19:5 the words of Genesis 2:24 are quoted in full.

Clearly, marriage is not just an affair of and between two people, but God is involved in their union.

The law which God laid down was that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and that they should become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). There is an indissolubility about marriage and Jesus goes right back to that great principle.

According to Louw (1986:5) "die huwelik is nie 'n absolute wet nie, maar 'n roeping tot permanensie". (Afrikaans for : marriage is not the ultimate law, but a calling towards something permanent).

Wright (1927:143) is of the opinion that Jesus plainly had no love for divorce or any grounds. Nowhere did He say, that adultery was or was

not a valid ground for divorce. Jesus is exposing the false teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes with regard to divorce (Lloyd-Jones, 1959:253). He did not deny that in the past the Deuteronomic law was implemented. All he said was **"because of the hardness of their hearts, God made that concession"** (Matthew. 19:8).

According to Lloyd-Jones (1959:259) God was not advocating divorce, or commanding anybody to divorce his wife. In Matthew 5:31 Jesus is in a way saying **"You know what I am talking about."** In verse 32 He is saying **"now, stop it."** According to Alexander & Alexander (1973:478) Jesus is in a way saying that sin begins in the mind and will, and that is where it must be rooted out. Jesus' view is that the standards of God's kingdom are way above the standards of the law-courts, the Law of Moses included.

3.8 The implications of the Deuteronomic law today.

Schelkle (1979:30) is of the opinion that the Old Testament is familiar with the idea of marriage as a love relationship. In the Yahwist creation story, the man greets the woman with delight when God brings the two together (Gen. 2:23).

Schelkle is convinced that even the marriages of the patriarchs, despite their deficiencies, were marked by love. Although one may partly agree with Schelkle one does not help to wonder as to how their so-called "love" functioned. Was it love or lust? When it comes to the way Old Testament times people handled divorce, I am not totally convinced that true love existed as such. That Spirit of Ubuntu which says: "Do to others what you want them to do for you" is lacking (Mt. 7:12). South

Africa is a country in which conditions have become chaotic in this matter of divorce. Surely we must get rid of the legalistic approach which makes a man say, "She has spoiled my life, therefore I must divorce her".

The danger of our day is laxity. Christian people too seem inclined to accept the fact of divorce too easily. There is a general tendency to accept the common morality of our own time. This is true in particular of the common sexual morality, living together without being married, LAT (Living Apart Together) relations, and even homosexual relations. A light-hearted acceptance of the possibility of divorce also falls within this category. And so does the lack of the spirit of Ubuntu (Schrotenboer, 1988:86).

As unworthy and undeserving sinners we have all been forgiven by the grace of God, and that must enter into and control our view of everything that happens to us with respect to all other persons, and especially in the relationship of marriage. The state should have regard to the national purity on which the whole fabric of society rests.

The general attitude of the Roman Catholic Church has been that a "validly" contracted and consummated marriage is indissoluble and that consequently divorce and remarriage after divorce are sinful acts. The Church of England has always refused remarriage after divorce. The Reformers generally broke with the strict no-remarriage rule of the medieval church (Schrotenboer, 1988:86).

I am of the opinion that we must take care not to change Jesus into a lawgiver who makes rules and regulations concerning marriage and divorce which we now must incorporate into our present-day church orders. Although the Scripture (Deut. 24:1-4; Mt. 5:31-32) speaks clearly in terms of principles governing divorce and remarriage, it is neither

possible nor wise for any of the churches mentioned above to attempt to construct a legal code which would cover all cases or all circumstances that would apply. Instead, in every instance churches must seek pastorally to assist the partners in a marriage to achieve forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration wherever possible. According to Wright (1927:144) at present the church is violating the letter of the New Testament by allowing judicial separation, which is a genuine **putting away**, and refusing to sanction a divorce with a right to remarry.

Wright (1927:144) is of the opinion that it cannot be claimed that this encourages marital purity.

The Church is well advised to follow the example of Christ in His tender regard for human sufferers, while insisting upon the essential marriage as the aim of all (Wright, 1927:145). Jesus lays down no rules for these practical difficulties of life.

He strove continually that men might enthusiastically endorse the noble ideal by their constant effort, so that no thought of adultery or divorce should ever arise (Wright, 1927:145).

Hendrickx (1979:79) is of the opinion that a purely juridical approach to the man-woman relationship whereby a marriage once concluded is made indissoluble can be as hard as legalistic for the man and woman concerned as the Scribes and Pharisees were in Jesus' time. The law can only deal with actions, not with the thoughts that give rise to them (Alexander & Alexander, 1973:478). Once South Africans live according to the spirit of Ubuntu this inhumane domestic violence may be avoided.

The so-called failures of marriage are due to those who wreck their marriage from the outset by want of mind and heart. Those who enter into

the covenant of love without any real affection. They have no inward resource of a right sense of the sacred obligations of marriage. For these people divorce is an easy remedy and therefore no remedy (Wright, 1927:146).

Today the Christian view of divorce varies from denomination to denomination. Some churches recognise divorce only under certain conditions, such as unfaithfulness.

Still others have no official position. It is surprising that our world is as it is, **"men and woman play fast and loose with God's Word in this vital matter"**.

Different nationalities and Church denominations in South Africa do interpret the deuteronomic Law differently. When the missionaries came to Africa (and South Africa) they preached that polygamy was an unforgivable sin. Before their arrival, Africans practised polygamy. The main reason was to avoid divorce. Divorce was associated with a curse. To avoid tensions the husband was allowed to marry two or three wives as long as he may afford to pay lobola (the bride price). He was, however, compelled to take the feelings of his first wife into account. I agree with Van Warmelo and Phophi (1948) when they say that this was to avoid unnecessary frictions and divorce.

Unfortunately when the missionaries came they said **"no more."**

The result was that those who wanted to be "Christians" were compelled to divorce some of their wives. At times without a valid reason. It is funny that even some ministers of religion still associate polygamy with barbarism.

Kindly note that the point which prevented divorce for centuries before the so-called **"enlightenment"** was the spirit of **Ubuntu** which prevailed in

Africa. It is not humane to send someone away like a dog. The situation as it prevailed in ancient Israel also contributed to divorce. In the first place both parties were married at a tender age : 12 to 16-year-olds. Secondly, after marriage, the bride's parents would frequently provide accommodation for the son-in-law. In such situations marriage was at the mercy of the two male parents who indicated it, not the partners.

According to Hendrickx (1979:73) this divorce logion did not have a fixed place in the early Christian tradition and could therefore be quoted in different contexts. Properly speaking, the point of the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was neither to permit divorce nor to establish its grounds (Hendrickx, 1979:74). By sending away his wife a husband leads her into a situation where she may very well commit adultery, for which he is then considered co-responsible (Hendrickx, 1979:74).

Throughout this reasoning, it is presupposed that the husband observed the old prescriptions concerning the grounds and the procedure of divorce (Hendrickx, 1979:74). The indissoluble character of the marriage bond constitutes the newness of the antitheses in Matthew 5 and 19, otherwise there would be nothing really new, and this saying would be just another reproduction of the old law. According to Hendrickx (1979:74) there is a good possibility that the phrase **"except on the ground of unchastity"** is an addition by the evangelist. Hendrickx (1979:74) finds it hard to understand the phrase **"except on the ground of unchastity / indecency or fornication"** as a real exception, neither accepted by Jesus himself (which scarcely anybody defends), or introduced by the early Christian tradition or by Matthew.

Hendrickx may be right.

The reasons for our hesitation to accept the phrase "except on the ground of unchastity" are the following :

(a) The early post-apostolic tradition apparently did not know of any such **exception** until the middle of the third century.

There is no evidence whatsoever that up to that time anybody accepted adultery as grounds for a divorce (Hendrickx, 1979:74).

(b) There is no trace of such an "**exception**" in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11-12, the parallel texts of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 (Hendrickx, 1979:75).

(c) The two Matthean texts themselves, viz. Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, if considered in their context and in their own particular perspective, do not admit such an interpretation (Hendrickx, 1979:75).

We may say that marriage to Jesus is a divinely ordained, mystical union of kindred souls which has its manifold roots in the divinely fashioned nature of men and women (Wright, 1927:141). In that union of life, physical and spiritual, marriage fulfils its purpose for the noblest educative ends, and is meant to be **indissoluble** (Wright, 1927:142).

Marriage is not a human invention nor an experiment in social relationships which can be altered or abandoned at will - it is a God-ordained, monogamous structure, requiring faithful commitment on the part of the husband and wife (Schrotenboer, 1988:79).

Hastings (1912:741) says that though considerably affected on the legal side by non-Jewish environments, Jewish family life has retained, throughout the centuries, a distinct character to which both the Old and the New Testaments contributed.

The influence of the family relations has been one of the strongest religious and social forces, making for sobriety and purity, and forming an intimate bond between the individual and the community (Hastings, 1912:741).

The individual was merged in the family, and the family was in turn merged in the community. Every Jew found his joy and his sorrow in all Jew's joys and sorrows. Every Jew took a personal interest in the domestic life of the community. A marriage and a funeral were congregational events. That is why when the wife was unfruitful (barren) it was not only the husband's concern but also the whole "family" and ultimately the community (Hastings, 1912:741). Unfortunately in such situations many people regarded divorce as the only solution, hence Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The sad discovery is that divorce has consistently been ranked second among forty-two stressful life events. Only the death of spouse ranks above it for impact (Arendell, 1986:3).

It is convincing that in the beginning i.e. before the Mosaic Law, it was not so (Mt. 19:8).

The solidarity of the community is a pronounced feature in all primal cultures (Thorpe, 1991:119). A newborn child becomes a person in and through the community (Thorpe, 1991:120). In Africa, every member of society is closely linked with the community. In other words a newly wed woman becomes a full member of the family and the community. Divorce in this circumstance is not only regarded as a taboo, but a breakdown of that much needed solidarity. Pain is felt when relationships are disturbed (Thorpe, 1991:111).

Our findings is that divorce is becoming a "legal" force of community adultery. You marry today, you divorce tomorrow only to remarry day-after-tomorrow. The legal procedures laid down to terminate marriage are so relaxed. My view is that the state should see divorce as a crime committed against a partner, a family and the society. The message to all those who marry should be clear : **Strive to keep your marriage, don't do crime.**

The clause "**since she has been defiled**" (Deut. 24:4), indicates that some measure of moral defilement was associated with a divorced woman. Once divorced the woman is left with a stigma (social or moral), a curse attached to her as a divorced woman (**Mbuyavhuhadzi** = a divorced woman who is forced to go back to her parent's family, in Venda) (Laney, 1992:14).

3.9 Jesus' view of marriage

Jesus' view of marriage as reflected in the Gospels cannot be divorced from the main problem experienced by most people during his time, namely divorce.

From the Gospels, especially Matthew 19:3-11; 5:31-32; and Mark 10:1-12, we get a clear picture of how Jesus viewed marriage: a permanent union which was only adulterated by man.

Mathew 19:12 which says "For there are different reasons why men cannot marry: some, because they were born that way; others, because men made them that way; and others do not marry for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. Let him who can accept this teaching do so" is of special interest to me.

Some of the questions one may ask is why others have to refrain from marrying when in essence people were expected to marry? Who are those who do not marry for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven? What is it to them that is so special, from a religious point of view, that they do not want contaminated?

During the time of Jesus, marriage between Jews and Gentiles were not very rife because of the Deuteronomistic laws as discussed above. A very serious situation emerged after the death of Christ, during the early Church. The First letter to the Corinthians 7:1-16 can be cited as representing the concerns, problems and confusion which faced Christians (the followers of Jesus Christ) during the time of the Apostles.

This letter, above all, deals with the problems of the community at Corinth and answers various questions which had been put to Paul by this church. This Letter was written between A..54 and 57 (Hartin,1977:57).

At this time Christianity was a developed religion. The greatest problem was that of schism. Factions had formed boasting that they belonged to Apollos, or Paul or Christ (1 Cor.1:10-13). The moral problem can be seen to arise from their recent conversion from Gentile paganism. They deal with the attitude of Christians towards sex and marriage, with the liberty of eating meat offered to idols, and with the proper celebration of the Eucharist, which they seem not as yet to have distinguished from the pagan banquets (Hartin, 1977:57).

Each one of these problems Paul treats at length and offers them a solution and instructs them on the true teaching of Christ in this regard.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16 is more relevant to our topic:

“ 12 To the others I say (I, myself, not the Lord): if a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she agrees to go on living with him, he must not divorce her . 13 And if a Christian woman is married to a man who is an unbeliever and he agrees to go on living with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made acceptable to God by being united to his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made acceptable to God by being united to her Christian husband. If this were not so, their children would be like pagan children; but as it is, they are acceptable to God . 15 However if the one who is not a believer wishes to leave the Christian partner, let it be so. In such cases the Christian partner, whether husband or wife, is free to act. God has called you to live in peace. 16 How can you be sure, Christian wife, that you will not save your husband? Or how can you be sure, Christian husband, that you will not save your wife?”

Although the above mentioned extract is from the apostle Paul and not Jesus Christ himself, Paul argues (and correctly so) in Verse 25 that he (Paul) is one who by the Lord's mercy is worthy of trust. The impression we get is that in the absence of Jesus, Paul is in a position to give us what Jesus might have said.

From the text it is not clear whether Jesus or Paul anticipated mixed marriages and divorce the way it happened. Paul is not happy about the latest development, that is mixed marriages, but discourages divorce. From the above extract it is apparent that mixed marriages, (marriages between Christians and unbelievers) were there and that a lot of marital problems emerged as a result of religious differences. The situation was so serious to the extent that most Christians thought that it would be better to divorce partners who were not Christians than to remain in such

unfortunate marriages. This is exactly where 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 comes in. Speaking on his personal capacity as an apostle, but making use of Jesus Christ's teaching and understanding of marriage and divorce as portrayed in the Gospels, Paul did justice to the question under discussion.

3.10 The encounter between Christianity and traditional African culture.

3.10.1 Discontinuity and Negation

Reformed mission theology tended to emphasise individual conversion as a radical break with the past and treated the process of church indigenization as a total transformation of all aspects of indigenous Cultures and religions. This emphasis obviously excluded adaptation in terms of identifying and incorporating constructive elements of traditional customs. Instead, it invariably promoted a policy of discontinuity, which inhibited dialogue between representatives of the Western and African culture and led to a negation of indigenous practice by the early mission church policy-makers (Daneel, 1989:41).

The mission theology of the South African Dutch Reformed Church has been influenced by German theologians. According to Dutch Reformed policy the African is not to be robbed of his language and culture. Instead his entire national heritage must be permeated and purified (Van der Merwe, 1967:52).

It was argued that none of the heathen dances, dream messages of the spirits, addresses to the ancestors, consultation with diviners or any form of traditional marriage could be assimilated into purified within the church

community. All indigenous customs had to be renounced (Daneel, 1989:42).

All forms of ancestor worship and divination were typified as transgressions against the first commandment (Katekisma, 1966:8).

The missionaries' general tendency was towards elimination and a measure of negation of African beliefs, rather than confrontation and dialogue. What was good news at the mission stations, at the schools and at the clinics erected by the missionaries was not necessarily good news in the villages. Religiously church members tended to live in two worlds. They would attend Sunday services and prayer meetings at the mission station where God indeed seemed to be present for the protection and advancement of his people. Back in the villages, however, the threat of wizardry, destructive forces and crippling droughts was as real as before. Many church member continued to propitiate the ancestors, to surround their homesteads with a "stockade" of magically prepared objects to ward off evil, to participate in traditional exorcistic and witchcraft - eradication activities in as attempt to secure their well being (Daneel, 1989:42).

Modern progress and acculturation had not changed this. Radical discontinuity without adequate substitution created a vacuum which many members filled by leading a double religious existence: worshipping the God of the Bible at the mission station and venerating the ancestors for protection and well being in the village (Daneel, 1989:43).

3.10.2 Inculturation and Rehabilitation

According to Daneel (1989:44) over the past three decades African theology has grown as an attempt to give expression to Christianity in African religio - cultural terms, to relate Christianity meaningfully to the African's view of reality and to integrate it into his world view. A distinction can be made between the more moderate school which emphasizes indigenization and the radical school which is concerned with inculturation. Insofar as they concentrate on the religio - cultural heritage of Africa, both these approaches represent a cultural theology, as opposed to South African Black Theology whose focus is primarily socio-political. In the moderate school concepts like indigenization and accommodation predominate. Here the task of translating the Christian message in the African context still makes use of Western methodology. Indigenous cultural elements used the process of indigenization remain subject to Western revelation theology and gain validity in the church only through transformation (Daneel, 1989:44).

The more radical school of inculturation, represented by theologians like Tshibangu, Mushete and Mbiti, adopts a new theological methodology. The Bible and Christian tradition are evaluated with greater openness towards the African culture. Whether moderate or radical, African theology is essentially a response to Western theology and its practical expression in the missionary context. In this respect African theology attempts to unmask the weaknesses and pretensions of Western theology and, in doing so, establishes its own identity. Thus, at the fourth Theological Seminar in Kinshasa, Zaire (1968), Vincent Mulago rejected Western theology's implicit claim to universality and normativeness as well as the tendency of Western theologians to view African theology as an adapted version of universal theology. By contrast he emphasized the

pluriformity of all theological endeavour. African theology constituted much more than attempts at "Africanization" or "indigenization". According to Bosch (1984:113) it proceeds from its own basis, to grapple with the total complexity of questions put by the church in Africa and to respond to these questions in the light of the "African faith".

As a form of contextualized inculturation, African theology should be characterised as religio-cultural liberation. It presents a new approach in the face of a history of colonial subjection, Western racism and imperialism. Enforced acculturation has caused a deep, traumatic split in the African soul - a "religious schizophrenia", as Desmond Tutu put it - with an accompanying identity crisis. Against this background African theology forms part of the African's attempt to overcome alienation from his or her cultural heritage. Reaction against colonial conquest provides self-respect as a necessary condition for the search for a new, liberating identity. Hence preoccupation with and re-evaluation of indigenous traditions represent the necessary and demanding first phase of the exodus from Western religio-cultural enslavement (Witvliet, 1984:111).

A characteristic feature of this form of liberation theology is the rediscovery of and appreciation for those tenets of African culture which had been rejected or ignored under Western domination. Rehabilitation of culture, tradition and history is thus the hallmark of this first phase of liberation (Daneel, 1989:45).

The question is how does this rehabilitation of traditional religion affect the views of African theologians on the subject of biblical and African concepts of marriage, especially mixed marriages? Does Scripture remain normative or is the Gospel message smothered in African religion and bereft of its liberating power?

In response to such questions one should bear in mind, first of all, that against the background of Colonialism - which all too often was mirrored by missionary policy, praxis and attitudes - African theologians, in their

reflection on traditional religions, are passionate apologists (Daneel,1989:45). They are concerned with their own religious roots. What they find there shows continuity with the Christian faith rather than the discontinuity which the missionaries tended to emphasise.

African religion finds its fulfilment by affirmation in the Gospel message of Christ and does not fall under the judgement of discontinuity as preached by the missionaries. In an article on the encounter between Christian faith and African religion, Mbiti (1980:817) states emphatically that the God of the Bible is the same as the God already known in the pre-Christian framework of African religion. By implication, therefore, the historical account of God's involvement with the people of Africa is considered to be on a par with that of Israel (Daneel,1989:45).

3.11 Conclusion

In the days of later Kings of Judah, a much more hostile attitude toward intermarriage developed and became a matter of law as contrasted with the earlier view that marriage outside of one's own people was merely a matter of acceptance or of refusal of a social standard. During this period a people, disconcerted by the degraded cultures and practices of neighbouring nations and at odds with them, too, on political matters, included in the Book of Deuteronomy a legal enactment opposing intermarriage. It expressly forbids the practice of intermarriage and unequivocally states the reason: "For she will turn away thy son from following Me that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against thee and He will destroy thee quickly". The desire to prevent the Hebrews from adopting heathen practices and thereby degrading their own religious way of life lies at the root of such legislation. Such legislation was intended to assure the religious and political unity

and solidarity of these people. Later, Ezra the Scribe (444 B.C.E) believing that the purity of the monotheistic religion and the purity of blood were bound together, viewed intermarriage as a form of defilement and declared that the ancient faith was adulterated when the blood of a Hebrew was mixed with that of a heathen. Marriage with the children born of these mixed marriages was also prohibited as was marriage with all non-Hebrew peoples (Gordon, 1964:177).

For Africans the community is a priori to existence. Without the group, the individual would not exist (Thorpe, 1991:110).

The suggestion of this study, therefore, is that when it comes to marriage, **corporate accountability** should be maintained.

The sin (divorce) of an individual should be seen as something which fell on the entire family as a corporate entity. The community should be seen as the arena for human interaction. Tensions arise and must be dealt with, lest they erupt in acts of aggression and surface as sin (divorce). The family and ultimately the community, should be seen as the arena where forgiveness and reconciliation can and must take place. No individual (in our case the husband) should be permitted to disrupt the whole. Individual rights should not be exercised at the expense of the family and the community.

The family, the school and the church should teach children to solve conflicts through non-violent methods. Families promote peacemaking skills when they make their home a place where affirmation rather than constant criticism is the norm.

Conflict resolution skills like listening skills, expressing rather than repressing one's feelings, learning non-hurtful ways to express anger and expressing needs and wants in clear terms may preserve marriage.

CHAPTER 4

MARITAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH MIXED MARRIAGES.

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher would like to indicate through this study that the presence of two religious traditions in a marriage usually leads to divorce. According to Ho (1984:49) when persons of different ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds marry, their adjustment difficulties are likely to greatly exceed those of couples of the same background. To the normal difference in personality, social class, education, and life experiences must be added the differences in values, customs, and traditions associated with differing ethnicities, races and religions (Ho, 1984:49).

4.2 Causes of mixed marriages

4.2.1 The role of parents and family members.

Today's family is "open". Where young people once married only those persons whose familial, ethnic, social, or traditional background was similar to their own, marriages often take place with little or not reference to such considerations. In this sense, the family is "open". South Africans are an open-class society, not only in terms of economic or political opportunities, but in terms of the social aspect of life as well. A man who has moved up the economic scale is generally looked upon as a

likely partner in marriage for a woman whose cultural and social heritage may be far superior to his own.

Such a man may, on the other hand, marry a woman socially and intellectually inferior to him because of her physical attraction and his emotional response. Such factors make for an increase in marriage between persons from different classed, educational backgrounds, and different religious faiths as well (Gordon, 2964:44).

Parents may not be pleased, but their sons and daughters think that parents would not, in the last analysis, disown a child who enters upon an interfaith marriage. Young people believe that their parents are permissive. They see no special problems associated with securing parent consent for such a marriage. They believe that they would receive the parental blessing in the case of an interfaith or interracial marriage, even if, at first, parents appeared to be unhappy or distressed. Today, parents say - and their children are quite aware of it - "No matter what happens we must not lose our children". Whereas, in a former generation, parents would unequivocally oppose an interfaith or interethnic marriage and actually cut off an "errant" child from further family contact, this seldom happens today.

Parents influence their children by direct and indirect efforts to instruct them in the ways of the world. The "values" they regard as basic to good and proper living are taught by both precept and example. Children learn about society and its demands not only from their parents but from brothers and sisters and others as well. Whatever the way, from formal instruction to personal example, the learning process continues. The family sets the values which it deems worthy of emulation even as it makes clear those which it looks upon with disapproval.

The emotional ties that exist between parents and their children often go beyond the immediate family and may be noted, too, in the extended family. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, cousins, in-laws - all who are related by blood and legal ties - play their interrelated roles in affecting the religious, social, cultural, political and economic, moral and ethical values of each member of the family. The influence of the family upon each of its members must then be regarded as the principal means of socialization in our day. Parental authority, by means of which socialization occurs, is generally accepted by the children within the immediate family. The authority of "elders" within the extended family is also recognized for its religious influence. The role of both the primary and the extended family is of such major importance that it is no exaggeration to say that it has generally been regarded as responsible in large measure for shaping the course of human history. Today's young people are far less inclined to accept parental attitude with respect to social, cultural and religious values than is generally believed. Youth's tendency to "rebel" against the ideas, opinions and practices of their elders is obvious (Gordon, 1964:40).

We live, too, in an "Age of Rebellion" when the conservative values of parents, Church and religious movements are often opposed with great vigour by our young people. The reasons go beyond the matter of emancipation of young people from parental and family controls. They seem to have some direct relationship to the kind of world youth feels it has inherited (Gordon, 1964:54).

But intermarriage is not always an act of rebellion against parents or their values. It is often reluctantly entered into because circumstances brought together two young people whose love for each other developed before

either was fully aware of what was happening. Such intermarriage are not the result of defiance, revolt, rebellion, hostility.

A youth who listens to a well-reasoned argument against intermarriage is not likely to be impressed if he is aware that the sincere religiosity of the parent is open to question. It is identification with and loyalty to parents and kinsfolk that results in some continuing formal religious affiliation by young people rather than a strong faith in a God who is near to them.

4.2.2 The role of religio-social institutions.

Religio-social institutions have directly or indirectly prescribed conduct with respect to such important matters as the choice of a life partner in marriage. They have generally opposed intermarriage with a person of another and different religious faith, racial or ethnic group. Matters once generally regarded as settled and fixed by custom and tradition are today, in ever-increasing degree, openly questioned and traditional attitudes are often disregarded (Gordon, 1964:40).

The literature of our day, the movies, the stage and television have romanticised marriage. The emphasis is upon physical attractiveness and emotional longing rather than upon family background.

There is thus a likelihood that intermarriages will occur in greater frequency under such circumstances. The belief in the "equality" of all humans is assumed to mean that there are really no significant differences between people of varying backgrounds and that whatever differences there may be are without importance.

Religious influence in all the major religions has been reduced considerably in our day, due not only to the increasing influence of scientific thought, but to the growing number of persons who, paradoxically, are affiliated with churches but appear to be quite indifferent to their prescribed standards and values.

Intermarriages often occur when weak endogamous feelings exist in one of the parties. If there is little or no feeling of identification with a particular religious group or family, or if there are conflicts with parents, if there are personality problems, job difficulties or a host of other such causes of conflict, exogamous marriage is frequently the way chosen to break away from one's part. The desire to "live one's own life", or in some cases to assimilate completely into another way of life often produces the same result.

Sex ratios and culture are the most basic factors involved in intermarriage. Well-balanced sex ratios tend to cause people to marry within their own group. If the sex balance is unequal, then the nature of one's culture will play a major role in determining the selection that will be made.

Propinquity is another factor that plays an important role in cross-marriages. People who live in the same neighbourhood are more likely to become acquainted and ultimately to marry. Residential propinquity is one of six important cultural factors that may affect the selection of a mate, the others being ethnic origin, religion, race, socio-economic status, and social characteristics (Gordon, 1964:56).

The breakdown of old forms and patterns of behaviour, so characteristic of our day, and the consequent growth of individualism must certainly be regarded as a factor contributing to the increase in mixed marriages.

The current belief that whatever one does is one's business, and is only indirectly of concern to society, assures a steady increase in the number of interfaith and interracial marriages. The happiness of the individual is today regarded as the prime factor in marriage. The choice of a mate is no longer made by well-intentioned parents. Nor are they asked for "permission" to seek the hand of a daughter in marriage. Parents are "told". Parents are lucky these days if they know much about their future sons-or daughters-in-law. Ask youngsters why they don't talk to parents and they tell you, "Its my life and I can live it as I want". The right of the individual to be "happy" is regarded as superior in importance to all other issued that may arise.

Aware as we are of the many religious, physical and social factors that tend to increase the number of intermarriages in our society, we have not yet explained why some people, confronted in the main by similar factors, will intermarry while others do not.

The decline of religious authority and of observance in the home, as well as the substitution of schools for the example formerly provided by parents in the religious, moral and ethical education of children, tend also to loosen the ties that bind young people to their religio-cultural heritage.

Young men and girls now meet and fall in love while attending the same schools. The number of college romances and subsequent marriages continue to increase each year, as more girls attend college and universities.

The opportunities for communication between persons of different religious, cultural, economic, and social background are greatly improved in the custom centres.

Mixed marriages are, therefore, most common in large cities. In addition, the degree of mobility within urban areas is highly marked. The automobile and the plane make it possible for families to move quickly from one area to another. The opportunities for travel, for recreation in new and even far-off places increase the opportunities for making new friends, not of one's own group. Differences between people tend to be increasingly minimised, similarities are stressed. Religious barriers are considerably reduced. Under these conditions groups tend to be less suspicious of or hostile to one another than they were only a generation ago. An increase in mixed marriages of all kinds thus becomes highly probable.

4.3 Cultural conflicts

Culture, in one of its simplest meanings, refers to the widely shared customs and traditions of a specific homogeneous population, be it an ethnic, racial, or religious group (Ho, 1984:50).

In such a social entity, marriage is established according to customs which specify eligible partners, ways of negotiating the marriage, and behaviours and relationships appropriate for marriage. Presumably, all marriages in such social groups take place within the same population. In the case of intermarriage or mixed marriage, husband and wife from differing cultures involving various customs, traditions, thoughts, and behaviour, will naturally encounter adjustment difficulties with each other. Differing cultural values are a major problem in intermarriage because most of us tend to feel that our particular culturally ordained values are incontestably "right" or "true" or "the best" (Ho, 1984:50).

This quality of assential rightness is inherent in value systems, for each culture tends to teach its particular value system as representing the most

appropriate way to conduct one's life. We usually do not recognise that we subscribe to a particular set of values until they are challenged - perhaps when we encounter someone whose values differ from ours. Once value system is challenged, especially by our spouse, we become uncertain and react defensively. We may lose objectivity and become offensive which could result in increased marital problems (Ho, 1984:51).

The problem of two conflicting cultures - African and Western - are shown as putting some Africans in the dilemma of self identity in marital adjustment (Asana, 1990:vii). More and more modern Africans find themselves between two worlds in today's rapid social (and religious) change. Born of parents in an African culture, they may spend part of their lives in a village context, have a taste of their cultural heritage, then a new world view begins to dawn on them as they go to school and climb the ladder of educational achievement with Western curricula. Soon they begin to question some of their native traditional values and come into conflict of loyalties between what they are exposed to and what they grew up with (Asana, 1990:1).

According to Asana (1990:1) the problem is that in the process of such cultural and religious changes and growth, there may be strong Western (or Christian) influence on the individual's reasoning and lifestyle, but the roots of the traditional African background are not and cannot be completely cut off.

4.4 Churches 'and religious groups' attitudes towards mixed marriages

An interfaith or mixed marriage by definition means the existence of two faiths, side by side, in one family. Most Christians, especially the Fundamentalists, may feel that their religion and religious conviction is being seriously threatened and that one way to combat these forces is to discourage marriage outside the faith. According to Ho(1984:53) for a Roman Catholic to marry a non catholic, for example, special permission from the bishop is required. To obtain this dispensation, the Catholic party must reaffirm, to the priest or deacon preparing him or her for marriage, faith in Christ and must state the intention to continue living that faith in the Catholic church. Prior to the wedding ceremony, the Catholic partner must also promise verbally or on paper "to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptised and reared as Catholics". Most Protestant Christian churches do not have the same stringent policies regarding intermarriage, but all encourage their members to marry other Christians. Those who have chosen to marry outside their group still are made at times to feel that they are the outcast. This feeling of isolation and guilt can easily create problems between husband and wife (Ho, 1984:53)

4.5 Food and dining etiquette

There are also problems that come from the couple's daily interactions with each other. Such problems usually can be traced back to each individual's ethnic, racial, or religious background differences. Many religious customs govern the eating habits of people, such as fasting on certain days, dietary observances during lent, forbidding people to eat pork, and the like. Amongst the Vhavenda people it is customary, for

example, to taste food or drinks before you offer it to a guest. This may be very much unacceptable in other cultures and religions. Such religious requirements, mentioned above, may not be a problem during courtship when romantic emotions run high and interaction between the couple usually is courteous and limited. They may loom as irreconcilable sore sport after the couple marries and begins to interact daily and intensely with each other (Ho,1984:55).

4.6 Friendship

While intermarriage may be seen as a matter between "two people", their continuing relationship and happiness depend also on their interaction with others, including their friends. Through interacting with friends, the couple satisfies their social need for sharing and enrichment and avoids becoming too self-centred. Nevertheless, making friends and maintaining friendships present peculiar difficulties for many intermarried (Ho1984:56). The couples discomfort with their friends and their friends discomfort with them is real and common in intermarriages.

The couple mutual understanding and acceptance of each other does not imply that their friends will do the same. Friendship begins with common values, interests, and backgrounds. Friends of intermarrieds usually find that one partner in the marriage does not share their commonalities. Differences in background generate uncertainty, distrust, and discomfort, which destroy social relationships. Usually the husbands friends may stop laughing or talking every time the wife approaches them. The wife's friends may also do the same when the husband approaches them.

Some couples choose to relinquish their individual friends to make new friends with whom they feel compatible as a couple. This arrangement works only if the couple can agree on the meaning of compatibility. Also,

the friends the couple selects must want to reciprocate friendship. Unfortunately this is not always the case, due to diverse cultural and religious background. The intermarried couple's difficulty in making and maintaining friendships also affects their leisure-time recreation and activities. Their isolation from friends forces them to interact more with each other and to depend more on each other for recreation and enjoyment. Thus, the couple's relationship may become too close, leaving no space for individuality and creativity. For a stay-at-home Muvenda, for example, it is not acceptable for the husband to spend more time with his wife. Rumour may soon spread that "o liswa" (he was bewitched by his wife). Both parties in such a situation, where the couple's relationship is too close, may feel stifled and begin to resent the constant presence of the other (Ho,1984:57).

4.7 Financial Management

Money is one of the major problem areas in a marriage (Ho, 1984:58). The couple's financial difficulty can involve both the question of not having enough money and the question of managing the funds they have. The proper management of money is a skill that must be learned and which will be defined differently by different cultures or religions (Ho,1984:58). The financial relationship between a Christian who grew up contributing ten percent of his or her monthly income as part of tithing, and a member of the African religion who never practised tithing, may invite a lot of marital problems. Utterance like: "Are you married to your church or to me?" are common among such couples.

4.8 Sexual adjustment

Since religious orientation has a strong impact on an individual's life, it should come as no surprise that it also affects an individual's sexual relationship with a marital partner (Ho,1984:60). I mentioned somewhere above that the primary aim and objective of an African marriage is procreation. A childless marriage was and is still regarded as disastrous. Most Africans are very much against contraceptives. For such Africans, to live with the fact that they are consciously participating in the prevention of the birth of a child, is regarded as immoral (Ho,1984:61).

The role of sex in mixed marriage is far broader than that of reproduction and contraception. The sex act is a form of marital behaviour by which and through which the married couple develop, express, and enrich their spiritual, physical, and emotional relationship with each other. Our attitudes towards sex and its role in marriage are derived in very large part from our religious beliefs. Throughout history, religious codes have regulated in considerable detail the conditions under which intercourse may occur, the times on the church calendar when it is discouraged or forbidden and various other aspects of the marital relationship. In addition to religious restrictions, different ethnic and racial groups have specific codes regulating the sexual behaviour of their members (Ho,1984:61).

4.9 Child rearing practices

Every couple brings to marriage the religion and culture of their own families. If they share the same basic religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, their differences are usually minor and present fewer difficulties. However, if they come from different religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, their differences may be more fundamental or complex. Intermarried couples may work out their differences and maintain a stable marriage until children enter the picture. At that point, previous determined arrangements and compromises may not be adequate to accommodate new demands and stresses brought on by the child. The arrival of a child reactivates the couple's memories of their own early childhood and underscores their child rearing beliefs. Such beliefs can produce new conflict between spouses. Sometimes this results in the child's becoming the symptom of this conflict when he or she begins to display uncertainty, anxiety, rebellion, and difficulty in learning or making friends. Intermarried parents consistently emphasise different values and employ different approaches in disciplining children. Having to respond to two different sets of instructions, children in this type of family often become confused and easily distracted. In order to avoid conflicts with a spouse, some intermarried couples adopt a "one-partner-taking-over" policy (Ho, 1984:62).

Such a situation is not healthy for both the parents and the child. Partly due to the magnitude of their cultural differences or their unwillingness to accept disharmony in their relationship, some intermarried couples raise their children by adopting a total hands-off attitude. If neither parent wants to impose values in deference to the other, the children are left in a vacuum with no model or guidance.

4.10 Festivities and observances

Most Christians are familiar with 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 in which the Holy Communion or Eucharist is described. Special food is eaten during the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is very much important to Christians across the divide. On the other hand thevhula (to pour out) is a very important ritual amongst most Africans in general and the majority of Vhavenda in particular. So serious was thevhula that a muvhenda who dared to reap his muvhoho crops before the thevhula ceremony had taken place was put to death (Stayt, 1931:254). The combination of a traditional African and a Christian may invite all unwanted marital problems. The example given above, namely, the Lord's Supper and thevhula are symbolic in nature but very important. Usually members of the African religion may not have problems celebrating the Lord's Supper. The problem comes in when the Christian is to attend the thevhula ceremony. Usually the thevhula ceremony is associated with paganism.

Whilst Christians speak about the Trinity of God, that is, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Africans speak of propitiation of spirits. In Venda, for example, the spirits are represented collectively either by cattle or river pebbles or goats, and individually by spears or small iron or copper rings. Many important lineages possess a sacred black bull which is called makhulu (grandparent) and is regarded as the embodiment of the ancestral spirits. Every lineage does not own a sacred bull. Most of the poorer lineages have sacred stones instead. These stones are embedded side by side near the hut. A small bulbous plant with a yellow flower, "tshitungulo" is planted close to these stones. The ground is always kept carefully swept and smeared for three or four feet around them (Stayt, 1931:244).

The mere presence of such pebbles, goats or cattle may bring a lot of questions to the Christian who may interpret the ritual as paganism. The Christian may refuse to venerate any of the above mentioned-thereby removing himself / herself from the family circle or unit. African people are family people (Masenya,1996:77). The other partner may find himself or herself isolated from the whole group. This may have serious impact on the intermarried. Supplementing the “tshitungulo tree” with “Christmas tree” may as well bring a lot of marital problems.

4.11 Practice of religious faith

Different religious teachings and practices often provide the basis for misunderstandings and disagreements between an interfaith couple. It is one thing to recognise the fact that differences do exist. It is quite another thing to live with these differences day in and day out as intermarrieds must do. Differences in religious practices persist even when a couple believes that the problems arising out of such differences have been resolved. The roots of religion are planted deep, and they are not easily uprooted or neutralised (Ho,1984:59).

Rejecting one’s religion as a means to make a mixed marriage work may be too big a price for an individual or any couple to pay. Without faith, a individual is weakened in his or her internal strength, spirit, and commitment essential to becoming a happy individual and to achieving a successful intermarriage. According to Ho(1984:60) statistics on divorce consistently reveal that divorced couples show more religious indifference than married couples. This observation is very correct. The researcher’s statistical data confirms that.

4.12 Residence

After marriage the most important problem is one of residence. In the Western society it is an accepted norm that a son sets up an independent home after marriage. But in Venda, like in India (Bambawale, 1982:95) due to the sentiments of the traditional joint family system, the son invariably brings his bride to his parental home. In mixed marriages the daughter-in-law is, therefore, sometimes an unwelcome member to the household (Bambawale, 1982:95).

Choice of residence is of great importance. When an intermarried couple lives in an area dominated by one particular religious group, the group invariably does not interact with the spouse, as that person is considered to be one of the "out-group" members. According to Bambawale (1982:99) children of the locality often tease and harass such couples. Therefore a cosmopolitan area would offer a compatible and congenial neighbourhood.

4.13 Extramarital attachment

Extramarital attachment is seen by Rip (1978:19) as a marriage situation where one of the marriage partners has a serious relationship with a third party of the opposite sex. Pothan (1986:132) states that extramarital attachment of either spouse has been found to be a serious threat to marital stability.

From an African-Christian point of view extramarital attachment is something viewed with mixed feelings. Amongst the Vhavenda people extramarital attachment was and is still regarded as men's prerogative.

A number of Venda proverbs are used by men to defend their promiscuity: Munna ndi ndou, ha li muri munwe fhedzi (a man is an elephant, he does not feed on one tree only). A man can have more than one wife. (Interestingly, he will never allow other "elephants" to come and feed on his tree"). Musadzi muthihi ndi khaladzi. (One wife is equivalent to a sister). This is used to show how acceptable it is for a man to have love affairs with women other than his wife. Munna ndi tshienda-na-musi, mutuli u u wana phanda. (A man walks around with his pestle, for he will find the mortar wherever he goes). "Musi" is a long hardwood pestle with knob at the top for use with mortar "mutuli". In this context both words represent the male and female genitals.

Young men grow up knowing that apart from their mother's their fathers does have a "mufarekano" i.e. extramarital attachment. There were many reasons for this. Instead of divorcing a rebellious wife, a man could have extramarital attachment. This was done to make the wife jealous.

These irregular unions with women who have left their husbands without being divorced through repayment of "thakha" are a very common phenomenon of Venda society (Van Warmelo & Phophi, 1948:403).

Women also promoted extramarital attachment. According to Van Warmelo & Phophi (1948:297) it was not uncommon for a wife to do her best to find someone to be her co-wife (muhadzinga).

Today the situation is different. Most women are no longer prepared to have co-wives (Vhahadzinga). Unfortunately the majority of young men usually start extramarital attachment each time they have pressure from their families and communities or their own marriage crisis. Some do it in an attempt to get a baby-boy and therefore heir to their estates. Although adultery is vehemently condemned, is it at time "understood" if the main aim was to get children in a childless marriage.

In a religiously mixed marriage extramarital attachment will not be approached and traced the same way as in a non-mixed marriage. A member of the African religion who is married to a Christian may justify his or her reasons for "sleeping around" and expect him/her partner to "understand".

Without getting into details it may suffice to say that spouses in religiously mixed marriages do not hold the same sexual orientations. As mentioned somewhere in this study their view on sex is very different. This is a good recipe for divorce.

4.14 Interference of in-laws ?

In a mixed marriage something which is seen as "interference" by one partner may not be seen as "interference" by the other partner. What may be seen as interference in a Christian marriage may not be viewed as interference in an African marriage. Most Westerners like Pothen (1986:125) are of the view that interference of in-laws is caused by the male spouses' greater share of loyalty towards their kin and not their spouses as it is expected of them in a typical christian marriage. The female spouses may find themselves in the group of strangers, many of whom are hostile, without anybody from whom they can expect sympathy and understanding (Pothen, 1986:125).

According to Rip (1978:11) interference depends on what the in-laws say and do, and how the married couple reacts to it. Most of the spouses who experience interference, by in-laws, are those who stayed full time with their in-laws during their marital life, and even those who at one time of their marital life stayed with their in-laws but who later on moved out to

stay in their own rented houses. Complaints of spouses who experienced in-laws trouble or who view interference of in-laws as the cause of their marriage breakdown are mostly quarrels, financial problems, interference as regards their household chores like cooking and cleaning, and children. According to Pothen (1986:125) interference by in-laws especially mother in-laws may come in the way of a husband and a wife's marital relationship to the point of breaking down the marriage.

From the above-mentioned facts one can deduce that the mixed marriages, especially between Africans (traditionalists) and Christians, the situation may be explosive. Amongst the Vhavenda people, for instance, if the wife is from an ethnic group from which it is religiously, socially, ethnically and morally not to be married from e.g.. the Vhangonas or the Shangaans, she would find herself in the group of strangers without anybody from whom she can expect sympathy and understanding. The proverb "Blood is thicker than water" is applied.

Men who come from patriarchal societies grew up knowing that women are inferior and that men are superior and are not to be controlled by wives. The emancipation of women from such ills and mind-set is seen as a threat by such men and the society which moulded them. It is not surprising that even today talks like: "O liswa nga musadzi" (Venda for "His wife poisoned him so that he may behave in the way he is behaving. This is equivalent to "He is not normal for under normal circumstances he may not behave like that").

Rip (1978) and Pothen (1986) give us the impression that it may be a good thing not to stay with the in-laws as soon as you marry. The situation in Venda (and most African states) is that when you marry your wife belongs to the family and the community. She is never yours as an

individual. For every new family to prosper, it is believed, you need to have the blessings of your entire extended family. A good and healthy relationship should, therefore, be established with the in-laws. This is to be done on a person-to-person basis (not through the telephone).

From an African point of view this ensured good health for the newly weds and the children to come. The blessings of the extended family are the blessings of the ancestors who were involved throughout the marriage process. Now, for anybody to suggest that a marriage involving an African who is also attached to his roots i.e. (culture, ethnics, norms) is to be started far away from in-laws, is by implication breaking the foundation on which such a union is based.

4.15 Communication breakdown

Communication implies a reciprocal exchange of information. The established pattern of communication in a relationship should always be maintained. Failure to maintain this pattern breaks down communication in the family. When there is communication breakdown spouses fail to talk and listen to each other to the extent that even emotional support dies.

In such marriages, the spouses may decide either to continue to live as a "sham couple" for the sake of the marriage or for the sake of their children, or they decide to dissolve their bond of marriage through seeking a divorce.

In mixed marriages, problems such as extramarital attachment, interference of in-laws, friction over financial matters and alcohol abuse can cause communication breakdown between spouses (Molosankwe, 1990:44).

The problem is that what may be seen as alcohol abuse by Christians may not be viewed as abuse by Africans in traditional Africa. A Christian who is seeing a person who took a lot of alcohol may remark "He/she is drunk" - this is negative.

An African may see the same person and remark "O di takatela", (Venda for "He/she is happy and full of life) - this is positive. And hence the problem if such a person from different backgrounds, are combined all in the name of marriage.

4.16 Friction over children

In mixed marriages especially "Afro-Christian marriage" the absence of children may cause marriage breakdown. Children are so much important in African societies that a childless marriage is seen as lifeless. Under such circumstances adultery and extramarital attachment is added to the already existing problems. At times the problem may be such that the help of traditional healers is sought. The results of such efforts is that the other partner may feel offended and thereby refuse to use the conception believing that children are blessings from the Lord.

The sex of the child may also bring a lot of friction's. It is an open secret that most Africans love baby-boys than girls. Under such circumstances if a boy is not being born such couples do not have peace of mind.

In families where there are children parents argue about how they should or should not be treated. Disagreement on these issued can cause marriage breakdown in some marriages. Amongst the Vhavenda people, for example, the husband may insist that his son(s) be taken to

"Murunduni" (i.e. initiation school for young men during which they are circumcised). The wife may vehemently oppose this and insist that her son be circumcised in a hospital even if that will mean being circumcised by a woman.

Parents tend to quarrel over what is best for the child and friction continues to such an extent that divorce is seen as the best solution to their problems (Molosankwe, 1990:48).

4.17 DIVORCE

4.17.1 Causes of divorce.

In the Vhavenda community, where the parties to a marriage desire a divorce, this does not concern them alone, but their respective families, because the marriage likewise was not brought about by husband and wife on their own. Even though the husband mala'd with self earned thakha, everything must first be discussed with his relatives, because the marriage derived much of its validity from their approval during its subsistence.

So the husband calls his relatives together and tells them what the problem is. Those summoned are his father, Khotsimunene, the family makhadzi, his mother and some elders not of the family, to avoid the appearance of a conspiracy against the wife. After hearing the story, they first resort to reasoning and persuasion. "Domestic disputes are common", they say, "try to be forbearing towards one another again".

Sometimes they side with the wife saying "you, husband, are to blame", or they say, "you, wife, did wrong; submit to your husband, and return to your former peaceful life".

If they have no success at home, the woman's father will try to pacify her and her husband. "Why do you spoil the friendly relations between us" says he. If he is fond of his mukwasha, he may wax angry against his daughter to the extent of beating her, and offering a gift to make amends and restore peace between her and her husband. If all the persuasion by the elders of both families fails, the wife may be formally sent back home (Van Warmelo, 1948:437).

Formal sending back of wife to her family

The formal and recognised method of sending back a wife to her family when she is no longer wanted is termed u fhelekedza "to accompany". This is done when she is returned to her family contrary to her wish, because it is to her husband who no longer wants her. Where a wife is told, "go home, we don't want you here any longer, you are no good", she must reply, "If you don't want me, escort me back to my people", (i.e. formally send me back there).

The woman may put herself in the wrong by going home without being formally escorted by a messenger. A person dispatched to formally notify the makhulu of the wife's return may be the dzhendedzi who acted as go-between in the marriage negotiations (Van Warmelo, 1948:441).

4.17.1.1 Witchcraft

Of all insults the worst is the allegation that one is a muloi (wizard, witch). A muloi is a wicked person feared by all, and if found in olden days had to be punished or slain.

Van Warmelo (1948:455), maintains that in pre-European times it was customary after every death in the village to consult diviners, and if the divining dice pointed out a certain person as the guilty one, the matter was reported to the chief, and that muloi and his or her family were killed and their property confiscated by the chief.

With the political changes in South Africa, things have slightly changed - for the worse. The matter is no longer reported to the chief or anyone but street courts or the so-called "comrades" who will in turn pass judgement. Maybe we should mention that as recent as 1993 and 1996 the Northern Province (especially Venda) was notorious for her witch-hunt.

Where a wife is called a witch, the trouble starts. They then decide to send her away lest she kill the other people. A court will never say to the husband, "bear with her, it does not matter", axiomatic that one cannot live in a hut together with a snake. For this reason one does not live in one village with a muloi, she must be expelled from it.

If the woman is liked by the husband's family a special provision can be made. Her family may be requested to take away their evil spirits from her (because these are making her practice witchcraft).

If all parties agree, a black goat is found, and by means of a sacrificial rite at the river they free her witchcraft. If her people refuse to do this, the husband formally send her back and gets a divorce. According to Van

Warmelo (1948:45), no wife is simply driven out just for having been called a witch. She must first have indicated as such by the divining dice.

There are women who are thought to be witches, but as they have not bewitched anybody, their husbands cannot drive them out. A muloi can only be driven out of a village after she has killed someone (by witchcraft) and has been accused by the divining dice. Sometimes she is only making people ill, so they go around consulting diviners until they discover she is the culprit.

Since European rules has forbidden the pointing of someone as a witch and the shedding of blood, chiefs no longer order the execution of people found guilty of witchcraft, all that has remained of that custom is a five of five to eight herd of cattle. Those who refuse to pay are ordered out of the country. In the Northern province, however, people do take the law into their hands. Witches are burned alive and their property destroyed

We mentioned that in the Venda custom, marriage is regarded as very important. Every effort will be done to preserve it.

Though a woman be a witch, the elders sometimes keep the matter in the dark, fearing to break up whole families. When the divining dice have accused a wife in the family, they do not upon their return home reveal her name. A wife is more often chased away after having bewitched someone the second or third time (Van Warmelo, 1948:459).

4.17.1.2 Excessive wife-beating and maltreatment

When man and wife do not agree, the blame is seldom put on the man. No matter how much he beats her, they will always say he merely corrected her. According to Venda custom, a husband may correct his wife with a stick if she does wrong.

And the wife, though severely beaten, may not run away to her parents. She may run to her husband's eldest sister (the latter is called makhadzi who wields the family authority) or to her parents-in-law or her husband and scold him and tell him it is not right to quarrel in the family, it is an omen of warfare and misfortune.

The wife may not run away to her own home, for if she does, her father must pay a tshipfumelo (gift of reconciliation to make amends), usually a beast or a goat, regardless of the husband's errors, because the wife should have sought refuge with her husband's sister, her mother-in-law or her husband's eldest brother. The whole issue is to be a family matter. The above mentioned people do serve as "shock absorbers" in issues like this - no outsider is allowed to interfere. If a wife who is beaten runs for safety to any other outsider (including the chief), she has done wrong. The family will suspect collusion between that official and the woman in question.

Even today the question of the police or the magistrate is ruled out. Four out of every five men (ages 20 - 70) I have talked to, were vehemently apposed to police or magistrate interference with their marriages.

Several proverbs illustrate the dominant status of the husband in the social institution of marriage. There seems to be a basic assumption that in marriage the woman must be moulded to fit the needs of the man, and

hence the many references to stubborn women and wife beaters. A woman in these cultures is like a child who can easily be punished if her actions are found to be wanting in terms of the patriarchal status quo (Masenya,1996:172).

Spouse abuse in African culture usually involves women as the victims of many situations, but cases of abused men are not absent. In most cases the abuse is physical beatings, but verbal abuse and other forms of unfriendly treatment are common. Part of the reason for the increased level of divorce in African today is spouse abuse. Asana (1990:121) also confirms this. An example of an abusive husband is depicted by Chinua Achebe (1959:40) in one of his novels. In the story he portrays a polygamous husband who has his wives under his grip with manly authority. In this traditional society, the husband had the right to vent his anger on any of his wives any way he wanted. In the particular case, the husband in question is particularly fiery, from the way he acts towards his family and fellow village people.

Women on the other hand would use other subtle ways of fighting back, like denying property in anger, gossiping and teasing their husbands in public, and drawing the sympathy of others to the shame of the husband. For rescue from an abusive husband a wife could report her case to the parents or elder of her husband's family of origin.

Whichever spouse initiates or promotes it, spouse abuse constitutes a problem in marriages. Because of its prevalence and the danger it constitutes, spouse abuse has led to the end of marriages. Modern court systems can be used to settle cases of spouse abuse but the illiterate and poor village woman is not exposed to that possibility. Ignorance and tradition cut her off.

Most Venda women are also aware of this. Wives who report their husbands to the police or magistrate courts are mistrusted. The result is that they are in principle removed from the family circle which is the engine of the family life. A grudge always prevail between the wife who reported her husband (even if he is in the wrong) and her husband's family. Although this may take some time, such a marriage usually ends up with divorce. The claim made by the husband and his family is that "U khou mu rambela vhathu kana zwira" (the wife is assembling a regiment against him) by going outside the family circle.

Among Christians who still have a link with traditional Africa, wife-beating is still rife today. When I was a gender convenor (for Sadtu Dzanani Branch) I learned that wives belonging to pastors, teachers, and the police (to mention just a few) were still beaten.

Asked why they don't talk to someone about it, the respond we got was that "the grave of a woman is at her in-laws", meaning that whatever they do to you there you keep it to yourself until death, especially if you want to preserve your marriage.

Awkward as it may seem, but this is a fact. Although we need to guard against generalising, we need to mention that Venda people are good at pretending that everything is going on well in the family. The result is that by the time the problem comes to light the damage is unreparable. The victim endures the maltreatment until finally her relatives comes to take her away, or she runs away to some other man.

4.17.1.3 Neglect of household duties by wife

As a mother, a wife has the responsibility of nourishing the children and helping them to grow healthy and strong. Badly behaved and poorly fed children reflect the image of a negligent mother who is not taking her part seriously and deserves to be reprimanded. As a priority, mothers are conscious about the welfare of their husbands and children and the general family as a whole. Because the expectations of the society are very high, especially of the new wife, she does her utmost to meet the demands, most of which she learns through older women. Since complaining would be a sign of weakness and incompetence, the young wife would go through great strain trying to satisfy society and prove to her husband that she is a deserving wife. The roles have sometimes been crushing (Asana,1990:45).

According to Masenya (1996:9) different people hold different opinions regarding what characterises an ideal woman. She is also right to say that these differences have far-reaching consequences for marriage set-ups. A woman is traditionally expected to submit to the authority of males (their fathers and or their husbands) without questioning their authority.

Writing from a womanhood perspective Masenya (1996:76) is of the view that African tradition and culture present themselves to women as an oppressive system. It is a patriarchal system with a male domineering factor. According to Mathabane (1994:212) a true woman does not shout at her husband. A true woman does not refuse her husband anything. A true woman does not contradict his counsels. She respects her husband as ruler of the house. She obeys and supports him in everything. She helps him accomplish his duties of providing and protecting the home (Mathabane,1994:212).

Another cause of disputes between husband and wife which may end in divorce is neglect by the wife of her domestic duties, such as non-observance of household rules, rudeness in not greeting him humbly, disrespect towards her parents-in-law and general laziness (Van Warmelo, 1948:475).

4.17.1.4 Neglect of wife by husband

Getting married and eventually becoming a father are both signs of maturity on the part of a man and that maturity is shown by how well such a man plays his role in the family especially in relation to his wife and children who are the members of the family closest to him. By tradition, the hierarchy in the family must be maintained as an educational tool for the growing children (Asana, 1990:40)

Every father in different African cultures seeks to play his role in the family in such a way that society can see his fruits a positive with something for coming generations to remember of him. No one wants to be referred to as an unworthy father. The worthiness of a father must therefore be visible in the way he provides for his household, relates with his family and the community, and deserves respect through his behaviour. It goes without saying that the role and responsibilities of the father must be reflected in his role as husband to be complementary (Asana, 1990:42). When a man gets married, therefore, he expects his wife to provide him with good food to eat through cultivating and cooking well. She is expected to keep the house in order and relate well with other women around her, who could be neighbours or fellow wives to the same man. Her politeness and generosity, especially with food, brings

honour to her name and that of her husband. A good wife shows respect not only to her husband but equally to her parents-in-law (Asana,1990:44).

Certain shortcomings of the husband may also cause a divorce. According to Venda customs (past and present) the husband must provide for his wife. If he does not work properly for his wife, other women talk at her until she runs away. There is a Venda proverb which says, "a dog that has a master is distinguishable by wearing a collar". This means that a woman who have a husband can be told by the ornaments she wears.

From the time she enters her husband's village, a wife with her needs thereby demonstrate his lack of affection, and dissatisfaction is bound to follow. The husband's neglect of his wife during an illness, his omission to buy food for her in times of scarcity, and his failure to provide a habitation for her is seen as serious offences.

4.17.1.5 The problem of interfaith marriages

The basic problem here is difference of understanding between Christianity and the other religious systems (African Religion, in our case on the vital purpose of marriage and the way issues are to be attended to when there is domestic violence of any form). The possibility of an interfaith marriage eventually ending in a conversation to a particular religion, is a theological hope (Kisembo & Magesa, 1977:150).

As mentioned somewhere above, the majority of the Venda people are Christians who still maintain the link with African traditional beliefs. Their

main problem is that they cannot reconcile the two. There is always conflict when the two religions prescribe how certain issues are to be addressed. Unfortunately the scale for such individuals cannot be 50/50 on both religions for both husband and wife.

We may be close to the truth to say that, in times of crisis Venda men do shift their focus more to African religion than to Christianity.

The majority of Venda women may stick to Christianity up until they are intimidated by either their husbands or authoritative family members. A wife may be in favour of "huisbesoek" and counselling by a pastor. This may be regarded as "interference" by the husband who, in most cases, may favour the counsel of family elders to resolve disputes. In this way the foundations of marriage is disturbed. And although the crack to the marriage may go for years without being noticed, the ultimate result is usually divorce.

4.17.2 Offences not valid as grounds for divorce

4.17.2.1 Adultery not ground for divorce.

Adultery on the part of a wife is no reason for divorcing her. The remedy is to get damages from the adulterer. If the woman overdoes it she is told by her husband that he will not cohabit with her any longer, he will be satisfied with the food she cooks for him, and to have her children as his. In most cases the family elders will advice him to marry another wife, without actually divorcing the adulterous one.

I do regard this as the first and most painful "divorce" because the couple will be staying in the same household, working together during the day in

the fields, eating the same food, drinking together, and to a limited extent dancing together.

Love, affection, peace, mutual understanding is replaced by hate, domestic violence and revenge. The "we" is dead. It is replaced by the "I". The wife is no longer loved and adored but despised and ridiculed. The respect and dignity she enjoyed is no more. The trust which prevailed between her and her husband and his family is replaced by mistrust and suspicions. However, be that as it may, she is not expelled like a dog. And this brings in the aspect of *vhuthu/ubuntu*. On humanitarian grounds she is protected from the final blow.

If she commits adultery with a brother of her husband or some other relative of his, they may divorce her because they say she is sowing discord between people living in harmony (Van Warmelo, 1948:485).

This is because the like hood of a quarrel between members of the group is considerable. The woman is therefore regarded as a troublemaker intent on causing strife between people who are generally peaceful people. A *mulutanyi* (person causing strife) is not welcome.

4.17.2 Habitual lying, gossiping and insolence

Some women are habitual liars, scandalmongers and full of insolence, but their husbands cannot drive them away simply for these shortcomings. Unfortunately such women are never trusted, for life. They are always reminded that they are liars. Such women do not enjoy the respect and honour they used to get.

According to Van Warmelo (1948:485), if there is too much of this, a husband administers beatings and admonishes his wife about what she is doing. We need to mention right here that the moment we say "beatings" modern people will obviously raise eyebrows. Pretending they do not know it is happening and playing the innocent. My research into this aspect proved that even those men who swear (at times under oath or from the pulpit) do apply corporal punishment to their wives. As mentioned somewhere above the Venda people do not support excessive wife-beating. Neither do I. I do, however, understand why it was and it is still done today. Whether this is right or wrong we need to understand this matter in its proper context.

Strange as it may seem there are women who believe that if your husband does not "beat you" he does not love you and that the only thing left is for him to send you away. And so gossiping was done to get attention from the husband.

Gossiping was, and is associated with women not men. That is why these offences did not lead to divorce.

Women beating must stop but in its place something must be brought in. New methods should be put into place to avoid this situation. Non-violent methods e.g. negotiating skills should be taught very early in life. We do not have to bring America to Africa where you push someone away and you appear in court. As Africans we have our ethics, norms and values. All we need is to bring them back.

4.17.2.3 Desertion without cause

The mere fact that a wife deserts her husband for no good reason does not give her husband's people the right to divorce her. If she makes a practice of running away, her own relatives consult the dice to discover what influence is at work. If witchcraft or madambi (evil magic) is discovered to be the cause, these are combated with medicines. Desertion on the part of the husband, who stays away in town, say four years or more, without coming home, may justify the makhulu in taking her daughter back. This is when the woman is still young and is dissatisfied or has already run home (van Warmelo, 1948:491).

4.17.2.4 Barrenness not ground for divorce

The barrenness of a wife is not a ground for divorce. What may lead thereto is impotence of the husband. It is up to her family, when they see that she remains childless, to give another daughter to bear children for her elder sister. When a woman remains childless, she is in vain and then they give up hope. Thereupon the makhulu's family, foregather in private to decide what other girl to give the vhwasha, as a deputy of the first barren woman.

It matters little what sort of person is given. Usually they choose a younger sister from the same hut, or a half-sister (Van Warmelo, 1948:373). If a wife proves barren, her husband cannot just go to his makhulu and demand another girl. It is the makhulu's duty to think of this.

If a mukwasha anticipates his makhulu by asking for a girl, the makhulu answers that he is still deliberating or invites him to mala any other of the

girls that are there, which means he would pay thakha in full for another wife with a status of her own (Van Warmelo, 1948:487).

The right of divorce is handled in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as something which is not established but presupposed as already existing (Schelkle, 1979:26). Divorce had long been practised among the Hebrews, but Deuteronomy seeks to hedge it about with some safeguards (Buttrick ea, 1953:473). This was an easy matter for the husband in the Semitic world. There is no law in the Old Testament which institutes it because it is simply taken for granted as part of age-old custom (Buttrick ea, 1953:473).

What the law tries to do is to regulate it, usually in favour of the wife. We infer from this law that a man could divorce his wife only for good cause; and the case must be brought before some public official; Then a legal document was prepared and placed in the wife's hand (Buttrick ea, 1953:473-474).

According to Buttrick ea (1953:474) these formalities involving time and money, were to act as a deterrent to hasty or rash action. On the other hand, there were some in Israel who by theological reflections upon the meaning of creation seem to have felt that the monogamous marriage was the will of God (Gen 1-2) and that divorce was something God hated (Mal 2:14-15).

4.18 Conclusion

Obviously some of the problems of intermarried couples presented in this chapter could easily be problems experienced by married couples of the same racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. However, because of their cultural and religious difference, intermarried couples tend to have built-in handicaps to overcome in their relationship with each other.

4.19 Footnote for Chapter 4.

* Khathutshelo (not real name, a Christian name meaning forgiveness) is married to Vhengani (hate). They are blessed with one child, a boy. The boy is three years old but cannot talk or use body language. Khathutshelo (the mother) thinks that he needs therapy. She is spending a fortune on psychologists and psychiatrists. Vhengani (the father) on the other hand thinks that the boy was bewitched. He is convinced that evil people are jealous that he is having a respectable job in the government and that he is prosperous. As if that is not enough he is blessed with the heir to his estate, a son. Vhengani is a Christian (or should I say churchgoer) but in times like this he will be quick to cross the line of his faith. Vhengani is convinced that a traditional healer should be sought. His problem is that he cannot go to the traditional healer on his own as this is contrary to the "biblical teachings" as narrated to him.

His African upbringing tells him that he is a man (not a woman) and as a man he must always have or make a plan. And plan he did : his uncle is to take his son to Mangondi (a remote rural area, where a well-known traditional healer stays). The doctoring is to take place without the knowledge of Khathutshelo (the mother) because "women are talkative" and by talking too much they do invite witches.

Khathutshelo do not want her husband or anyone for that matter to decide for her. Khathutshelo do not also want her child to be linked with ancestral spirits or traditional healers. She is embarrassed and angry at that. She will prefer a minister of religion to be called in for prayers and counselling. She feels undermined. She feels betrayed and useless. Whether the problem at hand is solved or not, already we can see some cracks appearing on their marriage.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with marital problems associated with mixed marriages.

In this chapter the analysis of data is presented and discussed. Computer analysis of the data was done in order to obtain accurate findings on frequencies, percentages and chi-squares of the items, listed in the questionnaires.

The Chi-square statistic tests the null hypothesis by comparing a set of observed frequencies which are based on sample findings, to a set of expected frequencies which describe null situation. The chi-square statistic measures the extent to which the observed and expected frequencies differ. If this measure of difference is small, then the null hypothesis is accepted. Conversely, large differences will result in the null hypothesis being rejected (Wegner, 1993: 248).

To derive the Chi-square sample statistic, the following chi-square formula is used:

$$X^2_{\text{calc}} = \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where: f_o = observed frequency per cell (class)

f_e = expected frequency per cell (class)

The decision rule is:

Accept H_0 if $a' > 0,05$

Reject H_0 if $a' \leq 0,05$

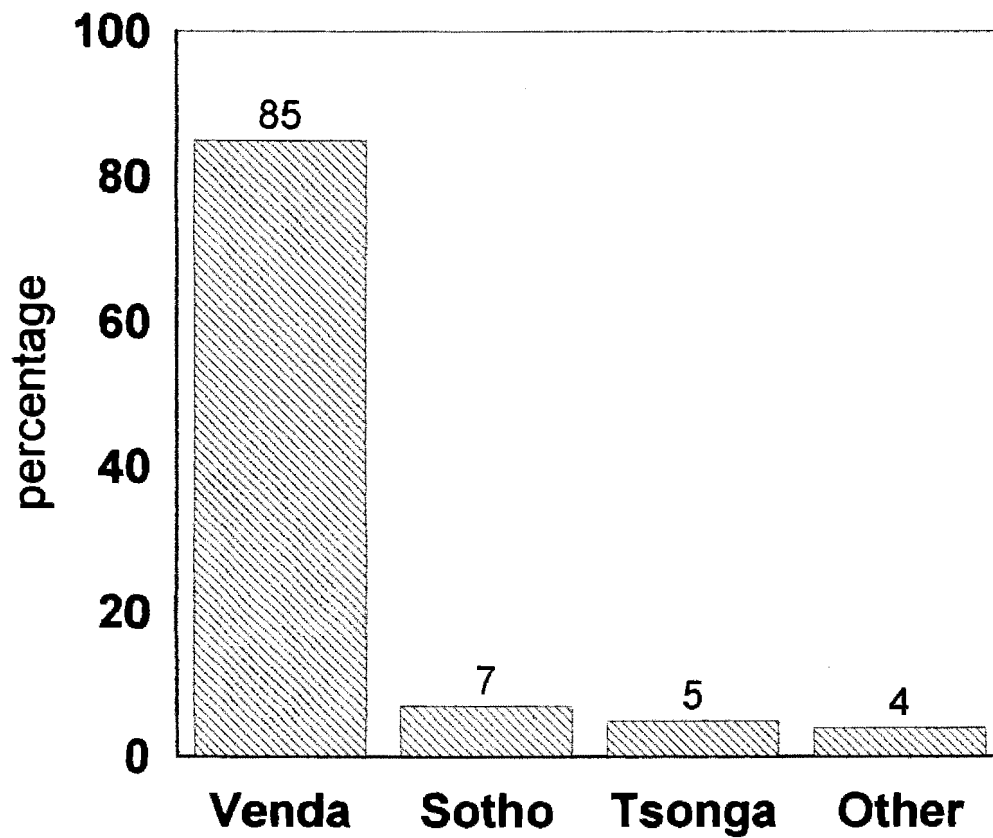
The three Questionnaires will be sub-divided into three main sections. Section I will deal with Married couples whose marriages qualify as mixed marriages. Section II will deal with professional people. These are the people to whom most marital problems are referred to. Section III will deal with the upcoming generation. The views and attitudes of young people who are single, engaged or are on the verge of getting married, will be analysed.

5.2 Section I (Questionnaire No. 1) Married Persons

5.2.1 Ethnicity

To which of the following groups do you belong?

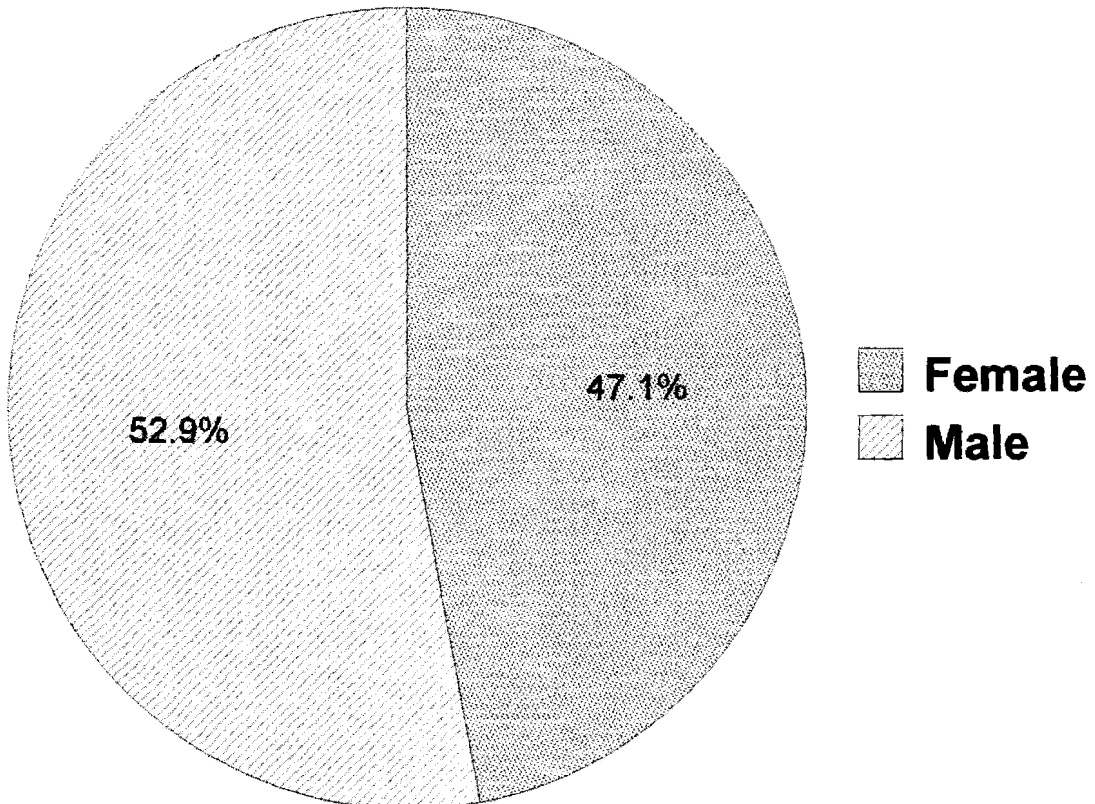
FIGURE 2 (Questionnaire No. 1 Item 5 Column. 8)



In figure 2 it is revealed that 85% of the respondents were Venda people and that only 7% were Sotho. The remaining 8% is Tsonga and other. This findings suggest that when we report we will not be misrepresenting the Vhavenda people of South Africa.

5.2.2 Gender

FIGURE 3 (Questionnaire No. 1 Item No. 2 Column. 5)



From Fig. 3 it is clearly indicated that 47.1% of the respondents were females, whereas 52.9% were males. This pie diagram does, therefore, give a good distribution of the targeted groups viz. married persons.

This implies that males were mainly from African Religion and Afro-Christianity, and that females were mostly from the Christian belief.

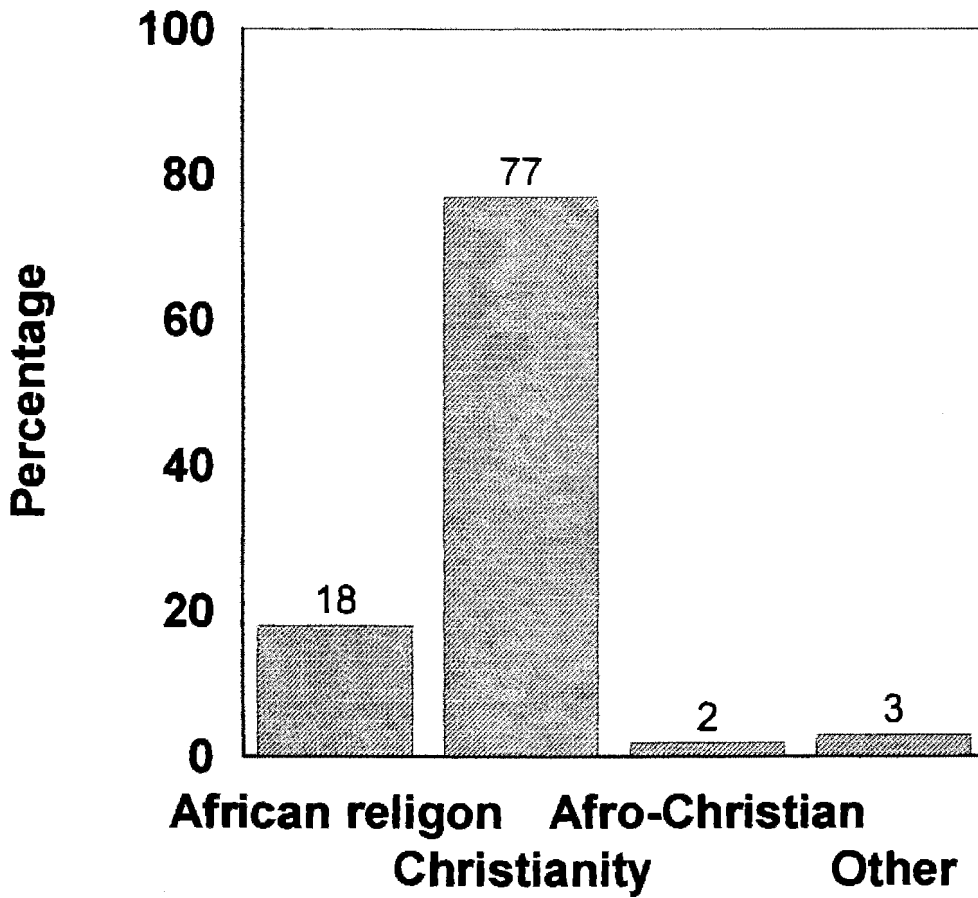
This did not come as a surprise realising that the Vhavenda people, 85% of whom responded to the three questionnaires are basically patriarchal in nature. Women occupied a lower status in the society. The traditional and conservative upbringing is more embedded in the minds of men than women. In Venda it is usually assumed that women can be deceived easily. Through initiation schools men were trained to be more stubborn, thereby, rejecting any change which is in conflict with what they already "know". Women are allowed to go to church and become christians for as long as they will not dare oppose decisions, religious or otherwise, imposed on them by men. That is why 81,8% of male respondents are Afro-Christians, that is, Christians who still have links with traditional Africa and her religious convictions.

In other words religion and gender plays an important role in the lives of both sexes and can therefore not be ignored when people marry each other.

5.2.3 Religious Affiliation

FIGURE 4 (Questionnaire No 1, Item 1. Column 4)

What is your religious affiliation? Choose one from the following:



From Fig. 4 it is seen that 18% of the respondents are members of the African Religion, whereas 77% of the respondents were Christians. It is interesting to see that 5% of the respondents are either Afro-Christians or belong to other religions. Once more our target group, viz. Christians and members of the African Religion, is impressing.

The question is : are they unable to reconcile the two? Should the society encourage or discourage mixed marriages? Or is it more prudent to ignore the issue and let chance be the driving force? This question should not, and cannot, be answered in isolation from the total role of ideologies and philosophies governing and influencing marriages in such societies (Kirwen, 1977:148).

I want to indicate that when a person steps out of one religion he steps into another. A person does not step out of Christianity (for example) into nothing, but into something. The majority of the Vhavenda people steps out of Christianity into African religion or visa-versa. Interfaith in this context, therefore, does not necessarily mean one member being a traditionalist and the other member being a Christian. The backward-and-forward movement of the believer is something serious here. A trained eye can identify this without any difficulties.

GENDER	African Religion	Religion Christianity	Afro-Christians	Total
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Male	72,2%	46,5%	81,8%	52,9%
Female	27,8%	53,5%	18,2%	47,1%

100%

100%

100%

100%

5.2.4 Data on marriages

5.2.4.1 Do you belong to the same religion?

	African Religion	Christianity	Other	Total
YES	54,3%	80,4%	36,4%	73,4%
NO	45,7%	19,6%	63,6%	26,6%

100%

Noting that 85% of the respondents to all three questionnaires were Vhavenda people (see Fig. 2 Item 5 Col. 8 = To which of the following groups do you belong?) and that 77% of these people are Christians (see Fig. 4 Item 1 Col. 4). Now, the fact that 26,6% of these couples do not belong to the same religion is a cause for concern.

5.2.4.2 Are the people around you aware that you have marital problems ?

	African Religion	Christianity	Other	Total
YES	39,4%	17,3%	40%	22,5%
NO	60,6%	82,7%	60%	77,5%

100%

This implies that mainly Christians keep their marital problems to themselves. These findings suggest that people from these two religions will in most cases not have the same approach to marital problems. Please note that the difference between their "No's" is 22,1%. Based on the statistics above we may argue that marriage between people belonging to this two different religions may bring in more problems than happiness.

5.2.4.3 If you were to start all over again would you marry him/her?

	African Religion	Christianity	Afro-Christians	Total
YES	65,7%	78,1%	45,5%	74,1%
NO	34,3%	21,9%	54,5%	25,9%

100%

This implies that Christians were mainly prepared to remarry their original partners and that members of the African Religion would be reluctant too. This confirms the suggestion that these people who are in two different religions and religious convictions do have a different approach to life. Their philosophies of life and ideas are not the same. Even when they encounter marital problems there is a good possibility that they may try to solve such problems differently. A member of the African Religion may like to involve the whole family his parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts as well as ancestors. On the other hand a Christian may choose to involve his/her nuclear family and only Jesus. Another point is that Christians are more forgiving than members of the African Religion

although such forgiveness is short-lived. Basically it is the moth-and-candle situation. Note that the difference between a YES and a NO is 12,4%. In other words something more serious e.g.. marital problems, may be happening to the extent that the percent of those who do not feel like marrying again is 25,9%.

5.2.4.4 Have you ever beaten your wife/husband?

	African Religion	Christianity	Afro-Christians	Total
YES (within institution)	51,5%	19,3%	54,5%	27,0 %
NO (within institution)	48,5%	80,7%	45,5%	73,0 %

100%

This implies that members of the African Religion mainly beat each other as compared to Christian spouses. These findings suggest that if members of the African Religion were to marry Christians or Christians getting married to members of the African Religion marital problems would be inevitable.

5.2.4.5 Type of marriage

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between marital status and the following variables:

	Traditionally Married	In Comm. of Property	Other	Total
MALE	15,2%	61,9%	22,9%	
FEMALE	8,3%	78,1%	13,6%	

100%

This implies that mainly Venda females are married in community of property than traditionally. The question is why? The thesis tried to answer that somewhere above. There is a good possibility that people or institutions which served as shock absorbers are no longer there for women like before.

5.2.5 The importance of thakha

(a) Did you give thakha (bride wealth) (man) ? Gender

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between thakha and the following variables:

MALE

YES	82,0%
NO	18,0%

TOTAL 100%

This implies that more Venda males give thakha when they marry than those who do not. These findings suggest therefore that the institution of thakha (bride wealth) plays an important role in the lives of these people.

(b) If YES what did you give ?

MONEY	81,6%
OTHER	7,8%
N/A	10,6%

TOTAL 100%

(c) Was thakha given to your family (Female). Gender

FEMALE

YES	63,2%
NO	36,8%

TOTAL **100%**

(d) If YES what did he give ?

MONEY	76,7%
OTHER	23,3%

TOTAL **100%**

This implies that mainly money is given as thakha than other presents. These findings suggest that although the institution of thakha (bridewealth) enjoys a popular support amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa, its form has changed. In the past mainly livestock was used.

(e) If you were to start all over again would you marry him/her ?

*Did you give thakha (man) ?

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between marriage and thakha (bride wealth).

YES	81,4%
NO	18,6%

TOTAL **100%**

This implies that mainly men who paid thakha would like to keep their wives even if they were to start all over again. These findings suggest that marriages where thakha (bride wealth) is involved may be more stable than those where it is not.

(f) Have you ever beaten your wife/husband ? *Did you give thakha (man) ?

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between battering and thakha (bride wealth).

YES	36,5%
NO	63,5%

TOTAL **100%**

This implies that mainly men who give thakha do not beat their wives.

- (g) How long have you been Married ? Was thakha given to your family ?
(Female)

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between thakha and the other variables.

	0-5 yrs	5-10yrs	10-15yrs	20yrs & above	Total
YES	7,9%	34,7%	27,7%	29,7%	100%
NO	30,8%	15,4%	26,9%	26,9%	100%

100%

This implies that where thakha was given marriages lasts longer than where it was not. These findings suggest that the importance of thakha in marriages should not be underestimated.

- (h) Have you ever reported him/her to any authority ? If YES what did he give?

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between thakha given and whether spouses reported each other to any authority.

	MONEY	OTHER	TOTAL
YES	12,6%	41,7%	15,9%
NO	87,4%	58,3%	84,1%

100%

This implies that those who give money as thakha are mainly not reported to any authority than those who give something else or do not give anything at all.

5.2.6 Are the people around you aware that you have marital problems ? When your marriage is in a crisis whom would you like to talk to first?

The result indicate that there is a significant relationship between marital problems and the people who are talked to first when a marriage is in a crisis.

	Family member	Police/ Court	Church member	Other	Total
YES	21,4%	60%	15,6%	25%	23%
NO	78,6%	40%	84,4%	75%	77%

100%

This implies that the majority of people strive to keep their marital problems as close to themselves as possible. These findings suggest that this situation has something to do with the people's social and religious outlook on marriage.

From Questionnaire No. 1 which was administered to married persons it is interesting to see that 64,3% of the respondents to the question "When your marriage is in a crisis whom would you like to talk to first" indicated

that they may like talking to family members; 0,5% indicated the police; 4,6% indicated Court of Law or magistrate; 17,3% indicated church members; 1,0% indicated traditional courts, whereas the rest of the respondents fell under "other". This confirms problems experienced when two different lifestyles, religious convictions, ideologies and philosophies of life, is merged.

Another point to be noted is that although the majority of the respondents are Christians 77% (see Fig. 4 item 1. Col. 4) they still think and behave like traditionalists. Responding to the question "Are the people around you aware that you have marital problems?" 22,5% of the respondents answered in the positive whereas 77,5% were negative. Such a situation is very much dangerous. The deafening silence in those households may mean excessive oppression and a chain of marital problems.

5.2.7 Have you at any stage thought of divorcing him/her ?

If you were to start all over again would you marry him/her ?

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between divorce and marriage.

YES	46,3%
NO	53,7%
TOTAL	<u>100%</u>

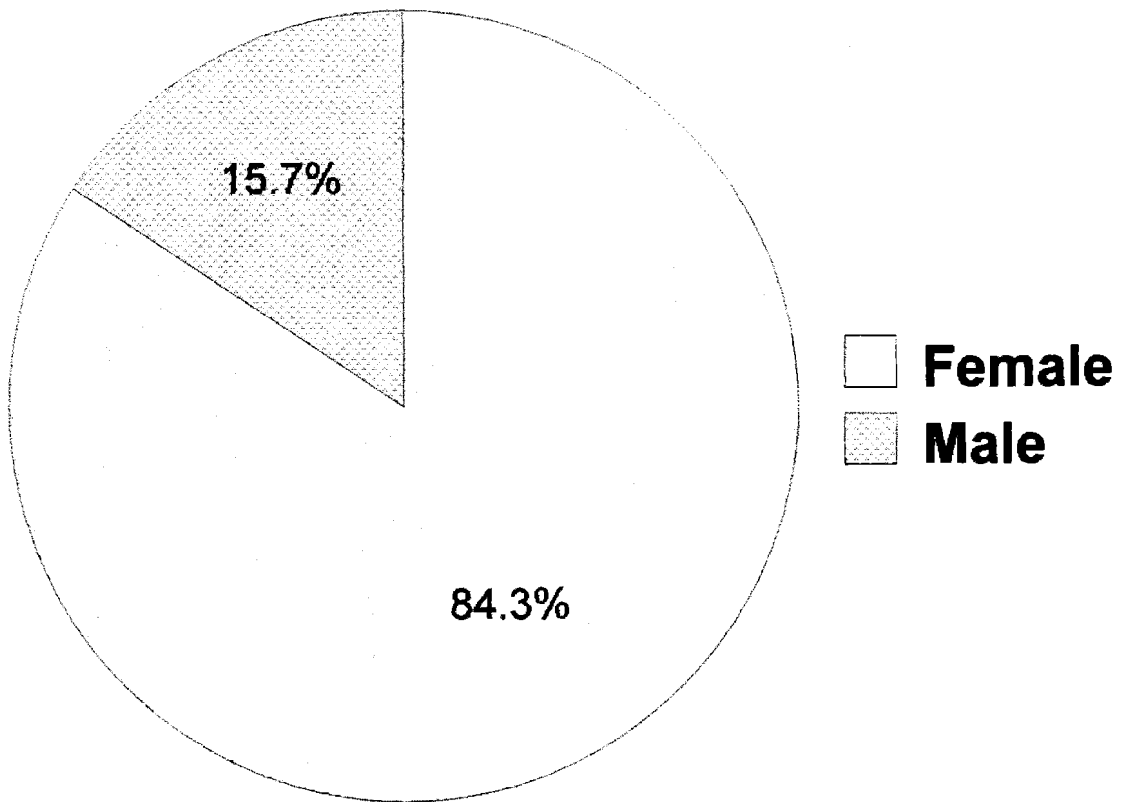
This implies that although a large number of people would like to keep their marriages the percentage of those who think of divorcing their spouses is big, 46,3% as against 53,7%. These findings suggest that marital problems especially divorce is growing at a fast rate in Venda.

Responding to the question: "Have you at any stage thought of divorcing him/her?" 72,5% of the respondents answered in the negative (No) whereas 27,5% responded positively (Yes). From a distance 27,5% looks small but in reality such a figure is alarming.

Section II (Questionnaire No. 2) Professionals

Gender

FIGURE 5 (Questionnaire No. 2 - Item 2. Column 5)

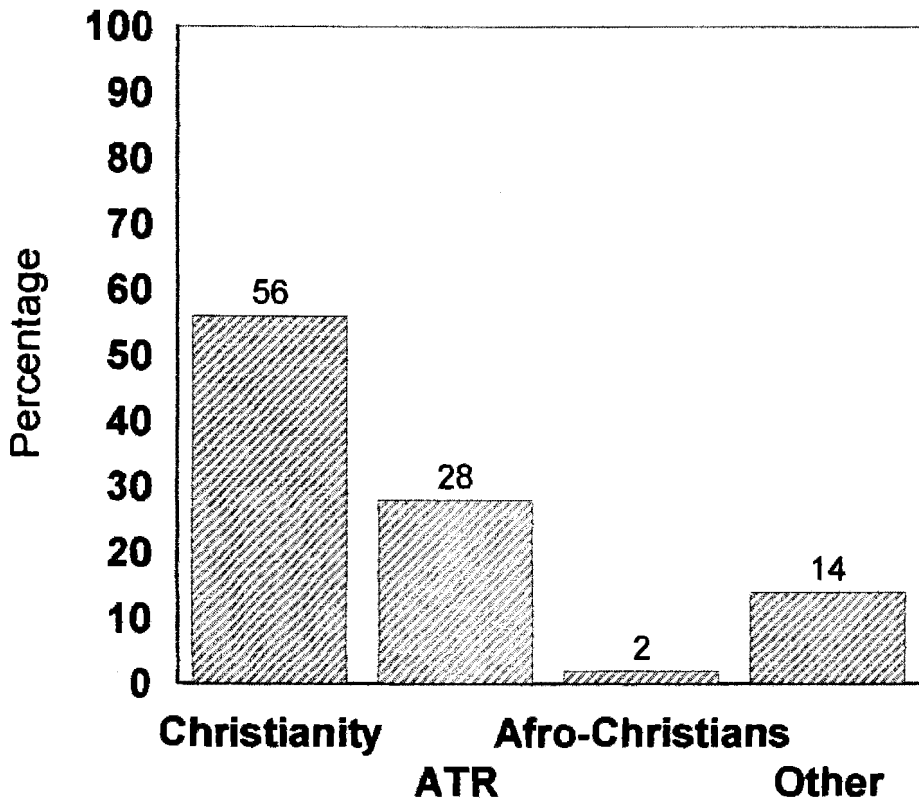


From Fig. 5 it is clearly indicated that 84.3% of the respondents to this Questionnaire were females, and that 15.7% were males.

To which religion do you belong?

Religion

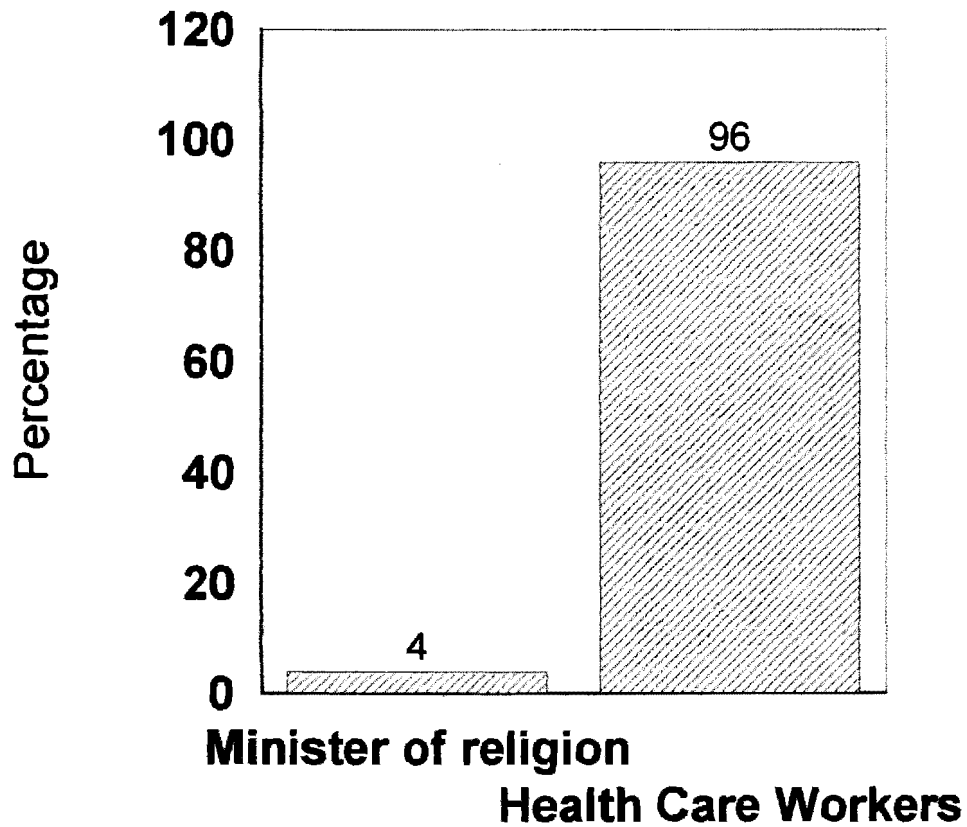
FIGURE 6 (Questionnaire No. 2 - Item 10. Column 13)



In Fig. 6 it is indicated that 56% of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 2 are Christians and that 28% are members of the African Traditional Religion.

Type of institution

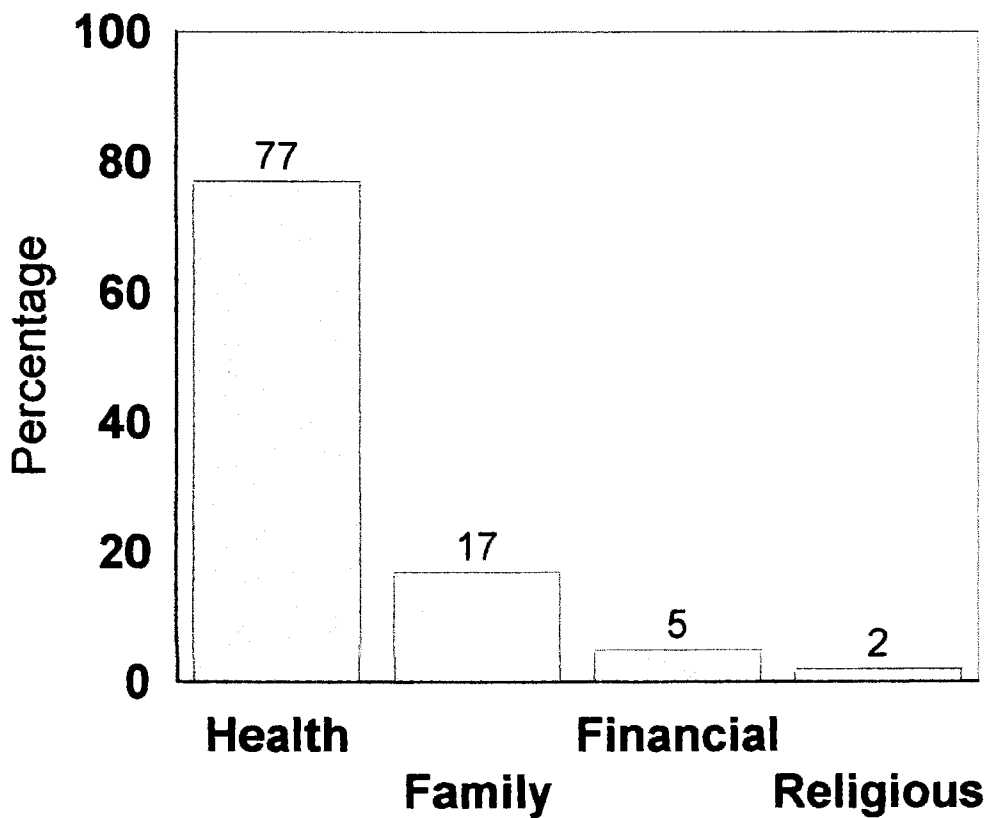
FIGURE 7 (Questionnaire No. 2 - Item 1. Column 4)



From Fig. 7 it is clear that 96% of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 2 were Health Care Workers. These are the people who deal with all sorts of problems (marital problems also included). The remaining 4% came from ministers of religion.

Problems people usually come to you with

FIGURE 8 (Questionnaire No. 2 - Item 6. Column 9)



From Fig. 8 it is clear that 77% of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 2 came with health problems. The majority of the people interviewed indicated, amongst others, that they do suffer from depression, stress and high blood pressure. Although these respondents indicated the highest category viz. health, it was evident from the discussion with them that they also suffered from marital problems. And that some of these conditions or illnesses are very much related to marital problems.

When I interviewed Health Care Workers and ministers of religion who completed Questionnaire No. 2 I found that most people who visited Health Care Workers at hospitals and clinics were actually beaten by their partners. If we compare Questionnaire No. 1 Items 15 and 16, that is, columns 18 and 19, with Questionnaire No. 2 Item 6 column 9 we may conclude that abuse, especially woman abuse is rife. As indicated in a table somewhere above 51,5% members of the African Religion, 19,3% Christians, and 54,4% Afro-Christians beat each other.

When I interviewed Health Care Workers I discovered that family violence took many forms. The result was that victims had nowhere to go but hospitals and clinics for treatment. Although some men were and are also abused the percentage is lower than that of women who are abused.

Physical abuse: Most women who are battered experience more than one kind of abuse. Physical abuse may include such things as being slapped, kicked, pushed or burned, amongst others. Women are tied up, left in dangerous places or ignored when ill or injured. Women are also deprived of food and rest.

Emotional abuse: Although it is much less evident to outside observers, emotional abuse is also very damaging to a woman. Verbal insults, threats, belittling comments, isolation from friends and family and withholding access to her children can erode a woman's self-esteem and her support network. Emotional abuse makes a woman feel unimportant, useless and destroys her self-confidence.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse, through rape or indecent assault, is another way in which a man may attempt to assert power over his partner. Sexual abuse can also include criticising a woman sexually and treating her as a sex object.

Economic abuse: A man may abuse his partner economically . He may deny or limit a woman's access to money, accuse her of stealing his money, expect her to do more with the housekeeping money than is possible or prevent her from working so that she does not have an income of her own. Economic abuse can also include damage and destruction of property.

Our research showed that from the outside, the violent family may look relatively normal. Despite the violence occurring in the home, battered women and their abusers may carry on perfectly healthy relations at work and in the community. Spouse abuse can and does occur in all socio-economic groups, in all races and amongst men and women of varying education brackets.

There is no "typical" battered woman just as there is no "typical" abusive man. There are, however, certain characteristics which are often exhibited by men and women involved in violent relationships.

Characteristics of a typical abuser:

(a)Need for control

Male abusers tend to demonstrate a need for control. They make all family decisions and expect family members to comply. Differences in opinion are belittled or lead to explosions of rage. Family resources (such as money, use of the car, telephone, food, ect.) are controlled by the batterer.

(b)Egocentric

Abusers tend to be extremely egocentric. They look at most human transactions in terms of how they feel rather than how their actions make others feel. They are often unsympathetic when wives and children have pressing needs.

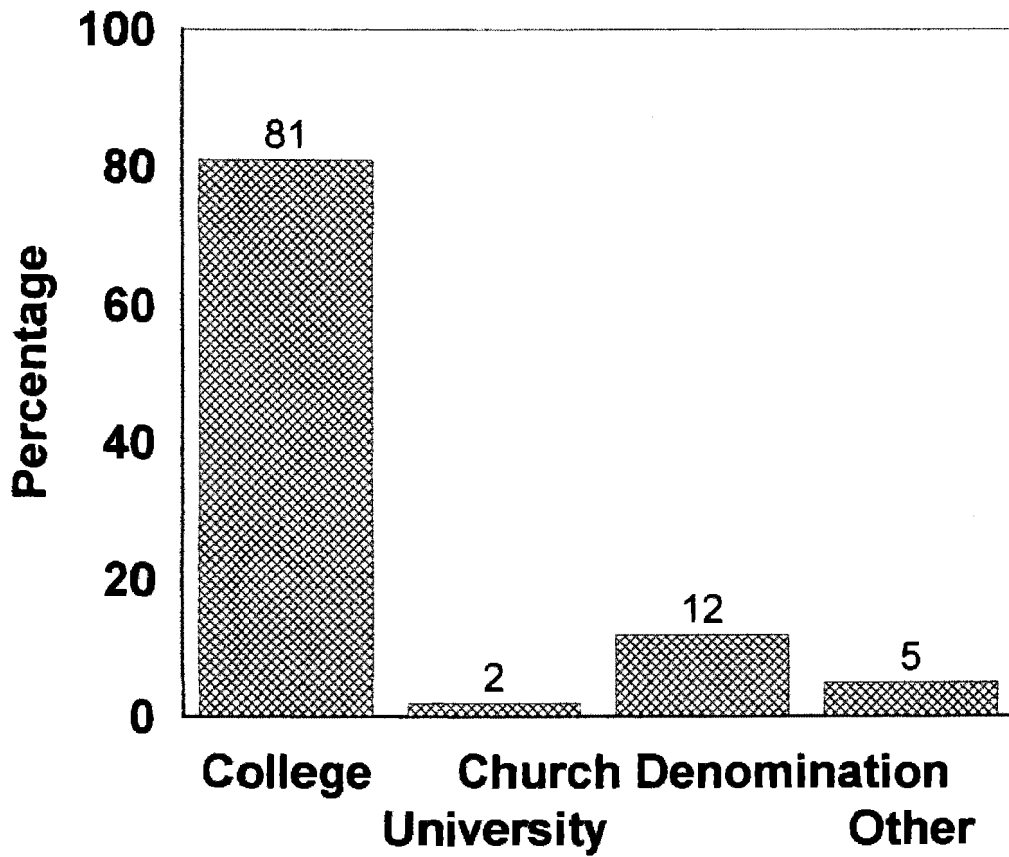
(c)Unable to accept blame

Abusers tend to be unable to accept blame for their actions and instead insist that others treat them badly. While research has shown that many batterers grew up in violent and coercive environments, this is not always the case and does not legitimise abuse.

The Battered Woman Syndrome

Many battered woman develop what is called the Battered Woman Syndrome which emerges when women have been the victims of repetitive physical and psychological abuse. In most battering relationships, the overt violence is not constant; it often occurs in cycles with peaks of violence and periods of calm. In general, however, the abuse is usually on-going experience which increases in intensity throughout the course of the relationship.

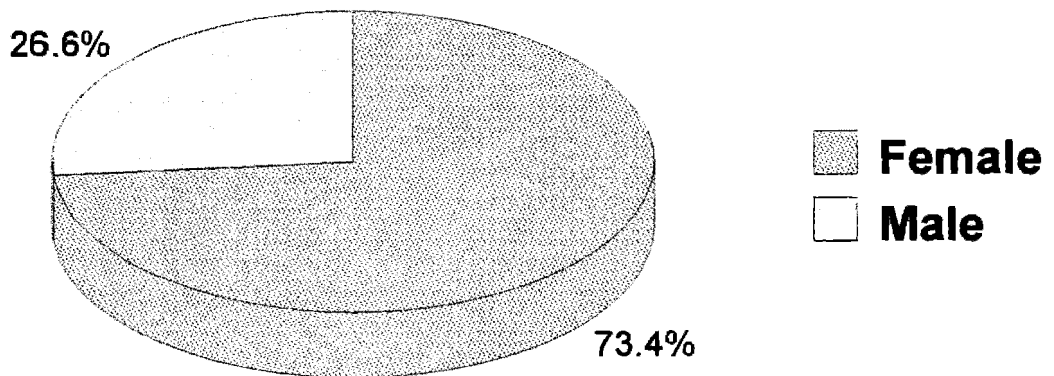
Trapped in this cycle, unable to predict or avoid the next violent episode, many women develop a passive response to abuse. Although many women initially believe that they can control the violence through their own behaviour, they soon learn the uselessness of accommodating the abuse or of refraining from behaviour which seems to incite the violence. Consequently, women learn that nothing in their power will alleviate the abuse. Even when it appears to others that she could leave her abuser, a battered woman will often not do so. Repeated abuse seems inevitable and escape is not seen as a realistic alternative.

Section III (Questionnaire No. 3) The upcoming generation5.3 The youth: The upcoming generationFIGURE 9 (Questionnaire No. 3 - Item 1. Column 4)

From Fig. 9 it is clear that 81% of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 3 were college students and that 12% of the respondents were from church denominations. The remaining 7% was from the University or the labour market. These findings suggests that the researcher was able to reach his target group viz. those who are dating or are on the verge of getting married.

5.4 Gender

FIGURE 10 (Questionnaire No. 3 - Item 2. Column)



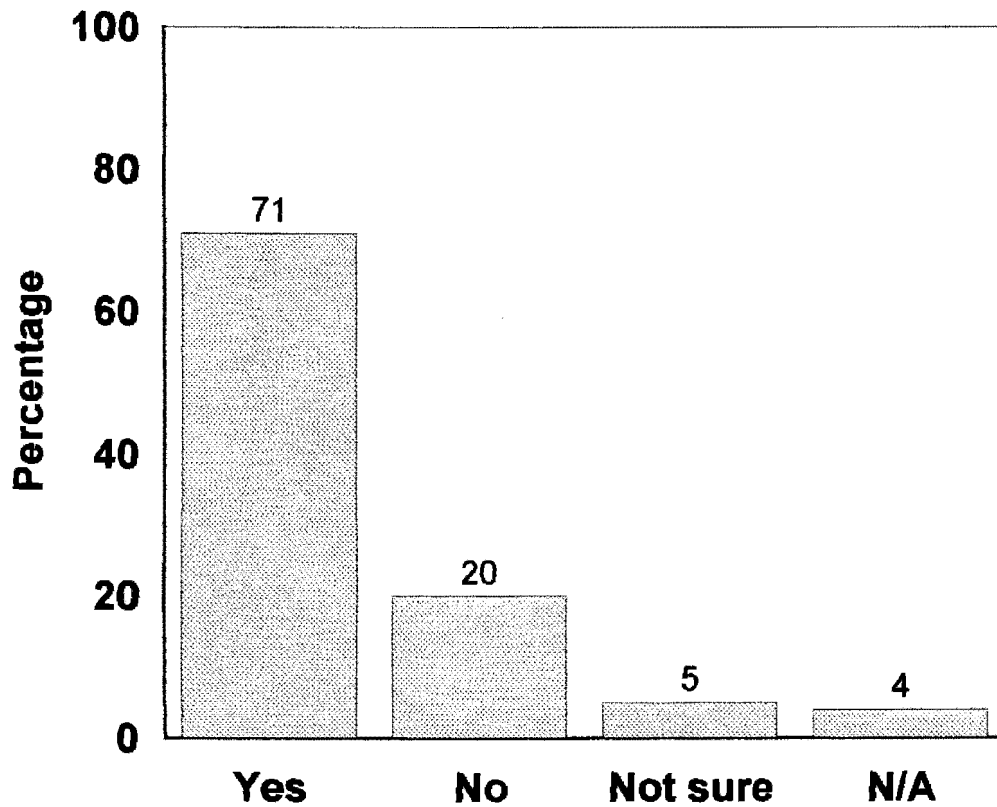
From Fig. 10 it is clear that 73.4% of the respondents to Questionnaire No.3 were females, and that 26.6% were males.

If we combine all three Pie diagrams on Gender i.e. Fig 3, Fig 5 and Fig 10 we may come with the conclusion that at least 68.3% females and 31.7% males responded to Questionnaires 1 to 3.

5.5 Their views

FIGURE 11 (Questionnaire No. 3 - Item 13. Column 16)

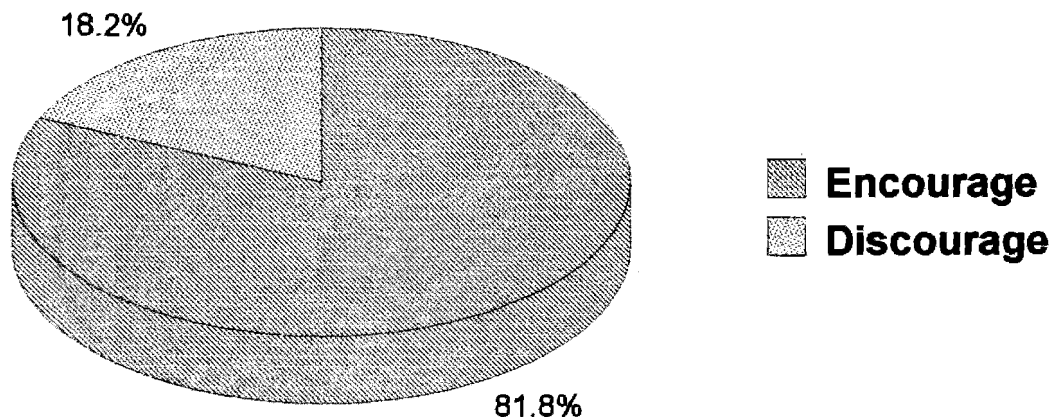
5.5.1 Do you think people belonging to different religions should marry?



From Fig. 11 it is clear that 71% of the respondents think that people belonging to different religions may marry each other. Only 20% of the respondents think that they should not. These findings suggests that the majority of the respondents may not be aware of marital problems experienced after mixed marriages. This was an alarming observation, especially when one realises that 8 out of 10 such marriages end up in divorce. From the divorce files obtained from the Thohoyandou High Court (1979-1999) at least 8 out of every 10 divorces granted were caused by mixed marriages and religious differences.

5.5.2 Will you encourage or discourage mixed marriages?

FIGURE 12 (Questionnaire No. 3 - Item 14. Column 17)



From Fig. 12 it is clear that 81.8% of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 3 would encourage someone who is just about to marry a person not belonging to his/her religion and religious convictions to go ahead. Only 18.2% of the respondents would discourage such a marriage. Fig. 12 is very much related to Fig. 11. It is imperative to indicate that 17% of the respondents to Questionnaire No. 3 were aged between 15 and 20, 76% of the respondents were between 21 and 30 years of age whereas only 7% of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years old.

In fact 71,3% of the respondents indicated that they were single 28,7% were engaged. This means that the majority of our respondents are not yet married. Fig. 11 shows that 71% of the respondents are of the opinion that people belonging to different religions may marry each other. Such findings suggests that mixed marriages may be very common during the next generation. Such a situation may have a negative influence on the marriage institution. Marital problems and marriage breakdown may increase. Responses on the question "Is the person you are just about to divorce belonging to the same religion as yourself?" Shows that 20,4% of our respondents who are already married are on the verge of divorcing their partners and that those partners do not belong to the same religion as the respondents. The fact that only 1,9% of those divorcing belongs to the same religion confirms the suggestion that mixed marriages are more doomed to failure than marriages involving people of the same faith and religious convictions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

6.1 Introductory remarks

6.1.1 A profile of a typically unstable mixed marriage in the Venda society.

From the data collected in previous chapters we can now compile a profile of a typical mixed marriage in the Vhavenda society. Indications are that the wife will be a Christian (Fig.4). She will be a Muvenda (Fig.2). Whereas the husband will be a member of the African Religion who did not give thakha (Table 5.2.5.1 shows that 18% of the husbands in mixed marriages did not give thakha). Such husbands beat their wives (Table 5.2.4.4 shows that 27% of the intermarried beat each other whereas 73% do not). At least 51,5% members of the African Religion and 19,3% Christians confirmed that they beat each other. Unfortunately people around such couple are not aware of the marital problems around them (Table 5.2.4.2 shows that 22,5% think that people are aware whereas 77,5% are of the opinion that they are not). As a result 46,3% of these couple think or are on the verge of divorce (Table 5.2.7).

6.1.2 Remarks

I lay no claim to omniscience or infallibility; hence I can not claim that the views expressed here are correct in every detail and meet every situation. Both years of study of intermarriage as a concern of the social scientist, and years of intimate personal contact with people, make me feel that I

may be of assistance to others who contemplate intermarriage or are already in a mixed marriage.

Each system of marriage has its own inner logic. If you attack or disturb a critical part of that system, you threaten the very system itself (Kirwen, 1987:79). There is a general feeling among Christians here in the Northern Province that the doctrine of the church(es) may be compromised and the marriage weakened unless young people marry within their own denominations.

It is imperative to mention right here that "identity" amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa is something very important. Preserving their cultural heritage is not only a social priority, but also a religious one. Marrying a person who is not of the same culture and religion was and is still regarded as a weakness. The blessings of the family and the community are reserved for such couples. There is a Venda saying which goes like: "Arali Phophi a vhe amuthu ro vha ri tshi do ri a ri farele hoyu mushumo. Zwino nga ngafhi sifha o mala mukhada" meaning "It is just a pity that Phophi is not a human being.

If he was a human being we would be requesting him to perform this task for us, but now that he is married to a "foreigner" it can not be done by him."

Amongst the Vhavenda people a person who is married to a "foreigner" is not regarded as humane. A person becomes a fully human being when there is a balance between his spiritual (ancestral spirits included), his psychological and cultural forces.

The identity of an individual is traced back to an ancestor. Any person without ancestors, therefore, does not have an identity. The significance of a person or family's identity is seen in times of crisis. Whenever families venerate their ancestors it is important for such families to identify themselves and the ancestors whom they want to come to their rescue. Otherwise all the rituals may amount to nought.

If Christianity only teaches Western ways of founding and organising a family, then I think the African people should resist and reject Christianity with all their efforts.

For those who hold a strict Africanist viewpoint and for those uncompromisingly Christian fundamentalists, the issue of concern in this study is not whether the church is going African or Western. Rather, the question is how helpful it can be for our communities to keep away from all sorts of mixed marriages.

Experience taught me that the problems of mixed marriages were always, without exception, the problems of the wider society, and not the problems of that particular couple.

Intermarriage cannot occur without loss of an important dimension in human relationships. People can live together and share significantly, but they can't share at the point where they should and most need to share. The religious climate of family league will suffer. If the "faith" means anything to either or both parties the issue (of difference in religion) will eventually come up, especially if an where there are children (Gordon, 1964:136).

Parents who from the earliest moments in the life of the child are themselves kind and loving, and who in that spirit equip the child with a positive attitude toward religion may be more effective by their indirect approach than are the others.

A home in which the child from his earliest years associates gentleness, love, compassion and understanding with the religious way of life is more likely to reduce the possibility of mixed marriage than will all the preaching in the world.

Mixed marriages are the object of attention in every society because of their life meaning. Marriage is more than a relationship between individuals. It is a relationship between groups - a relationship signifying equality between those groups (Johnson & Warren, 1994:1).

Parents should, without rancour and bitterness, point out to their sons and daughters the implications of the contemplated mixed marriage for the intermarried themselves; the perpetuation of the particular way of life associates with a given religion and the people whose way of life it is.

Opposites may attract, but that does not guarantee that they will stay together. If one out of every three marriages are known to fall, and if we know that the percentage of these failures increases in race and religion are considered as separate factors in these marriages, we must conclude that intermarriage is unwise for most individuals and must, therefore, be regarded as a threat to both personal and group happiness.

Our personal histories reveal the fact that no percent in a mixed marriage, however intelligent and capable he or she may otherwise be can assure his children of the security in family and society they both want and need.

Even though young people, viewing the statistics concerning the failure of such marriages, are generally certain that by some special ability, talent or quality of character of their own they can deal successfully with these problems, there is no reason to believe that they can. Alert and intelligent though they may be, marriage involved not only the man and woman who are the primary parties to the marriage but their parents kindred and society as well.

Their views are generally opposed to such marriages, and the pressures that result have their effect upon the married couple. The fact that intermarriages do not succeed in the same proportion as other (non-mixed) marriages is, in large measure, due to the fact that the number and degree of differences between the parties to such marriages are likely to be greater than the normal differences that exist in marriage. It takes great skill and much effort to resolve intermarriage differences.

Although most couples contemplating such a marriage are quite certain that they possess these advantages, the statistical evidence at hand makes it clear that, unfortunately for them and their children, they are less likely than they think to have them.

Parents must be ready to teach and practice the highest religious standards at all times for the child soon learns to distinguish between "talkers" and "doers".

Loyalty to parents and their standards can be acquired when the child regards the parent's way of life as rich and rewarding. The love of parents and a sincere appreciation of the values by which they live can produce the desire within the values to identify with them. Such identification generally includes that parents' religion as well. Generally,

children with this kind of a relationship to parents and family may be relied on to follow in the path of their heritage.

I advise against inter dating if you wish to preserve your own faith. I believe in group activities. Mixed marriages have fewer chances for happiness. Too frequent there must be compromises that make religious life difficult if not impossible for the inter-marrieds. Further, it is really not only individuals that marry but families. Intermarriage is a source of division and ultimate conflict between people. It produces either indifference or complete abdication of the religious life for the entire family. There is no unified religious perspective for the family by which they can acquire strength.

Partners in marriage ought to have a common faith.

There is a greater chance for a happy marriage when there is a similarity of religious background, when there is no family opposition to the marriage as is generally present in mixed marriages.

The factors appear to be so numerous and so different from case to case, that we must conclude that all the factors we have mentioned play some role, but we must add that the factors differ in individual cases. That is why no general rule can be laid down with any degree of accuracy. Whatever the factors may be, individuals respond and react differently to them. What may affect one person adversely may appear to have no such effect on yet another person, or at the most to affect him slightly. It is, then, the nature of the particular individual (or group) with whom we may be concerned that must be clearly ascertained.

No hard and fast rule, principle or "law" regarding marital choice can be established, however, something in the air seems to suggest that there are those who intermarry on the basis of the individual's conception of himself, of his group and his relationship to his group.

There is the rebellious person who intermarries in order to remove his identity as an African. And then there is the detached person who has broken away from the African primary group, resulting in a weakening of the old standards opposing intermarriage. We also have the adventurous person who does not care about the identity of his spouse while regarding marriage as a new experience. The unorganised or demoralised person expresses his non conformity through intermarriage. Promiscuous persons who develops affection for a person outside their own religious groups;

The marginal person who intermarries in order to raise his status or that of his children to that of the majority group; the acculturated person whose newly acquired standards cause him to believe that there is no one in the African group (or specifically a Muvenda woman) who is any longer acceptable to him; the desire for new experiences; response and recognition - have also been suggested as the possible reasons for intermarriage.

The marital choice is related to one's years of interrelationship with partners and members of the immediate and extended family. Warm and happy reactions to a parent result in an unconscious desire to choose a partner who is regarded as similar in all respects. Unfavourable reactions tend to bring about a choice utterly unlike such a parent.

The trend toward the acceptance of intermarriage appears to be growing. Whether those attitudes constitute a threat to the well-being of the individual, society, family and organised religions is, to some, debatable.

I do want to echo the sentiments of Gordon (1964:38) that intermarriage is such a threat. I do not believe that it holds forth the promise of a happier or brighter day for mankind.

Young people should be led to face the issues involved and helped to see that true love of another person should persuade one to desire the other's spiritual welfare and to wait for marriage until religious unity is assured.

Marriages involving the "rebellious" are unfortunate and can hardly prove successful because the rebellious are often emotionally unhappy young people (Gordon, 1964:60).

In the case of a mixed marriage, as in all marriages, there is always a confrontation at some time or other.

There is a moment when "identification" becomes important to either one or both parents. Each of us needs to identify in some degree with parents, family and other clearly recognisable groups, nations and religions. It is not enough that we identify with the human race. We wish to know who we are among humans, wherein we are alike and wherein we differ. And the differences are as important as are the similarities. That is why so many of us "belong" to churches without ever stepping into them. They help others to identify is, even as they help us to identify ourselves. We seek identification for ourselves through identification with some group or groups. Without these we tend to become tension-laden. A child who is deprived of identification by the most well-meaning of parents has been done a disservice.

Nor is it advisable for parents of different religions to expect a child to wait until he or she reaches adolescence "to make up his mind" which religion satisfies him. To do so it create added stress and strains that can be dealt with only with great difficulty. At the very most, never informing a child of his parents' religious affiliation or non-affiliation commits the child to nothing and that too is a commitment. It is, therefore, a mistake to believe that one can rear a child to age twelve, thirteen or fourteen with absolutely no commitment. Rebellion by a parent or parents against religion is a commitment that communicates itself to the child. Children, more often than their parents, are the victims of intermarriage because of their uncertainty concerning their identity. Well-intentioned intermarried parents find it difficult to provide their children with the security that comes from "knowing who I am and what I am". A child's growth is associated not only with physical but also with emotional factors.

Growth is inhibited when insecurity concerning one's identity creeps into the picture. The child who "does not know who or what he is"; a child who is constantly reminded that his/her mother is a "Mutonga" (Shangaan), because his parents, however happy their mixed marriage may be, are identified with different religions, may become emotionally insecure, unhappy and even on occasion develop neuroses (Gordon, 1964:318).

Children of mixed marriages may express their insecurity in many different ways. They may be highly irritable, overly sensitive, hostile either directly or indirectly, negative in their response to other persons, suspicious of others verbally or even express guilt feelings in one of many different ways. Parents may not always recognise any of these symptoms yet a trained eye may see they exist more frequently in the children of mixed marriages than in others.

Mixed marriages may tend also to produce an attitude of resentment against either one or both parents. Children who would like to identify with both parents find themselves torn between the loyalty they feel they owe to each parent. As a consequence of their inability to identify with both parents, a feeling of resentment develops against one or both parents. Mixed marriage where each parent represents a distinctive way of life is likely to induce problems involving the ego of the child, who may react in a variety of ways that both the parents and society may regard as negative. In spite of that, parents may insist that, insofar as they are concerned, their marriage is both happy and successful. The religious experience is primarily an emotional one. Children who are torn between two sets of emotional experiences - each parent relating to different ways - become the victims of these parents, who, however well-intentioned they may be, seek to arouse the child's emotions through different religious valued and rituals. The inner conflict, often maladjustment, that results from attempting to live in two worlds, cultures or religions at one and the same time is often too great to bear. Certainly an unfair burden is placed upon a child whose parents expect to rear him in two equally good cultures or religions (Gordon, 1964:323).

Amongst the Vhavenda people such a child is said to be a "Muluvha-hothe" i.e. a marginal child. A marginal child is one who lives in or has ties of kinship with two or more interacting societies between which there exists sufficient incompatibility to render his new adjustment to them difficult or impossible. Such marginal people are on the boundary between groups or being in both groups but really in neither. A marginal person may not only be insecure in his/her feelings toward others, but is very likely to indulge in self-pity that may prove ruinous to his own personality development.

The belief that one has been deprived of an "identification", that parents have not been "fair" and that opportunities were not offered for a close relationship to a culture or way of life, of which religion is an integral part, tend to create a mood of self-pity that may be harmful to one's wholesome development (Gordon, 1964:324).

No man is an island, entire of itself : each man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main is accepted as a truism, yet we have the tendency to believe that none of us really requires membership in a family, ethnic or religious group for our personal well-being, a notion which, I believe, is wholly unsupported by the facts. The background, the memories and the loyalties generally associated with the group cannot so easily be rooted out of our minds and hearts or those of our children.

Even though some persons may succeed in such an endeavour, most of us do not and cannot, precisely because an important part of our security is bound up with the religious and cultural group with which we have been associated. Difficult as it may be for adults to cut themselves off from their past, the problems for the children of such persons are even more difficult.

The children of the intermarried can very easily be regarded as "marginal", should they lack clear-cut religious identity, living as they do, on the margins of two religious and cultural worlds. Because humans seem to require both self and group approval, any act that tends to prevent us from acquiring either tends to make us insecure, uncertain of ourselves and of our identity in varying degrees (Gordon, 1964:325).

Even though we have pointed out many factors that tend to encourage intermarriage, we must also point out that there is another side of the coin - there is also factors at work that tend to reduce the possibility of intermarriage. There are numerous such "controls" in our society and,

ambitions will manifest itself. Such a subgroup will attempt to avoid complete integration and ultimate assimilation by a larger group. Idealisation of one's own group is regarded as natural because of the desire to perpetuate its values, to help maintain its uniqueness, to assure the purity of its ideology (freedom from foreign values) and its physical, racial and religious purity as well. Every effort is made, therefore, to maintain solidarity. Marriage outside the group is generally frowned upon and even opposed because it may, in some ways weaken the group. The family, with all its weaknesses, is still an important and powerful influence in our lives. Family mores are still strong enough to cause many young people to hesitate before they marry outside of the family religion (Gordon, 1964:67).

Inasmuch as the mate choices of the young people are most important to the elders in a given society, parents seek to control the choices that young people make. They do so, in certain societies, by supporting child (or early) marriages in which the elders choose the mates for their youth. They arrange matches on the basis of family, cultural, religions, economic or other factors. They separate male and female adolescents, making them inaccessible to each other. They exercise close supervision of their young, and define marriage as a duty and an alliance rather than a matter of romantic love.

They invoke societal and religious standards and traditions, enforcing their decisions by causing the treasonous youth to feel guilty of an offence against either or both. They urge conformity to these traditions and standards as means of preserving the group.

Although persons who are quite ignorant about the religious group with which their parents are affiliated may object strongly to intermarriage, they do so, I believe, on grounds of racial, national or familial loyalties.

Opposition to mixed marriages may also be based entirely on family pride. Parents may object strongly and effectively to an intermarriage because the child contemplating such a union is acting contrary to the parents' wishes - however rational or irrational those wishes may be. Their own societal character is made to seem better, more correct, or "special" than that of any other group. They find within their own group unique equalities and values that seem to them especially worthy of perpetuation. There may be many who deny the quality of uniqueness to any group other than their own and who state that the group has a special significance for its own members and provides a positive motive for its continued existence. The Venda people is no exception.

Even though the family as an institution may be weakening there is still a basic need on the part of most individuals for identification with someone or some group. Whatever may have happened to the distinctive ideologies of both the family and the church insofar as the average individual is concerned, the need to belong is so great as it ever was. What other persons think about us matters greatly to many of us - to the vast majority in fact. The influence of the kinship group has a marked effect upon each of us.

Young people, contemplating marriage with a person of another faith, owe it to themselves and to the children that they may be born to them to consider carefully the implications of such a marriage. Young people who have never regarded themselves as religious, coming into direct contact with a potential marriage partner of another faith, frequently feel

compelled to identify themselves in various ways with the religion of their parents.

To those who contemplate the possibility of intermarriage, I suggest that if your religion is, at present, of little or no significance to you, it is obviously difficult for you to imagine that the time will ever come when it may assume a far greater meaning in your life. Yet such situations do occur far more frequently than we may believe and they must be reckoned with. There is simply no way of knowing if or when a change of heart or mind will ultimately occur. This possibility must, however, be carefully considered. For, if it does occur, it may create a difficult if not intolerable situation in marital life (Gordon, 1964:353).

Although similarity of religions will certainly not assure or guarantee marital happiness, it is likely, on the basis of the statistical evidence presently available, to reduce the number of factors that may obstruct successful marital adjustment and affect the personal happiness of parties to the marriage. Children have a right to know who they are. They have a right to know with which religious group they identify - and why.

Living as we do in a world that emphasises the importance of family and religious affiliations, it is not likely that the child will come through the maize of road blocks without doing some damage to himself. According to (Biya.1992:65) if African women are "people", they must have a chance to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, even in the cultic aspects of tradition that drastically affect their lives and that of their children.

While in a patriarchal society males are often accused by females of being the oppressors, a counter argument often put forward by men is

that some of the obnoxious and repressive role functions of women, whether in religion or in social matters, were formulated in the distant past by powerful elderly women for the purposes of female discipline in the areas of wifely submission, chastity, good maternal care, and for maintaining the aura of femininity (Beya, 1992:66).

Parents, to the very best of their ability, ought to attempt to dissuade their children from intermarrying. They should do so lovingly and as persuasively as possible. Parents who threaten their children, or who insist that they will disinherit them, or refuse to acknowledge them as their children, are making serious mistakes.

Even if there were nothing unique or valuable about the contribution of each religious group to the development of humankind, it is hardly likely that any sectarian group would deliberately seek to destroy itself or even to weaken itself to the point of complete and utter non effectiveness. On the basis of group self-pride and self-respect, it does not appear likely that intermarriage will ever be regarded as a basic or major solution for the ills of our age.

Universal brotherhood, freedom from prejudice, intolerance and hatred of the unlike will hardly be purchased at the price of the giving up of all group personalities. None of the great prophetic voices out of the past ever proposed that national or religious groups, however different from their own, should cease to exist in order to achieve universal brotherhood (Gordon, 1964:358).

Mixed marriage appears to constitute a betrayal of family and group values. A deep hurt is often created in family and friends whose values are spurned. Pride is affected. Families, friends, religions and races,

knowing that their "values" differ from those of others, believe that their unique way of life is somehow endangered when mixed marriages occurs. To minority groups - racial, cultural or religious - the possible extinction of the group as the result of intermarriage looms as a very serious threat (Gordon, 1964:359).

Differences between people must be respected. You cannot eliminate them by pretending that they do not exist. Intermarriage may resolve one kind of problem, but it creates a host of others, equally bad.

There are other areas in which I dream of change, but my dreams remain unexpressed, as I am certain I will be branded as being tribalistic, or I might even find myself excommunicated for being a "pagan".

It has been confirmed through this study that marital problems in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa usually leads to divorce than marriage stability. The rate at which people of different religious faiths are getting married, is a serious cause of concern to the institution of marriage. This study also proved that marriages where Thakha (bride wealth) is given are more stable than those in which thakha is not given. Used correctly, the (bride wealth), mahundwane (camping), betrothal and many more taboos may help prevent mixed marriage and unwanted marital problems which usually lead to marriage breakdown.

Marriage between persons of different faiths apparently weakens the ultimate religious beliefs of such persons. What such marriages may do to the religious beliefs of the children of these mixed marriages must be even more startling. When people of different religious groups marry,

religious interest fades and often is lost. King Solomon's story is a good example of that.

Religious differences among married couples is significant. Any difference is potentially a problem in marriage. Differences in religion usually present more of an emotional problem than differences in such matters as age or education. Peoples' attitudes alone determine whether differences can be resolved or will become acute.

Religious differences, which may be one among the many sources of conflict, are often assumed to be the major cause for the failure of a marriage to work out successfully. No one can state with any degree of certainty, that religious differences will be the primary cause of marriage failure. Yet differences in religious affiliation often appear to be present in such failures quite frequently.

Is it, therefore, not wrong, to conclude that this type of difference is much more important than many of us suspect. As long as it remains one of the factors that seem to be closely associated with many marriage failures, it seems proper to call attention to it and to indicate that it plays a role in the failure of many marriages.

There is no absolute way of determining whether the intermarried are emotionally mature enough to be able to cope with such problems. The role which religion plays in our lives is different in the case of each individual.

That role may actually become different after marriage than it was prior to marriage. These are some of the major difficulties and problems that the intermarried must inevitably face.

Mixed marriages are by their very nature, divisive. They destroy or weaken the faith and values that with good reason have been emphasised by organised religion. They often create rather than resolve problems in human relationships. The story of Ruth did just that. Young people see no special problem in interdating with persons of another faith because they are convinced that, in their case, intermarriage will certainly never result therefrom. Usually the question is : what possible harm can come from friendly social contacts with persons of another faith?

The tensions that result from mixed marriages are produced not only because of religious and cultural differences between the intermarried, but because of their families as well. Inasmuch as no two people, no matter how much in love, live in a vacuum, the ideas, opinions and values of in-laws and family have a direct effect upon them, and that effect under circumstances involving intermarriage is often negative. The story of Samson in Judges 16:4-20 is an excellent example of that.

The children of the intermarried may suffer even more than their parents because the need to identify with some religious group is ignored or denied by the intermarried. Partners in a mixed marriage who believe that by refraining from direct affiliation with any religion their "problem" will be resolved are only fooling themselves. Two "negatives" will not make a "positive".

Like Samson, parties to an interfaith or mixed marriage often declare that, if they were left to themselves, they might solve their problem, but there are no isolated islands, physical or mental, and they are not likely to resolve their differences any faster even when they are away from parents and in-laws. We humans are gregarious. We need other humans to complement our lives. It is a serious mistake to believe that there is really

any "escape" from our families or communities. Sooner or later we turn to them once again for they are so much a part of each of us. The social obstacles to intermarriage are, indeed, many: class, ethnic, national, or racial differences - all of which are likely to create barriers to a successful marriage. It is easy enough to say that these differences ought not to exist. It is quite another thing to find a society where, in fact, they do not actually exist. Differences like these cannot be wiped out with the wave of a hand. They must in practice be taken into account and dealt with realistically.

The survival of a group depends in degree upon the quantity and quality of the institutions which it has established. This principle was embedded in the minds of the Deuteronomist and the Israelites. If these organisations and institutions provide their members, even indirectly, with the desire to maintain their subcultures, they serve a valuable purpose as means of counteracting the forces that make for complete assimilation. They may be termed "positive" insofar as the group is concerned. By following such a program there is more than a likelihood that mixed marriages can be avoided (Gordon, 1964:372).

When contrasting and even conflicting values are made readily available to the children of mixed marriages, they do not find it easy to make a choice between the two or even to accept both. The victim of this situation is often the child of the mixed marriage.

Domestic violence in such marriages is common. Responding to the question: Have you ever beaten your wife / husband? (Questionnaire No. 1 Item 15 Col. 18) 27% of the respondents said "Yes" whereas 73% said "No". From the above we may argue that South African women of all races, religious convictions and income levels face abuse from their partners.

However, because police statistics do not distinguish domestic violence cases from other assaults and no systematic nationwide surveys have been carried out to assess the extent of domestic violence, the problem is difficult to precisely quantify. South African organizations working with battered women have attempted to estimate the scope of such violence by extrapolating from their caseload and surveys. They also believe that a substantial number of women face domestic violence on a regular basis.

Rape Crisis estimated in 1992 that one in every three women was assaulted by her male partner. The Women Bureau estimates that approximately one in four is abused by her partner. The Advice Desk for abused women estimates that one in every six women is regularly assaulted by her partner, and that at least one in four women is forced to flee at some time because of her life threatening situation in her home. The organizations People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) and Coordinated Action for Battered Women also estimate that one in six women is abused by her partner. My recent research in Venda found that eight out of every ten couples cited battering as one of the reasons why they were divorcing each other.

Although Emotional abuse, sexual abuse and Economic abuse were mentioned as some of the problems causing marriage breakdown, Physical abuse came up top on the list.

Unfortunately battered women are often ostracized by their families and communities if they report what has happened to them. Responding to the Question: Have you ever reported him / her to any authority? (Questionnaire no. 1, Item 17, Col. 20) 12.7% of the respondents said "Yes" whereas 87.3% said "No". This explains why most marriages break, to the point where it is impossible for any organization to save it. Responding to the question: Have you at any stage thought of divorcing

him / her? (Questionnaire No 1, Item14, Col. 17) 27.5% of the respondents answered in the affirmative, whereas 72.5% responded in the negative.

6.2 Thakha (bride wealth) as a way of preventing mixed marriages and family breakdown

Probably the most significant, as well as the most prevalent characteristic of traditional African marriage is the custom of paying bride wealth. This custom is also very important for affirming the kinship and affinal group aspect in marriage. Though the agreement about the marriage might be made by just the bride's father or guardian and the prospective groom, the carrying out of the agreement involves many more people (Blum, 1989,47).

In traditional African society, the payment of bride wealth was more in the nature of a token of social exchange, or a gift, rather than of a simple payment of economic transaction. The institution of bride wealth had a high social and religious value. In patrilineal societies, the payment of bride wealth was an acknowledgement of the tremendous appreciation and a manifestation of the gratitude that the lineage of the man owed to the bride's lineage.

Traditionally, lobola is given to the daughter's family as a way of gratitude for the gift of a wife (Masenya,1996:184). I fully concur with Masenya (1996:184) when she says that "Lobola" is not much a means of buying a wife, than a way of expressing gratitude for "sego sa meetse" (someone who would draw water - a symbol of life, for the family). Masenya confirms that a woman who is valued and respected is the one for whom

lobola has been given. She also recommends lobola as long as it serves the good of all (Masenya, 1996:185).

This gratitude was due, for, two reasons: in the first place, the lineage of the bride was giving up, not only the services, but above all, the companionship and presence of one of its own members; her natal family would, in those respects, miss her. Conversely, the descent group of the man would get enriched by the presence and services and the childbearing powers of the bride. No gift or payment could ever be considered as adequate compensation for her (Blum, 1989:48).

The higher bride wealth found in some societies was a reflection of the society's general attitude to marital stability and divorce (Blum, 1989:53). It was not high bride wealth that gave great stability to marriage, but rather, it was the type of social structures, existing within the society, that would lead to more stability in the marital relationships, and thus, call for high bride wealth to be paid (Blum, 1989:59).

Although for members of the elitist group, ring marriage is not much more difficult to arrange than was customary marriage, and although it offers the prospect for greater prestige than customary marriage, nevertheless it offers harder conditions. Christianity and statutory marriage imposes many more strict obligations on the male, who traditionally was able to exercise authority and superiority over females, by taking a second wife, or by resorting to divorce and remarriage (Blum, 1989:149).

The Christian churches in Africa have not followed a uniform policy, regarding the payment of the bride wealth. The Anglican and other Protestant churches have been less consistent than the Catholic Church.

The latter, has generally, insisted that the bride wealth be paid before permitting a Christian marriage to take place. The reason for this insistence is the strong belief among many African peoples, including Christians, that bride wealth is significant for the validity of the marriage. Some other Christian churches, which at first tried to ban the payment of bride wealth, as being contrary to Christianity, had to later on reinstate it, because people were unwilling to accept, as valid marriages those contracted without it (Blum, 1989:149)

The significance of thakha (bride wealth) can be summarised as follows:

- (a) It is a friendly contract with no finality.
- (b) It involves many relatives in both giving and receiving.
- (c) It protects the woman and also through her the life of the family and the tribe as a whole is protected (Radebe, 1983:47).

My research findings confirmed that this principle of reciprocity as applied in the giving of thakha (bride wealth) also explains why even Venda Christians and relatively emancipated women insist on being "paid for". The law of reciprocity is so strongly felt that only when she has been "paid for" in accordance with that law, does she really feel that she belongs to the new group. When the "bride wealth" has not been "paid" or given before marriage a Muvenda wife will probably remind her husband as soon as a quarrel arises that he has no authority over her, since he has not "paid" the "bride wealth" yet (Van Rooy, 1971:67).

Thakha (bride wealth) negotiations often continue over a long period of months or a year. During this period, the husband and wife are not only prepared for marriage but come to understand each other better while at the same time the two families involved, get to know each other better. The advantages of this preparatory period are that the husband and wife

get to know each other's needs, and the partners are therefore in a better position to meet these needs in marriage.

The two families also get an opportunity of knowing each other better, and are therefore in a better position to join hands later in helping, the couple solve their marital problems. Marital disruption is therefore more easily prevented (Radebe, 1983:99).

6.3 Mahundwane (camping)

Mahundwane is the name given to a miniature village built by the children when their parents have finished reaping the harvest. The children build their mahundwane and there play at being grown up with a thoroughness and zeal that forms an excellent preparation for life as responsible men and women of their village. As soon as the mealies have been reaped the children visit the lands and glean all the cobs that have been left behind by their mothers. They then choose a site for their activities. The place chosen is generally a piece of ground a short distance from the village. One of the chief's sons, if there is one of a suitable age, otherwise any leading spirit of the kraal, is appointed chief. The children then pair off, each boy taking one or more of the girls as his wife or wives to work for him. When these preliminaries have been settled the children repair to the chosen site and proceed to build their village, which they endeavour to make, as far as possible, a replica of their parents' kraal.

Each little husband and wife build their own grass hut, after having all helped in the erection of a larger and more imposing hut for the chief. When the village is complete, and each family installed in its small hut, the wives borrow their baby brothers and sisters to act as their children.

even if they do not operate as effectively as they once did, they are, nevertheless, generally influential. Among such controls are the legal and religious prohibitions which societies and religions were established against marriage.

According to Gordon (1964:66) despite all of the freedom and independence of each individual we are nevertheless limited in all possibilities. The controls, social and personal, that are exerted over us by parents, friends and society are considerable. Only a few of us do exactly what we want to do. An ambivalence resulting from the desire to please parents, to conform to the norms of our society and religion and to fulfil our own wishes as well is always apparent. Most people steer a course that lies fairly close to conformity.

Some few may ignore controls and express their independence, however much they may "hurt" parents and other loved ones. Identification with the group becomes a religious necessity for most individuals. Both the group and the individual gain strength by strengthening each other. We may say, then, that we "belong" to groups and we identify with them as a means of maintaining our own security. We humans are gregarious animals.

We benefit from contact with others even as they gain from their association with us. Our religious, emotional and intellectual stability requires that we live as part of the group, which, in turn, derives its sense of purpose from the individuals who comprise it.

If the persons who are members of a subgroup are clearly identified with it, and if the integration within the group is sufficiently well developed, the desire for ever-increasing cohesiveness through unique uniform practices, ceremonies, rites as well as common memories, hopes and

Everything is now ready for the youngsters to settle down to enjoy domestic happiness. Every morning each little wife takes her mealies to her mother's hut and there stamps and winnows the meal to the necessary fineness.

She borrows pots, plates, and spoons and returns to her little hut to cook the morning meal upon her own fire-stones in preparation for her man's return. The boy-husband borrows a dog and goes off hunting like his father. If he catches anything, even a rabbit or a bird, he carries his spoil home to his little wife and presents it to her to cook for him to eat with his porridge. A portion is always sent to the boy-chief. So the day passes, the girl giving her husband water with which to wash before his meal and paying him all the respect that her mother shows to her father. She cares for the children, sweeps the hut, smears her yard thoroughly, so that if her mother should visit her everything will be in order. Sometimes the mothers walk across to see how their children are behaving, and scold their daughters if the porridge is not cooked correctly or the house properly cleaned. At night all the children go home to sleep, but first thing in the morning return to the mahundwaneni. Life there continues for several weeks, the children holding their court in their miniature khoro, obeying their chief and performing all the characteristic acts of courtesy and service that suit their respective parts (Stayt, 1931:99,100).

The children who take part in this event are usually between twelve and fifteen years of age and have often been through part of the initiation rites.

Mahundwane is essentially an organisation to produce proficiency in domestic and family affairs and, as such, is encouraged by the parents (Stayt, 1931:100).

Today mahundwane is not done the same way it was around 1931. Different names are also used for the same event, "camping" or an "outing".

Taking the above-mentioned exposition into account the researcher would like to suggest that used properly mahundwane or camping may prepare today's youth for marriage and in that process help prevent mixed marriages.

6.4 Positive aspects of homogeneous or "religiously unmixed" marriages

6.4.1 Good support system

Since marriage in African tradition is not just a contract between two individuals but also an alliance between two families, what two young people contract together, no matter how genuine, will not be considered complete until the families approve. The choice of a wife is therefore a joint effort from many concerned people. The marriage of two people goes with the mutual support of families of origin of the man and the woman. In the event of any difficulties, the married people know that they can always turn to their larger families for help with the assurance that rescue is sure to come. This assurance gives the married people a real sense of security and satisfaction as they know they are not abandoned to themselves. Unfortunately the intermarrieds may not have that assurance and sense of security.

When the couple quarrel, they do not carry their burdens individually but take their disagreements to older members of the family for settlement. This is also confirmed by the Venda saying that “Mudi a u shayi mukegulu na mukalaha”, (A household should never lack elderly people) meaning that older members of the family reinforces the support system of each family.

Also the community in which the married people live recognises its members and its rules are laid down to defend such members. When members run into situations of injustice or receive unfair treatment in the society they can turn to the elders and village council seeking justice. The rules of the society which give its members the power to defend others, especially in small village communities where everyone knows each other, are a reliable support system for those going through the experience of marriage. In such a setting, there is always someone to turn to.

Even before the young people finally get married, the foundations of their support systems are laid out. The long process of marriage tribute helps to introduce family members to the future bride and groom so that they can know those who are there to help them. The giving of marriage gifts (misho) to those dictated by tradition helps to create deeper friendship between family members who stand behind the couple in their defence and support.

Later on, the newly married begin to have children, they count on the practical help of the older woman to teach them what to do in their ignorance. It is not uncommon for the mother of the young husband and wife to take turns to come and live with the couple for weeks at a time to help them during and after the birth of the baby. This may not be easy with the intermarries who may always be looking at each other with

suspicion. Neighbours bring gifts and practically in house duties (Asana,1990:80).

In time of sickness, the patient is never alone, isolated in some distant hospital room. The sick person would usually receive treatment at home given by some other family member using local herb's or someone in the community who can treat that particular illness. The sick receive frequent visits from friends and relatives whose presence cheers up those who are not well. Unfortunately the same group of people who may be seen supporting one family, that is, "family A" may be reluctant to do the same to "family B" whose couple is intermarried. As I was interviewing most elderly people in Venda various reasons were given: fear of witchcraft, fear of the unknown ancestor, pressure from other family members who may be despising one member or partner in that particular marriage, simply because from a religious point of view he or she is not one of them.

The traditional African cultures, therefore, built up support systems in which one grew up from childhood through marriage to old age. The secret of all these support systems, as one can see, from the above description, is harmonious human relations which can be achieved if people marry within or from their religious group. Such an approach may give stability to marriage and confidence to individuals.

6.4.2 Identity

In African marriage, it is not love in the Western understanding that is primary. The need to survive, the continuity of the family and the reputation of the family name are at stake. These are the things that determine what wife to marry and the selection of a wife uses these

qualities as guidelines (Asana,1990:62). In African tradition, in which maintaining the family name and identity is very important, marriage is central because it is through marriage and procreation that the name is kept. Whether the teaching is done in community groups through elaborate initiation rites or in individual family circles by parents, in each case basic but important lessons on marriage are taught amongst other things, the youth is taught that in order to maintain the family name and identity, people should marry their kind, not only in terms of race and social standing but also religious background and convictions. A"khanga-mutupo" (sib name confuse or a person who bears a family name (mutupo) other than that of his father) is not liked (Van Warmelo, 1989:100)

Preparation for marriage therefore involves the community to a good extent, and the family of the person getting married, but the centre of interest in the whole process is the individual prospective groom or bride. Usually the people involved in the negotiations would like to know whose child it is that they are about to seal a marriage alliance.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are aimed at the South African youth, divorced persons, married persons, parents and different stakeholders who deal with family issues.

One serious drawback in modern African family life is the fact that whereas under the traditional set up both boys and girls receive preparatory education concerning marriage, sex and family life, especially during and after their initiation, modern schools give little and often no

such preparatory education. These schools spend more time teaching young people about dissecting frogs and about colonial history, than they ever spend teaching them how to establish happy homes and family lives. Unless this structure and system of education is changed, we are heading for tragic social, moral and family chaos whose harvest is not far away. Some Africans have been described as being cut off from, their traditional systems and yet not fully integrated into the Western systems, with the results that they are separated from their families with frustration between them. Marriage and divorces among Africans who have had Western education are taking more and more the patterns of the West with little or no regards for African guidelines (Asana,1990:96)

Every child should have a right to receive progressive sex education as part of his general education, and to receive marriage preparation in youth.

If this education is to be provided at schools, a properly organised educational system is needed which would include education for living, where basic education on sex and emotional development would be provided up to the age of eighteen years. Thereafter such education can be on preparation for marriage and should relate to the choice of a marriage partner, and to problems encountered in marriage. This would help individuals not to develop unrealistic expectations of marriage.

It is recommended that wherever possible, the family should be involved in the choice of a partner as is or was done in the traditional African culture.

It is also recommended that marriage enrichment programmes should be conducted regularly. Such programmes should concentrate more on preventive than curative measures.

To be successful in marriage, a person must at least receive some elementary preparation for it. People without some basic preparation for marriage cannot easily adapt themselves to it. Most divorces are to a great extent the result of inadequate preparation and the consequent establishment of marriage on an incorrect footing.

Christians do not have much literature on preparation for marriage (Asana, 1990:153).

More attention seems to be focused on the subject of problems and their solution, rather than their prevention before they ever occur. Such prevention would be most logical to start when preparing for marriage without letting people go into marriage blindly only to encounter certain problems at a time when it is too late to halt major catastrophes in conjugal relationships.

Educational preparation for marriage should be given a place accordance with its great importance. In this education the home, the school, the church and other character-building agencies, and the young people themselves should participate. The instruction given should deal with the principles of happy and successful marriage, such as ideals for the home, wise choice of partners, the wide range of marital adjustments, home management, children and their nature, and especially with the place of religion in individual and family life. These preparations would employ several methods including sermons, lectures, Bible studies, seminars led by pastors, teachers, parents and others with experience and specialisation in the area of marriage and family.

The use of appropriate Christian literature on the subject is encouraged while premarital interviews with the couple are expected to precede the final arrangements for the wedding. In the African church, these teaching on preparation for marriage have to be selectively, since not everything that applies to the Western church will have the same meaning in the African context. There may be some conflicts but also complementarily.

The application of some of the methods in preparing for Christian marriage in the African context have therefore to be selective with attention given to the particular context and its traditional preparation for marriage.

In a traditional family, preparation for marriage commences early in life as the child is taught duties and behaviour appropriate to his or her sex. The child is socialised with regard to adult as well as marital roles (Radebe, 1983:92).

Due to lack of preparation for marriage, some people tend to have unrealistic expectations of marriage, for example, the majority of today's youth may say that if she/he is not of the same faith as myself I will make her/him one, and are disappointed if their dreams do not come true.

* With the dying of the initiation schools, there is a need for a carefully planned system of general education for marriage, parenthood, and family, so as to prevent further breakdown of marriages due to ignorance and false expectations e.g.. mixed marriage syndrome.

QUESTIONNAIRE NO. 1

TO BE ADMINISTERED TO MARRIED PERSONS

For office use only

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SECTION A

Type of institution.

1 To which of the following do you belong?

1.1 African Religion

	1
--	---

1.2 Christianity

	2
--	---

1.3 Afro-Christian

	3
--	---

1.4 Other

	4
--	---

col 4

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SECTION B

2	2.1 Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
	2.2 Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/> col5

SECTION C

Choose and indicate your age category.

3	3.1 18 - 28 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
	3.2 29 - 39 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	
	3.3 40 - 50 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	
	3.4 51 - 61 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	
	3.5 61 years and above	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/> col6

SECTION D

Please tick one box to express your view on the basis of your understanding of marriage:

4 Are you a South African?

4.1 Yes

 1

4.2 No

 2

col6

5 If YES to which of the following groups to you belong?

5.1 Venda

 1

5.2 Sotho

 2

5.3 Tsonga

 3

5.4 Other

 4

col7

6 Please tick one box:

6.1 Traditionally married

 1

6.2 Customary Union

 2

6.3 Community in Property

 3

6.4 Out of Property

 4

6.5 Widow(er)

 5

6.7 Divorced

 6

col8

MALE

7 Did you give thakha (bride wealth)?

7.1 YES

 1

7.2 NO

 2

col9

8 If YES what did you give?

8.1 Money

 1

8.2 Livestock

 2

8.3 Both

 3

8.4 Not Applicable

 4

col10

(FEMALE)

9 Was thakha given to your family when you married him?

9.1 YES

 1

9.2 NO

 2

col11

10 If YES what did your husband give?

10.1 Money

 1

10.2 Livestock

 2

10.3 Both

 3

col13

11 How long have you been married? Please tick one box.

11.1 0 - 1 years

 1

11.2 1 - 5 years

 2

11.3 5 - 10 years

 3

11.4 10 - 15 years

 4

11.5 20 years and over

 5

col14

SECTION F

Please tick one box to express your feelings on marriage and marital problems.

12 When your marriage is in a crisis whom would you like to talk to first?

12.1 Family members. 1

12.2 Police. 2

12.3 Court of Law (magistrate). 3

12.4 Church member. 4

12.5 Khoro (traditional courts). 5

12.6 Other 6 col15

13 If you were to start all over again would you marry him/her?

13.1 YES 1

13.2 NO 2 col16

14 Have you at any stage thought of divorcing him/her?

14.1 YES

 1

14.2 NO

 2

col17

15 Have you ever beaten your wife/husband?

15.1 YES

 1

15.2 NO

 2

col18

16 Does your husband/wife beat you?

16.1 YES

 1

16.2 NO

 2

col19

17 Have you ever reported him/her to any authority?

17.1 YES

 1

17.2 NO

 2

col20

18 Are the people around you aware that you have marital problems?

18.1 YES

 1

18.2 NO

 2

col21

19 Do you belong to the same religion?

19.1 YES

 1

19.2 NO

 2

col22

20 Indicate by means of percentages how serious he is when it comes
to his religion

20.1	0-20	<input type="text"/>	1
20.2	20-40	<input type="text"/>	2
20.3	40-60	<input type="text"/>	3
20.4	60-80	<input type="text"/>	4
20.5	80% and above	<input type="text"/>	5

col23

21 Indicate by means of percentages how serious she is when it comes
to her religion:

21.1	0-20	<input type="text"/>	1	
21.2	20-40	<input type="text"/>	2	
21.3	40-60	<input type="text"/>	3	
21.4	60-80	<input type="text"/>	4	
21.5	80% and above	<input type="text"/>	5	<input type="text"/> col24

QUESTIONNAIRE NO. 2

TO BE ADMINISTERED TO TRADITIONAL HEALERS, PUBLIC PROSECUTORS,
SOCIAL WORKERS MINISTERS OF RELIGION AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS

For office use only

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SECTION A

Type of institution.

1 To which of the following do you belong?

1.1 Traditional Healer

	1
--	---

1.2 Public Prosecutor

	2
--	---

1.3 Social Worker

	3
--	---

1.4 Minister of Religion

	4
--	---

1.5 Health care worker

 5

1.6 Pharmacist

 6

1.7 Other (please specify)

 7

col4

SECTION B

2 Gender.

2.1 Male

 1

2.2 Female

 2

col5

SECTION C

3 Choose and indicate your age category.

3.1 18 - 28 years

 1

3.2 29 - 39 years

 2

3.3 40 - 49 years

 3

3.4 50 years and above

 4

col6

SECTION D

4 Out of ten people how many women do you as a professional help?

Women

4.1

-2

1

4.2

-3

2

4.3

-2

3

4.4

-2

4

col7

5 Out of ten people how many men do you as a professional help?

Men

5.1	-2	<input type="text"/>	1	
5.2	-3	<input type="text"/>	2	
5.3	-2	<input type="text"/>	3	
5.4	-2	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/> col8

6 The people you normally help come to you with (Choose the highest category):

6.1 Health Problems	<input type="text"/>	1	
6.2 Family Problems	<input type="text"/>	2	
6.3 Financial Problems	<input type="text"/>	3	
6.4 Religious Problems	<input type="text"/>	4	
6.5 Other	<input type="text"/>	5	<input type="text"/> col9

7 The "patients" you help, do they come together with their spouses?

7.1 YES

 1

7.2 NO

 2

col10

8 Does your "patients" request you to keep quiet to their spouses or members of family about the visit?

8.1 YES

 1

8.2 NO

 2

col11

9 At what time of the day do they normally come to consult you?

- 9.1 Early in the morning 1
- 9.2 Midday 2
- 9.3 Late in the afternoon 3
- 9.4 In the evening 4
- 9.5 Late in the evening 5 col12

10 To which religion do you think the majority of your patients belong?

- 10.1 Christianity 1
- 10.2 African Religion 2
- 10.3 Afro-Christians 3
- 10.4 Other 4 col13

11 Have anyone of your "patients" ever requested you to do something on his behalf because he is not comfortable to do it himself?

11.1 YES

 1

11.2 NO

 2

col14

12 Have anyone of your "patients" ever requested you to do something on her behalf because she is not comfortable to do it herself?

12.1 YES

 1

12.2 NO

 2

col15

Annexure "C"

QUESTIONNAIRE NO. 3

TO BE ADMINISTERED TO COLLEGE STUDENTS, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
AND YOUTH IN DIFFERENT CHURCH DENOMINATIONS

For office use only

--	--	--

SECTION A

Type of institution.

1 To which of the following do you belong?

1.1 College student

	1
--	---

1.2 University student

	2
--	---

1.3 Labour market

	3
--	---

1.4 Church denomination

	4
--	---

1.5 Other (please specify)

	5
--	---

col4

--

SECTION B

2 Gender.

2.1 Male

 1

2.2 Female

 2

col5

SECTION C

3 Choose and indicate your age category.

3.1 15 - 20 years

 1

3.2 21 - 30 years

 2

3.3 31 - 40 years

 3

3.4 41 years and above

 4

col6

SECTION D

Please tick one box to express your understanding of the questions under discussion:

4 Are you single ?

4.1 YES

 1

4.2 NO

 2 col7

5 Are you dating someone?

5.1 YES

 1

5.2 NO

 2 col8

6 Is the person you are dating of the same religion as yourself ?

6.1 YES

 1

6.2 NO

 2

6.3 NOT SURE

 1

6.4 DO NOT CARE

 2

6.5 NOT APPLICABLE

 3 col9

7 Are you married ?

7.1 YES

 1

7.2 NO

 2 col10

8 Is the person you are married to of the same religion as yourself ?

- 8.1 YES 1
- 8.2 NO 2
- 8.3 NOT SURE 3
- 8.4 DO NOT CARE 4
- 8.5 NOT APPLICABLE 5 col11

9 Are you divorced ?

- 9.1 YES 1
- 9.2 NO 2 col12

10 Is the person you divorced of the same religion as yourself ?

10.1 YES 1

10.2 NO 2

10.3 NOT APPLICABLE 3 col13

11 Are you just about to divorce ?

11.1 YES 1

11.2 NO 2 col14

12 Is the person you are just about to divorce belonging to the same religion
as yourself?

12.1 YES

 1

12.2 NO

 2

12.3 NOT SURE

 3

12.4 NOT APPLICABLE

 4

col15

13 Do you think people belonging to different religions should marry each other ?

13.1 YES

 1

13.2 NO

 2

13.3 NOT SURE

 3

13.4 DO NOT CARE

 4

col16

14 How would you advice someone who is just about to marry a person not belonging to his/her religion and religious convictions?

14.1 DISCOURAGE

 1

14.2 ENCOURAGE

 2

col17

15 When you married did you give thakha (bride wealth) ?

15.1 YES

 1

15.2 NO

 2

15.3 NOT APPLICABLE

 3

col18

16 When you marry will you give thakha (bride wealth) ?

16.1 YES

 1

16.2 NO

 2

16.3 NOT APPLICABLE

 3

col19

Annex ure "D"

P O BOX 451

DZANANI

0955

16 July 1999

The Superintendent

.....

Sir/Madam

QUESTIONNAIRES : for my DLitt et Phil in Religious Studies

1. The above mentioned matter refers.
2. This is to certify that I, Ntavhanyeni Sampson Phaswana of Makhado Township, Dzanani district of the Northern Province, am enrolled for the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in the subject Religious Studies at the University of South Africa.
3. My topic is : Marital problems in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa : An African-Christian perspective.
4. My thesis aims at investigating marital problems especially divorce in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people in South Africa.
5. I thus request you to assist me in this study by answering the following questions from your experience in working with "patients" from different backgrounds or families experiencing marriage breakdown.

6. All your answers will be treated as confidential information.
7. The report will be presented in such a way that no one will be able to associate you with the answers given.

I appreciate your support and participation in this regard.

Yours Faithfully

.....
Phaswana, Ntavhanyeni Sampson

Northern Province

HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

SILOAM HOSPITAL
PRIVATE BAG 2432
LOUIS TRICHARDT

Ref:
Enq: ... Makatu, M.R.
Tel: 015 - 973 0004
Fax : 015 - 973 0607

NORTHERN TRANSVAAL PROVINCE
SILOAM HOSPITAL
1989-09-09
PRIVATE BAG X2432 LOUIS TRICHARDT 0020
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

The Registrar
University of S.A.
PRETORIA

THESIS : MR. PHASWANA.

Permission has been granted to Mr. Phaswana to distribute questionnaires to members of staff of this hospital in preparation for his thesis.

All such questionnaires will after completion be returned to him.


SUPERINTENDENT

Annex ure "E"

P O BOX 451

DZANANI

0955

16 July 1999

The Registrar of the Hon. High Court

Private Bag 5015

THOHOYANDOU

0950

RSA

Sir/Madam

Divorce files from 1979 to 1999

1. The above mentioned matter refers.
2. This is to certify that I, Ntavhanyeni Sampson Phaswana of Makhado Township, Dzanani district of the Northern Province, am enrolled for the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in the subject Religious Studies at the University of South Africa.
3. My topic is : Marital problems in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa : An African-Christian perspective.
4. My thesis aims at investigating marital problems especially divorce in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people in South Africa.
5. I thus request you to assist me in this study by providing me with the divorce files from 1979 to 1999.

6. Every piece of information, verbal or written, will be treated as confidential information.

I appreciate your support and participation in this regard.

Yours Faithfully

.....
Phaswana, Ntavhanyeni Sampson



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Muhasho wa Vhulamukanyi
Ndawulo ya Vululami
Kgoro ya Toka
Departement van Justisie

Tel. No. 015-962 2262

Ref. No. 4/3/4/3/1

Enq.: Davhana T J

REGISTRAR OF HIGH COURT
Private Bag X5015
THOHOYANDOU
0950

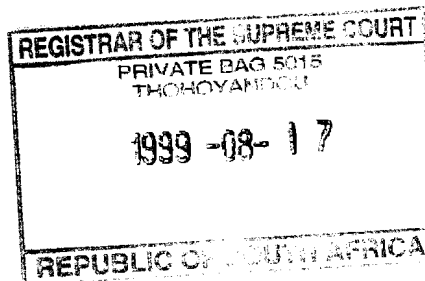
MR N S PHASWANA
P.O. Box 451
DZANANI
0955


DEar Sir

SUBJECT : APPLICATION TO HAVE ACCESS TO DIVORCE MATTERS :
N S PHASWANA : PERIOD 1979 TO 1999

Permission is hereby granted that Mr N S Phaswana have access to divorce matters from 1979 to 1999 for purposes of his dissertation.

Yours faithfully




REGISTRAR OF HIGH COURT : THOHOYANDOU

/mjr

Annex ure "F"

P O BOX 451

DZANANI

0955

16 July 1999

The Rector/Principal

.....

Sir/Madam

QUESTIONNAIRES : for my DLitt et Phil in Religious Studies : Application

1. The above mentioned matter refers.
2. This is to certify that I, Ntavhanyeni Sampson Phaswana of Makhado Township, Dzanani district of the Northern Province, am enrolled for the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in the subject Religious Studies at the University of South Africa.
3. My topic is : Marital problems in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa : An African-Christian perspective.
4. My thesis aims at investigating marital problems especially divorce in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people in South Africa.
5. I thus request you to assist me in this study by allowing me to distribute the following questionnaires to your staff members and students.

6. All their answers will be treated as confidential information.
7. The report will be presented in such a way that no one will be able to associate them with the answers given.

I appreciate your support and participation in this regard.

Yours Faithfully

.....
Phaswana, Ntavhanyeni Sampson



MAKHADO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Private Bag X2448
LOUIS TRICHARDT
0920
Private Bag X1004
DZANANI
0955

Tel.: (015) 966 4039
966 4040
966 4041
966 4006
966 4008
Fax.: (015) 966 4009

Reference No.: H 720035

Enquiries: Vice-Rector

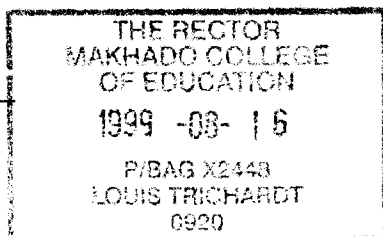
16 August 1999

Mr. Phaswana N S

Your letter dated 13.08.99 refers.

Permission to distribute questionnaires to students and staff is granted.


RECTOR



Annex ure "G"

P O BOX 451

DZANANI

0955

16 July 1999

.....
Sir/Madam

QUESTIONNAIRES : for my DLitt et Phil in Religious Studies

1. The above mentioned matter refers.
2. This is to certify that I, Ntavhanyeni Sampson Phaswana of Makhado Township, Dzanani district of the Northern Province, am enrolled for the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in the subject Religious Studies at the University of South Africa.
3. My topic is : Marital problems in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people of South Africa : An African-Christian perspective.
4. My thesis aims at investigating marital problems especially divorce in religiously mixed marriages amongst the Vhavenda people in South Africa.
5. I thus request you to assist me in this study by allowing me to distribute the following questionnaires to your staff members and students.
6. All their answers will be treated as confidential information.

7. The report will be presented in such a way that no one will be able to associate them with the answers given.

I appreciate your support and participation in this regard.

Yours Faithfully

.....
Phaswana, Ntavhanyeni Sampson



SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC TEACHERS UNION

DZANANI BRANCH

11180 NETSHIDAULU HOUSE
MAKHADO LOCATION

ENG. BRANCH SECRETARIAT
TEL : (015) 966 4075

P.O. Box 1595
DZANANI
0955
02.08.99

18 - 08 - 1999

Mr. Phaswana NS

Your letter dated 13 - 08 - 1999 refers.

Permission to distribute questionnaires to SADTU teachers is hereby granted.

Secretary
[Signature]



South African
Democratic Teachers'
Union (SADTU)

DZANANI BRANCH

PO Box 1595
Dzanani
0955

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