

PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES, A HINDRANCE TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Rev. BALOYI MAGEZI ELIJAH, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my original work and has never previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any University for a degree.

Signature: _____

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SUMMARY

The research is focusing on understanding the problems that are caused by the patriarchal set-up and which become stumbling blocks for the rights of women in the church and society. The research is done by application of the liberation theology from the reality of the experiences of the oppressed women.

The research will:

- Use the practical case studies as an experience of the victimized society in order to understand their pain and need.
- Study the biblical passages that helps to understand more about how men and women are expected to relate to each other by God.
- Study the African traditional understanding about how men and women should relate to each other.
- Give guidelines on how men and women can be equal participants for the kingdom of God, without undermining the rights of women and the biblical message on the view of women.

Liberation theology pioneered by James Cone will be used pastorally and therapeutically to help the women as victims of gender oppression both in the church and in the society.

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By Rev. Baloyi Elijah

KEYWORDS

Patriarchal structures
Practical theology
Pastoral care
Liberation theology
Women's rights
Tradition
Culture abuse
Headship
Submission
Obedience

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From ancient times patriarchal structures were only ruled by men for women, the family and society and it was an acceptable common practice. The only bad part of it was that it was used to promote women abuse and oppression. Our media report on a daily basis how men, because of the patriarchal system, abuse and even destroy the lives of many women. Therefore, if the headship of man implies that he has an unquestionable authority over women, the constitution of our country on gender equality plus the biblical message about how men and women should live, become a serious problem to be addressed. Phiri says:

“Because of patriarchy, women who had their own plantations in Kachikoti village (Malawi) are criticized as wanting to become men.” (1975:171)

The feminist movement scholar Fiorenza indicated that the church is also accepting patriarchy in order to oppress women. She said:

“The official church teaching argues that women cannot fully participate in the leadership of the church because Christ and Apostles did not ordain women. Therefore the tension between the democratic-charismatic and the

patriarchal-hierarchical model of the church comes to the fore in the linguistic notion of the word ‘church’.” (1992:17)

1.2 BACKGROUND

As a Christian servant the researcher did not have good experience when it comes to the issue of African male traditions that over-dominate women to such an extent that women are deprived of a life of freedom in our free country, South Africa. The author will share three stories that challenged his pastoral work in Giyani and Malamulele.

At times the researcher in this chapter will use the personal pronoun “I” instead of the academically accepted third person, in order to share his personal experience about the problem more clearly.

I became concerned when one of the women in my congregation revealed the story of her problems. This is somebody I know well as she attends the church where I am privileged to be pastor.

The story is that her husband, who is an elder in our church, who is having an affair with another woman who is also a member of the congregation. She told me that the relationship had developed more than five years ago, and that she knew about the affair for a long time. When asked why she didn’t take the issue to the church council for disciplinary measures, her answer was that as long as the man was still her husband

she would never do that since she respected him to the extent that she would do everything to protect his dignity, even if it means to die and not having dealt with this problem.

When she explained further, she indicated that it was indeed a serious problem, but she was willing to live with it. I later found out that the main reason was that her husband would either beat her or divorce her if she shared the story with anyone. The main problem of this woman that caused her not to complain, was her economical dependency on her husband.

The second story is of a woman whom was visited by the researcher in Giyani Township, who indicated that she was not free to receive any visitor in her own town house, because of her boyfriend. I concluded that this man was a boyfriend because they were not married, but he sometimes visited her and that he had a wife and house in the same township. She said that whenever this boyfriend saw a male visitor with her, he always was suspicious that she might have other boyfriends, while he had many extra-marital affairs himself. His extra-marital affairs were not a problem to him because he was a man. This reminded the researcher about Van der Walt who said:

“The wife was literally locked up in the house. She had to be seen in public as little as possible, because she would join

with her innate cunning, seduce the innocent men.”

(1988:21)

This is very true in some African townships, some women are in relationships that oppress them. This restlessness of being afraid at all times was upsetting her. As we were talking I realized that she was restless. As cars were passing by she was watching if it was not her boyfriend. When I asked her what her fears were all about, she related the fact that she was afraid that if her boyfriend would find us in her house, he was going to abuse her after we left. When I asked about her frequent absence in the church services she replied that this boyfriend sometimes denied her to go to church services because he suspected her of seeing other men. She said she was sometimes kicked in front of her children and he also confiscated her cell phone so that no other men can phone her. This type of abuse and oppression ruled her life even when the boyfriend was absent.

The other problem faced by this woman was her high blood pressure. The doctors advised her not to use contraceptives because they could cause more damage to her life, but as a result of the abuse she was afraid to ask him to use condoms. She was very open to say that she could not tell him to do so because he might desert her and she would be left alone, without financial help. In other words, she rather suffer the consequences instead

of saying anything whatsoever that can hurt the man. It is better that she is hurt than hurting him because he is a man. I realized that I was dealing with deep and traumatic abuse. Fiorenza articulates this kind of problem to the issue of patriarchy. She says:

“Patriarchy is the root of violence against women. The treatment received by Hagar from Abram is one of the simple examples.” (1994:1)

My ministry is surrounded by these women who fear men and are abused daily. The worse part is that some of their partners profess to be Christians. The third story is a daily reality because some of the preaching points of the church in which the researcher is serving are now closed because of the inferiority complex of women. When the researcher tried to investigate the problem he found that the women in the closed churches claimed that they cannot go to the church without a male preacher every Sunday because they had been taught from long ago by missionaries that the Bible wanted only men to take the lead in the church. When the researcher tried to investigate further, the elders of the church confirmed that that was the way things should be.

They believed in men being the head of a woman. On the other hand it was overlooked that these congregations were only composed of women, which made it difficult for them to have a male preacher every Sunday,

except when one traveled to visit them from another village. According to Ruether (1983:108), patriarchy is clearly a universal political structure which privileges men at the expense of women. The failure of the above women to preach or take a lead in the church also reminds me of the church which Ruether speaks about when she says:

“Dwight Hopkins tells us that when black women began to enter seminaries, they were faced with some African American men who resisted their ordination, denied black women’s calling by God, and in some cases abused them.”
(2002:197)

The church in which I serve is a true reflection of this American church. There is still a strong denial of women who may wish to be ordained in a church’s leadership position like a simple church elder.

Kimathi on the other hand says:

“This worldview indicates that men are more important than women and consequently, sons are valued more than daughters.”(1994:12)

while Clement says:

“The myth of feminine inferiority complex has become more widespread belief. In most human cultures women are

considered lower human beings than the male, less wise and less intelligent than men.” (1971:21)

The above quotations remind the author of a Sotho saying: “Libitla la mosadi ke bohadi”, meaning “the grave of a woman is at her in-laws” (Baloyi, 2001:41).

All the stories and quotations above indicate the seriousness of the problem of women abuse as a result of the patriarchal system which put men as superior people while women are inferior. The reader may realize through the abuse statements shared by women that male dominance is still a problem among African communities both in the church, and at home and in the society where women live.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This issue of patriarchy is a major problem in the northern part of South Africa, especially amongst the Tsonga-speaking people in townships of Giyani and Malamulele. The main problem is that many Christian women believe and accept it, while some Christian men use the Bible in order to enhance this issue. The question to ask is: “Why do men who are Christians continue to abuse their wives in the name of Christianity and Bible?”

1.4 RELEVANCE AND AIM OF THIS STUDY

Since the stories above are true problems and occur in our country, this research becomes important because of:

- The constitution of our country which has the bill of rights that states: “No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, in terms of subsection (3), including race, gender, sex, pregnancy etc.” (South African Constitution, 1996:7).
- The raising and multiplication of broken families and “fatherless” children, which is sometimes a result of abuse of women.
- The fact that most women are leaving some of the mainline churches which prohibit them to take leadership roles, to join Pentecostal churches which affirm them. Therefore, this is a trauma that is facing our society today and need to be addressed with a careful understanding of what the Bible says about women, especially because our country cannot really preach human rights in a free society while many women are still oppressed and violated daily.

The gist of this study is to:

* Help the pastors and church leaders to teach church members in order to accept each other as equal partakers in the kingdom of God, regardless of gender.

* To help women to build their self-esteem so that they can be ready to accept themselves as equal partners with men in the home, church, work and society.

* To help and liberate men through biblical messages from the bondage of seeing women as inferior people.

The traditional understanding of “man’s headship” amongst the African people does not stand the test of the biblical message on headship; hence we have this as a serious problem. In other words, misinterpretation of scripture has become a major stumbling block.

When I was ordained a minister in 1999, I realized that the church I was supposed to serve had a small number of men, while it was filled with women. The most worrying factor is that this church does not even ordain women. The second observance was that there was a real need for many people to serve in the offices of the church. On the other hand, I find that women were the people who were always available whenever there was work to be done in the church. Why did the church then deny ministry to the majority of these people. The other thing realized was that these

women worked harder for the church than most of the men, but they were restricted because they were not allowed to exercise their role as office bearers of the church.

It became more painful when I realized that in some preaching stations women would gather for a Sunday service, but end up going home without having a service because they would claim that the male preacher failed to come. I personally taught women that they should preach on Sundays whenever they meet without waiting for a male preacher and the services are now going on with women on the pulpit in some preaching points. The few men started complaining because I was violating the concept of men as head of the family. But it is still a problem because we still have traditional men who do not feel comfortable when a woman preaches. When I read Desmond Tutu's *Crying in the Wilderness*, I realized that he had the same problem than me. He says:

“I am sure the church has lost something valuable in denying the ordination to women for so long.” (1982:149)

The problem continued in two of our preaching stations as they were closed because women were afraid to preach, while the men who dominated them failed to come to church to reach them because of the distances and shortage of traveling allowances from the church. The

question that bothers me is: How long will the church suffer while there are women who could lead?

1.5 RESEARCH GAP

Patriarchy had been a problem for different societies many years ago. Some scholars and theologians used the Bible, culture and other literature to support feminine subordination in view of patriarchy. There were also many scholars who objected to patriarchy; hence we find researches about patriarchy in our libraries today. For instance, Tracy Steven did a good research in her article “How patriarchy actually prevents abuse” (*Christianity Today*. 47:2 (2003)). Dirk Buchner, Pieter Botha and others contributed on this issue. All these efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

Therefore, after these many researches, the issue of ‘patriarchy as a stumbling block to the rights of serving God as equals (men and women)’, especially amongst the mainline churches in Limpopo, remains outstanding for my research. The intention of the study is not to deal with the issue of patriarchy in general, but specifically as a hindrance to help both men and women of our congregations to share the “priesthood of believers” equally without gender restrictions.

1.6 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

In this chapter I indicated through researches and experience that patriarchy is a real problem that Christian women are faced with, especially in their homes, society and the church in some parts of the Northern Province. It was also clear that that problem is found amongst many African people, from different perspectives of life of course. From problem statement to the research gap the need for this study has become more visible. Therefore, the next chapter will concentrate on methodology of liberation theology, based on James Cone.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER DIVISIONS

Chapter 2 - Methodology

This chapter reviews the methodology of liberation theology of James Cone.

Chapter 3 - Biblical view of headship

This chapter uses exegetical remarks on some problem verses that help to understand how God want men and women to relate in spheres of Christian life.

Chapter 4 - African view of man's headship

This chapter uses African books, newspapers, speeches and films that help us to uncover the view of African women from the eyes of African men.

Chapter 5 - Possible comparison between African and biblical views of man's headship.

This chapter tries to compare the two views in order to draw the lines of differences so as to get to know how the victims can be helped.

Chapter 6 - Pastoral counseling

This chapter gives pastoral guidelines that can equip pastors, and African men and women to deal with the pandemic of women oppression both in the church and home.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of oppression of women brings to mind the problem faced by slaves in the USA. As preachers were dealing with this issue, some came up with the methodology of liberation as a way of addressing the problem.

The author will explore and use the liberation theology of James Cone as the methodology of this research in order to unveil the traditional structures which dominate women, and analyze them as a way of liberating both patriarchal structures and women who are abused. Cone is one of the forerunners of the liberation theology which turned to liberate people from oppression or domination. Before coming to James Cone himself, it is better to have the following little background that seeks to address the issue of abuse and oppression among men who stick to patriarchal structures.

2.2 SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Liberation theology was started in the Latin Americas during the times when the oppression of black Americans was taking place. In the midst

of oppression, McGovern Marxism helped to bring liberation theology into being and he says:

“The use of Marxist analysis, the stance of liberation theology with respect to socialism, capitalism and democracy. Most often the analysis focused on dependency theory, but the references to Marxist analysis occurred frequently enough in the writings of some liberation theologians (1989:xi).”

That awareness started to open a way of tackling oppression and abuse by those in power.

It all started after Europe began its conquest of what is now called Latin America with Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the West Indies in 1492 Vatican soil. The Vatican 2 and the general conference that was held in Medellin (Columbia) in 1968 did not actually produce Liberation theology according to Ferm, but the liberation theology emerged from the lives of the poor and oppressed in Latin America and, in particular, from the basic Christian communities of the dispossessed (Ferm, 1986:11-12).

Whenever there is a violation a methodology is needed in order to change the experience that oppresses the other. Theologians struggled to come up with solutions of addressing the issue.

From then some priests in the likes of Camilo Torres (from Columbia) and Dom Helde Camara (from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) tried to establish some basics of the so called liberation theology as a way to overcome the oppression that the people, including Christian communities, were experiencing. Later on came another man called Gustavo Gutierrez, who was a classmate of Torres while studying sociology together in Louvain.

The theology of liberation according to Gustavo, who is in line with Cone, became the answer to the question; what is the proper role of theology and of the theologian in the attempt to be faithful both to the Christian Gospel and to the poor of Latin America? He also suggests a vision of theology drawn from Augustine's *City of God* in his attempt to relate the Christian faith to the everyday lives of the Christians of his turbulent times (Ferm, 1968:17).

The above background challenged the author's ministry in the midst of patriarchal structures that were destroying women.

The researcher supports the main aim in which all the above-mentioned theologians or scholars meet, which is:

“Theology must try to answer the problems which are at hand (Ferm, 1968:17).”

In Latin American context it was oppression and poverty, while in Giyani and Malamulele it is women domination by men. If theology could only solve the past problems and address the community that lived twenty years ago, then it would not be our theology that seeks to liberate people today. Theology must always address problems faced by those who have lost their human rights. In other words, it must relate to our own circumstances today as was the case in those American times. Cone articulates it better by saying:

“Theology must *relate* the message to the situation of the church’s involvement in the world but not to retell the biblical story.” (1985:5)

Coming to Africa, liberation theology became more concerned with the racial oppression, especially in the times of apartheid. Then the portrait of oppression in South Africa that erupted after the Holland people landed in the Cape in 1652 caused the emergence of the black consciousness. This is where pioneers like Steve Biko, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Manas Buthelezi and Allan Boesak come in. Here some of Boesak’s views about liberation theology that sought to address the situation in South Africa are quoted:

“What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ when one is black and living in a world controlled by the white racists?”

And what if these racists call themselves Christians also?
Yahweh is the liberator God, and Jesus is the one who
affirms liberation for the oppressed. To confess Jesus as the
Black Messiah is the only true confession of our time.”
(Ferm, 1986:66)

To mention some African scholars in the field of liberation theology, there are people like John Mbiti of Kenya, Kwesi Dickson of Ghana, Charles Nyamiti of Tanzania, Engelbert Mveng of Cameroon and many others who were addressing the problems faced by their own people. All these people tried to understand and apply the Word of God in their own situation, where most communities were under oppression, poverty and colonization which needed to be liberated.. The sixteenth century saw the rapid expansion of Christian missions as Spain and Portugal conquered more and more of Latin America. Despite colonization, the church became champion of speaking on behalf of the oppressed. In view of the above, let us now analyze the methodology that seeks to liberate women.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF “LIBERATION THEOLOGY”

The methodology that will be used will be based on Cone, who seek to liberate those who are oppressed. Cone’s definition of liberation theology is as a discipline that seeks to analyze the nature of the Christian faith in the light of the oppressed which arises chiefly from the biblical tradition

itself. God, according to him, is God who dealt with His people from situation to situation. He never ignored difficulties of His people from time to time. In other words, when one addresses the concept of liberation theology, one of the main questions must be “what does God say about this situation or problem of oppression?” The other thing he says about the definition is that he takes liberation theology as:

“Making right from what man (sic) made wrong.” (Cone, 1986:2)

In other words, human being’s fall put many things upside down, including the way males live with females and also how husbands treat their wives.

Secondly, Cone sees liberation theology as freedom to be in relation to God, to self and to the community of the oppressed. That is why Cone emphasizes:

“Any statement that divorces salvation from liberation or makes human freedom independent of divine freedom must be rejected.” (1975: 141)

Therefore, liberation theology engages itself to bring back the order which was there before man brought disorder. According to the author, Cone is of the idea that liberation theology must correct what man had

wronged. Still in line with Cone, Muzorewa (1989:53) explains or sees liberation theology as an account of how the believers are set free from both third world oppressive structures inherited from colonialists and some created during the neo-colonial era and western theological as well as political domination.

The researcher agree with both Cone and Muzorewa in this aspect because there cannot be any reason to even speak about theology, if theology does not address the people of today with their problems and situations. To explain more about liberation theology Becken's (1973:4) view is that the experiences made by one section of mankind are definitely of importance in all other sections. Therefore relevant theology must be a theology and in presenting Christ it must be meaningful and relevant to the people in their situations. The researcher's argument is that if God is an omnipotent God, then He knows our situation of today. Therefore he has something to say about it. The researcher wants to summarize the definition of liberation theology by saying that it is a study of God's word that is directed to reality; where we must try to find out how God is dealing with our present problems. He spoke of course with the Israelites during the time of Moses and others, but He must be speaking to us today, addressing our situation through His word. May be, to make my point clear, let us take for instance the times of Old

Testament prophecy: each and every prophet that was sent to speak to God's nation was given instructions by God.

These instructions were related to the problems of that time. In many times when the people of Israel were in the hands of their enemies, especially the time of the bondage in Egypt, God used someone like Moses to liberate them so that they can freely serve their God in Canaan. God's intention when creating human beings was neither slavery nor oppression; hence He wants us to be free to serve Him. That is what Paul (Gal.5:13) said to the Galatians:

“As for you my brothers, you were called to be free. But do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting your physical desires control you. Instead let love make you serve one another.”

Any type of oppression must be dealt with by the God of creation, and that is all about liberation theology. During the times when Cone and others wrote about liberation theology, Latin America was torn apart because the people were trying to voice their anger at the American whites who oppressed them. That is why Cone (1989:131) says that black theology is the removal of the oppressive ideas from black community. Then this must be a theology also, that helps to remove the oppression of women by men. In agreeing with Cone, if theology fails to remove the

ideas which oppress people, then such a theology does not achieve its goal.

2.4 ITS MAIN FOCUS AND AIM

Russel (1974:85) sees liberation theology's aim as a search into tradition and history which is necessary to operate at all interlocking levels of investigation and interpretation in order to provide a way of escaping a fated world in which the future has been closed off by the established traditions of certain men.

The statements above introduce the reader to what liberation theology is all about. It intends to rescue the groaning society as a result of certain men's abuse of power and knowledge. Boff also supports Cone's liberation theology by saying that liberation theology must have both the historical and the contextual theology. He goes on to say:

“It emerges as a service of expression and explanation of faith, hope and charity of the community of Christians. It must answer practical questions like, what does God say with this situation today, what does this mean for reality today, what is the meaning and significance of this theme, or this truth, for the oppressed of our continent?” (1986:5)

In other words, liberation theology must aim at recovering the image of God in the oppressed people because they are also created by the God of life. The author disagrees with the theology of Arian that says that God created everything and left it in the hands of human beings in order to take 100 percent control. He strongly concurs with Boff's theology that seeks to restore God's sustenance over His creation, hence every aspect of the universe (including poverty, colonization and oppression) are part of His concern. This becomes clearer if we understand what De Bruyn (1993:228) says about "Stewardship of God". He says:

"A steward is someone appointed to look after someone else's possessions, and who has control of it. The steward has to keep in mind that he (sic) may never use his (sic)position to enrich himself (sic) unlawfully, he should rather see to it that the owner is enriched. As a steward, man has to regard his possessions as gifts from God. 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it' (Psalm, 24:1)".

If theologians are also stewards of God, there cannot be any reason to excuse themselves from seeing that even the theology of the day make efforts to see God addressing His nation in its own circumstances and situations, where liberation theology comes to rescue. Therefore, as

stewards, man ought to care for their partners which are given to them by God.

2.5 JAMES CONE'S THEOLOGY

2.5.1 Cone identifies himself with the community of the oppressed as God takes side with the poor

In other words, preachers ought to be the voice of the voiceless. The point of departure of Cone's theology is the Old Testament history of revelation, especially the historical event when God took the Israelites out of the bondage in Egypt. In his "God of the oppressed" he says:

"The Exodus was a decisive event in Israel's history, because through it Yahweh revealed Himself as the Savior of an oppressed people. Israelites were slaves in Egypt, thus their future was closed. But Yahweh heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he saw the plight of Israel, he took heed of it. When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had put forth against Egypt, they put their faith in Him, and responding with a song to the Lord as we read in Ex.15:1." (Cone,1975:63)

Here Cone reminds us of God who takes sides. God in this way became one with the suffering community and He stood by their side. His theology will help to liberate women who are oppressed by African structures of dominance. No one can try to liberate the oppressed unless he/she first takes side. There can be no liberation if we want to remain neutral.

This part of history forms the backbone of Cone's theology when trying to apply this message to his own situation of affliction in the USA. God's call and election of Israel is related to its oppressed condition and God's own liberating activity already seen in the Exodus. By delivering Israel from the bondage God is seen as entirely God of liberation, hence Cone will argue that the same God is God who wants to liberate black Americans from white oppression. In other words, the same God will take the side of the abused woman who suffer under the oppressive patriarchal structures.

If God does not address people in their own situation, theology would always be irrelevant in addressing their needs. That is why the author understands that the rise of the Old Testament prophecy was due primarily to the lack of practical solutions for injustices within the community. The very same injustices today are the sources of women abuse and domination; hence the cry of women is heard through feminist

movements and other liberal theologies. That is what Frazier (1975:415) indicates that women are depersonalized and abused in African communities. This process calls for practical theology to address the above structures.

The prophets of Israel were prophets of social justice, reminding people that Yahweh is the author of justice; hence the unjust were to be punished time and again. The fact that God pronounced judgments towards unjust rulers of the time indicates clearly that God has always been on the side of the oppressed. Cone was right in his theological departure because we must not be mistaken to think that God is only identified with those who enjoy life at the expense of others. God did not create either poverty or oppression nor did suffering in the beginning, but all these things come into being as a result of man's fall into sin and greed that lead to domination.

We cannot rule out that throughout the history God was always saving the poor and the wretched in the community. The reader must be reminded of the well-known story of a Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Even though some people might think that God was supposed to liberate this woman from her sinful ways of life, and immediately turned her from being a prostitute into someone who invited people to Jesus (a missionary or evangelist), God's liberation work to the prostitute is very

clear. God, in Jesus, first identified himself with a woman. In other words He entered into her world, and liberated her.

The other liberation work was seen on the event of resurrection of Jesus Christ. James Cone has this to say:

“The resurrection event means that God’s liberating work is not only for the house of Israel, but for all who are enslaved by the principles and powers. In order to ease the pain of injustice on earth, the message of resurrection conveys hope and promises reward in heaven”. (1986:3)

Theology can never be a theology that helps people if it does not address their political, financial and social concerns. Kretzschmar (1988:82) contends: “The discussion on liberation theology will be incomplete if implications for the church are not mentioned, including the abuse of women. This kind of theology is always concerned with those in bondage, like the women in Giyani.

In the New Testament God identified Himself again with the victims of oppression and domination in the person of Jesus Christ. Cone goes on to say that the Jesus’ story is the poor man’s story because God in Christ became poor and weak in order that the oppressed might become liberated from poverty and powerlessness. Cone continues:

“Whatever is said about faith, hope and humility in Christ must be interpreted in the light of his identity with the poor for the purpose of their liberation”. (1975:90)

Pretending as if God is happy with all the situations in which His people find themselves is like limiting God of His mighty deeds. Theology must not only recite what God said to other people, but it must talk about people in their situations. When this is taken into consideration then people would understand the relevance of liberation theology in women’s difficulties. It is of course very wrong to only promise people about the beauty that they will experience in heaven, while neglecting their present experiences of life. Hence the researcher supports the idea of Cone when he discusses the sources of liberation theology as follows:

*First source is *human experience*. Life of humiliation and suffering towards the black Americans produced black liberation theology in the west; hence the same applies to all situations. If someone is in a particular problem, it is not only possible to ask one what God is doing with the situation, but it is also necessary and important.” (1986:32)

Therefore, preachers in this northern part of South Africa are failing to represent God when they do not challenge structures that suppress women to operate as full human beings.

Moltman (1984:14) shares the same view with Cone when he feels that the starting point for individual Christians is the experience of justification in his or her own faith. The author and Moltman share the view that the experience of liberation as related to commitment to human rights is an extremely important part of our lives.

According to Cone (1986:33) other sources of experience are history, revelation, scripture and tradition. On the other hand, liberation theology has three roots, according to Nash (1984:9), viz: Linguistic, political and nationalistic or ethnic roots. The Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel also for the oppressed in society, therefore the church of Christ cannot be for other people, but for the society (for all people).

*Passion - The dictionary meaning of passion is a very strong, deeply felt emotion. The researcher personally understands passion in this context as the way how one can feel what someone else is feeling. In other words, it is to try and get to someone's pain as if it is my own pain. (Oxford: 1996) According to Cone:

“There is no liberation movement that can take place effectively before those liberating others get to deeply understand what is taking place in the hearts and minds of the victims. This is not easy at all, but that it is the only appropriate response to this truth”. (1986:18)

In other words, to experience what the abused women feel is a very important starting point for their liberation. It is also a point of departure in doing pastoral care with women who are abused.

When defending his point of passion he says (1986:19):

“In liberation theology the liberator participates in passion in behalf of the oppressed. The oppressed humanity is the point of departure of Christ Himself. It is difficult for the oppressor to participate in this reality of liberation because of his identification with the unreality. This is what one must think before becoming a spiritual liberator of the oppressed.”
(1986:19)

Since liberation theology is theology of action, there must be solidarity between the liberator and the oppressed, in this case, men and women. That is why we must speak about the relationship between FAITH AND

PRAXIS. The practicing of what we preach is biblically supported by the scriptures saying:

“Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in Heaven wants them to do” (Matt.7:21).

The above quotation challenges pastoral care givers and preachers who continue to suppress women through patriarchal structures.

It is important to note that without getting the reality of how it pains to be oppressed, one cannot easily liberate those in chains. We have a saying in Shangaan that indicates that one cannot really know what takes place in the circumcision school before one gets there. One must first identify oneself with the oppressed community in order to work for their liberation. This is very much biblical when we analyze what Jesus Christ did on earth. He related to drunkards, outcasts, prostitutes and thieves. True liberation must come from the conviction of the heart in the first place, then to emotions, feelings and so on. That is why one must take time to live with the oppressed and try to understand their pain before getting to help them. That is why the language of liberation must reflect the experience of the people about whom we claim to speak. Since the research is involved with the oppression of women, the same Jesus who related to drunkards is also relating to the oppressed women. He never

promoted any type of abuse towards women, but he helped them to heal the wounds of the experiences of the past.

2.5.2 Afflict the oppressors and support the oppressed

The fact the God did not only stand on the side of the oppressed but also judged the oppressors, is a reality of that. In other words, the one who stands for liberation must be ready to condemn and fight against the oppressors in favor of the oppressed. One can indeed not liberate the oppressed without being against the oppressor. Cone says:

“The subordination of women in the black church is obvious that I sometimes wonder why any argument is needed to demonstrate it. When the issue is addressed to black pastors and bishops their response is often reminiscent of the white responses to the subordination of blacks and they say ‘women like it that way or women do not want to be pastors.’” (1982:122)

This statement indicates clearly pastors and bishops who do not want to condemn the perpetrators or are against them; hence they cannot really liberate women without fighting against them. God’s liberation of slaves from socio-political bondage. He inflicted His judgment on the people of Israel when they humiliated the poor and orphans saying:

“You shall not ill-treat any widow or fatherless child. If you do, be sure that I will listen if they appeal to me, my anger will be roused and I will kill you with a sword.” (Exodus 22:23-24)

God never withheld His actions against the people who victimized others in any form, hence liberation theology must emphasize that the liberators be strong against the oppressors. Even if the liberator is a male figure, he must be very vocal when denouncing the oppression of women, especially when addressing the oppressors. If care givers and preachers adopt this method of liberation, they will be able to work with men or women who are dominated by patriarchal structures. With the abuse in mind, let us now analyze the role of practical theology.

2.6 SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Hesselgrave and Rommen, Bultman connects very well with Cone since he understands the theologian’s task to make the Bible believable and meaningful to modern man, and modern man (sic) cannot be expected to respond as people did in pre-scientific times (1989:140). This idea, plus other theories, helps theologians to see that despite making comments and thoughts about what the Bible says it is not enough; but they should also make it livelier and practical to people of the times, hence practical theology became an answer. If the Bible is meaningless to its readers,

then it is helpless because it will not assist people in their own concrete situations.

According to Chaffer practical theology is a discipline concerned with the application of the truth to the hearts of men (sic). Scheirmarker (In Burkhardt, 1983:55) argues that theoretical theologies (philosophical and historical theologies) cannot become theological until they are applied practical theology. Therefore, care givers are challenged to be practical when dealing with the issues of abuse and domination. (1993:189)

It is not easy to define what practical theology is because it is the most practical discipline that deals with the word of God directly to the reality of life. The author personally understands that every time one thinks of helping another person he or she intends to apply practical theology. The Dutch theologian, Dingemans, spoke about practical theology when he said:

“Whereas formerly practical theologians had first studied the Bible and the doctrine of the church in order to apply the results of their findings to the practice of the church, more recently, under the influence of social studies they have changed their approach: in recent decades practical theologians worldwide have agreed on starting their investigations in practice itself. Practical theology has

become description of and reflection on the self-understanding of a particular religious tradition.” (1988:83)

The author views this approach as taking a move from practice to theory, and then back to practice. When a systematic theologian asks critical questions about the way faith expresses itself in its language, the practical theologian asks critical questions about the way faith expresses itself in practice. The difference here is faith and practice. The author personally understands practical theology as the application of the word of God as preached behind the pulpit into real life situations. In other words, preachers (care givers) must apply their faith in practice.

Karl Bart understands theology as the systematic interpretation of God’s self-disclosure to the Christian church. (1936:47) The author wants to add that, in the process of this interpretation, a person also has an amount of responsibility, since he/she will be influenced by the situation and his/ her socio-historical background. The author’s belief is that if theology is successful, it must reach the understanding of human being as its audience. That is why the author is just partially in agreement with Bart, but he is in full agreement with Browning (1991:5-7) who goes further in explaining that theology is practical only by applying God’s revelation as directly and purely as possible to the concrete situations of life. The theologian must be able to move from revelation to the human situation,

from theory to practice and from revealed knowledge to application knowledge. The author is convinced that theology can be practical if we bring practical concerns to it from the beginning. Hyunchul (2004:40) named three approaches that emerge as new directions in practical theology, viz: Praxis-theory praxis, empirical orientation, and interdisciplinary integration and identification approaches.

Praxis-theory praxis has to do with applying God's revelation as direct and as pure as possible to life situations. Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:88) quote Gutierrez who defined praxis as "the existential and active aspects of Christian life which include: charity of the gift of oneself to the other, spirituality, anthropological aspects, social life of the church and signs of time. This is a challenge to care givers in the northern part of South Africa. Let us now analyze the empirical theology.

Empirical orientation is when the research is done to relate the text and its context hermeneutically (Heitink, 1999:266). Pieterse (2001:14) also advises that to understand better the purpose of practical theology, people need to connect it with other theological disciplines. This is an important statement that forces us to integrate our experiences with practical issues.

2.7 GOD AS A LIBERATING GOD

According to Cone (1986:9) it is not possible for anyone to do Christian

Theology, apart from the biblical claim that God came in Christ to set the Captives free. God has chosen to disclose the divine righteousness in the Liberation of the poor. This indicates clearly that, according to Cone, God's main intention is to liberate his people, hence He is a liberating God. That is why he says:

“The oppressors and oppressed cannot possibly mean the same thing when they speak of God, for instance, God of the oppressed is a god of revolution who breaks the chain of Slavery while God of the oppressors is a god of slavery and must be destroyed along with the oppressors.” (1986:63)

To add to what Cone has said, that is the reason why some black Africans still identify Christianity with the culture of white people, because when the same oppressors brought the gospel to the blacks, they did not think it was the same God who allowed the whites to oppress them, and is now preached again to slave them differently. This resulted in the thinking that whenever we speak about God, God of the whites is not the same as God of the blacks, even though they are both called “GOD”. It is very difficult to identify myself with my oppressor and hence our language and interpretation in many things will not be the same. From the Old Testament God was known as a Liberator of the Israelites (blacks and oppressed women included). To make this

clear, Cone argues that liberation theology is biblical because people claim that God of the Exodus and the prophets of Jesus and the Apostle Paul is involved in their history, liberating them from the bondage.

He says:

“A theology derived from black sources would have to focus on Jesus as the beginning and the end of faith, because this affirmation is a summary of the black testimony that ‘Jesus picked me up, turned me around, left my feet on solid Ground.’” (1986:12)

He continued with his argument by saying:

“What does it mean to be black and Christian? If God is the Creator of all persons and through Christ He made salvation possible for everyone, why are some oppressed and segregated in the churches and in society on the basis of color? How can whites claim Christian identity, which emphasizes the love and justice of God and still support and tolerate injustice committed against blacks by churches and society?” (Cone,1985:6).

The reader will now understand why God wants to liberate women who are oppressed, but to understand this, the reader needs to learn from the process of how God liberated other oppressed people in the past. Here Nash’s (1984:9) explanation of the liberation in the story of Exodus is Important, because he sees God as a military triumph, where one might even say of God’s right hand that “dashed in pieces the enemy”. Liberation of Old Testament began in Egypt when God sent Moses to

liberate the Israelites from the bondage they were experiencing at the hands of Pharaoh. In the same vein care givers are challenged to liberate structures that dominates and oppresses women.

The act of this nature was both political and religious. That is why, even today, those people who say that Christians must not interfere with politics are people who do not carefully study the Bible. God is God of Israel, of the oppressed nation, and therefore from the side of Israel God used certain individuals (Moses and Joshua included) to achieve His goal of liberating His people from such oppression. Since God did not create oppression, the author believes He is not for oppressors, but against them that is what we read in Exodus when it says:

“Terror and dread fall upon them. They see your strength, O Lord, and stand helpless with fear until your people have marched past- the people you set free from slavery.”

(Ex.15:16)

When we read in Genesis which says:

“God looked at everything he had made, and He was very pleased”, (1:31)

we find that everything that God created was good, but oppression is not good, hence it was not part of His creation. It only came as a result of

human beings sinning against God in Genesis 3. In other words, we can never normalize oppression and bondage amongst human beings. They remain abnormal situations of life and therefore must be treated as such. The author believes that the God of the Old Testament is the God of liberation and it must remain the universal truth. God did not only liberate His people in the Old Testament, but He continued to be a liberation God even in the New Testament.

According to Segumelo, (in Cone):

“If I read the New Testament correctly, the resurrection of Christ means that He is also present today in the midst of all societies affecting His liberation of the oppressed.” (1976:31)

This is also Gonzalo’s view of the New Testament, who sees Jesus of the New Testament as the “liberator of humanity”. According to him:

“Theology is a reflection and meaning of faith from the perspective of the experience of oppression and domination, of conflict and rebellion. Jesus is the liberator of the wretched and the poor.” (1987:88)

Gonzalo experienced the situation of Indian oppression by the whites, where the white man kept the Indian under his boot and under his contempt. This is what the African women are resembling in our

situation. That is why we understand that liberation has strong social and political over tones. The belief is that Jesus is the liberator of individual souls from the tyranny of the devil, which also means chasing away the devil from a human heart, brought in by the error of old Adam. The fact that God became human in Christ so that we can be free in order to speak about God in terms of humanity and about the crucified and risen Lord, is a true implication that God is a liberator of all those who are under oppression (Cone, 1986:8). With the abuse in mind, let us now analyze the issue of domination of women by men.

2.8 LIBERATION THEOLOGY ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF MEN WHO DOMINATE WOMEN

The male dominance tendency escalated to an extent where even the initiation school uses it as a tool to make boys feel that they are superior to girls. One of the ways in which African society train men to be responsible is through initiation schools. The domination of women can be seen in the statement by Thieme (1970:3) who says:

“For as much as man (sic) is the image of God, the woman must be the glory of man.”

The power which men have at the initiation school teaches them to abuse women and let them feel as their inferior beings. There must be strategies developed in order to help men understand that the abusive barriers they have must be denounced and confessed as wrong and evil in the eyes of God.

It has always been our African custom to teach men right values from their childhood as they move into manhood. Many structures were used in order to educate men on how to oppress women in marriage, for instance, the initiation schools in the forests are full of such teachings. It has now become part of our culture to dominate and oppress women. When coming to religion, especially African based religion, it promotes the idea of domination and therefore culture clashes with Christian teachings of equal partnership. That is why it is still very difficult for many African men to accommodate women, especially in leadership roles of the community and church. The author agrees with Van der Walt (1994:154) who says that the liberation of the woman cannot take place without the man. In other words, men will need to be challenged and taught on how to treat women as equal partners.

Sometimes even the Bible is misused in order to promote the issue of male dominance in many areas of life. For instance, in Gen. 2:23 “the bone of my bones” is taken literally as if a woman is to be owned like

property because she is from a man's bone. Today the whole question has become aggravated because of the notions of equality between men and women, resulting from the so-called "feminist movement". Because some men believe that the masculine form of God used in the Bible support their idea, the feminist movement has a question to ask:

"If God is masculine, how can He stand and agree with the brutality that men are doing to women?" (Jones, 1973:96).

If the society had treated men and women as equals, there would have been no fundamental reason to object to the view that God is masculine.

The study must try to educate men in order to understand that women need to be treated as equal partakers of God's kingdom. They must realize that we do not have to devalue any person because of gender difference, but ought to treat everyone with respect and dignity, including women. If Jesus Christ, our Savior, was not hostile to women, who are we to misjudge and mistreat them? Women are taught in the church that Jesus came to the world as a male where he healed, taught and helped women to find their feet in Salvation, for example, in Luke we read:

"Sometimes later Jesus made a trip through towns and villages, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom of God. The twelve disciples went with him, and also did some

women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases, Mary (Magdalene), from whom seven demons had been driven out, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, an officer in Herod's court, Susanna and many other women who helped Jesus and his disciples with their belongings" (Luke 8:1-2).

The rule of man over his wife in Gen.3:16 did not imply to forcefully push her around like a piece of property because that is not only dominance, but also abuse of power. That is why Mol (1981:129)

says: "Man should be a leader whose physical power is used to protect his wife and family, instead of abusing them." But then the problem arises when the male figure trembles and abuses the female. The author strongly concurs with Grant that Christ did not only have maleness on earth, but He also had humanity, since He came to liberate the human race in this world. It is irrelevant to use Jesus' gender in order to violate His main purpose in the world. It will be important to evaluate in the eyes of the women in the Bible, whether the biblical headship implies the violent situation which men are putting women in. The relationship between man and woman, as initiated by God in Eden, must be clearly understood by men, otherwise liberating the oppressor will become more difficult.

Men must be liberated from their traditional way of understanding women as their doormats. Violent men who mistreat their wives must be

brought to the salvation of Jesus Christ which does not allow them to see women as inferior people, since all people are equal before God. They need to be challenged therapeutically in order to understand that God sees us as equal partakers in His kingdom. In other words, they need the gospel that will help them understand that God is present even in their own circumstances and that He can also liberate them. Let us now address the issue of inferiority.

2.9 LIBERATING WOMEN FROM THE BONDAGE OF INFERIORITY COMPLEX

The discussion on liberation theology will be incomplete if implications for the church are not mentioned, including women in the church. That is why, for Kretzschmar (1988:77), liberation theology must be seen as an aspect of the gospel and an attempt to emphasize God's concern for the oppressed. Therefore liberation theology will cease to be called a theology if it is not tasking itself with an issue of trying to unfold those hidden secrets that are used in order to make some others inferior citizens to some people.

According to Olasky (1988:106), where liberty is honored and protected, people do not need rubber stamps on permits for many of the ordinary affairs of life. When prophets of God denounced any form of oppression they were not speaking about the situation which confronted the people of

the time. The Israelite community of the period before the feudal dictatorship of the city-states of Canaan, was forced to retribalize and regroup as an alternative, while the prophesy of the time gave hope and denounced the dictatorship. It is therefore the only true message to speak about liberation towards the people who are oppressed. That will not only help the oppressed community, but it will also help the leadership of the time by avoiding unnecessary uprisings (Mosala, 1989:104). The author believes that if women were handled as equal partners to men, from Latin America and all over the world, the feminist movement would not have been there.

James Cone's (1975:17) idea is that one's experience is the source of theology. He set an example of black theology that came as a result of black people's experience of oppression in America. If someone is enslaved, his/her experience about everything (including God) is a different one from other people. For instance, the understanding of the gospel of God by the victim of oppression is different from that of a free person. Likewise, the experience of women about God in the situation of being victimized by men, also resulted in the so-called "feministic theology" and brought a response to their oppressive situation. We need to rethink now about how God can liberate women, hence liberation theology comes into the rescue. This theology must reflect upon what it

means to be a woman. Cone went on to say that the theology must uncover the structures and forms of women experience, because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the women's experience itself.

Cone understands liberation as:

*Freedom to be in relation to God.

*Freedom in relation to self and the community of the oppressed.

*The project of freedom in hope. (1975:141-146)

Cone's concept of liberation must also aim at reconciliation. The pastoral services must be ready to prepare the oppressed for reconciliation with their oppressor after such a liberation. Cone says:

“It is just like when one is saved, He or She must be prepared to reconcile with God.” (1975:147)

In joining Cone the author will add by saying that if indeed God delivered Moses and the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, Daniel from the lion's den and his three friends from the burning fire, He is indeed a liberating God and is capable of liberating women. This means that any form of victimization is not accepted in the eyes of God. It is therefore important for us to firstly take into consideration the pain and action that is caused by oppression of some kind, so that we can try to come with a pastoral

healing of such a pain. Liberation will be an unfinished story if the concept of “hope” to the victims is not explained. In other words, the message of hope must become the climax of the liberation struggle of the oppressed. Even when people are still in the struggle, they need to be encouraged to hope for the good things thereafter. In the American struggle the victims of oppression used to sing the songs of hope which instilled them with hope in order to overcome their afflictions. Cone mentions that one part of their song said:

“The ship of Zion is coming with Jesus as the captain to carry us home ...” (1975:56)

Therefore therapy can be a place where hope is created. Both the therapist and the help seeker can work on issues that will finally build hope and courage in women who are oppressed.

The author lastly wants to mention that liberation without reconciliation between the two parties cannot help the oppressed to face the new future of freedom with responsibility. If the story of the exodus is a paradigm for the Old Testament conviction that God takes sides, the story of Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth is a paradigm for the New Testament conviction that God brings liberty to the oppressed. Brown summarizes his conviction by saying: “To know God is to do justice.” (1978:94)

The well-known story of Abraham who was separated from his people, where domination of a community, culture and tradition would continue with the Babel and its sequel, indicates a divine liberation. Therefore Abraham was liberated from all those traditions in order that he may serve God freely in his promised land.

The author thinks that the reason why many women proudly accept mistreatment and beating from men is because of their belief, which has also been taught from their childhood, that they are inferior to men. They are taught from their initiation schools that they should never show any sign of revolting against men. One old man shared with the author the reason why male initiation school is conducted in the forest. He said it is to teach men that they will work far from their homes, hence they will only come home for short times. A total misunderstanding of the role of men in the community.

On the other hand, the initiation of women is done at homes in order to strengthen the idea that a woman must stay at home and do the entire domestic work. A process of oppression developed through this way of thinking. The author also experienced as a young boy, which since he was the only boy in the family, though he was the youngest of all his siblings, that his father would come back from work and ask him about the past day, but he never asked his mother or sisters. By this the author wants to

indicate that from childhood, Africans teach their young girls to obey men unconditionally while boys are taught to be bosses from a very early stage (Graham, 1953:37).

If we can try to solve this problem right as it is today, without analyzing and looking back to where we came from, we may find ourselves contradicting the education of our children at home. The author's belief is that this liberation must start right from when we are still young and under the care of our parents and guardians. That is why our fathers, mothers, teachers and so on must be responsible for this change. Then the community will respond in treating women better.

Women must also be liberated biblically, by being taught what exactly was taught wrongly by other preachers who advocated that even in the church, men alone must take the lead while women become passive spectators. Even today we still have churches where women are not allowed to say a word, even when they are more gifted than the men in that church. For women to stand up and redeem themselves in this situation, the teachings of what love is, like Paul taught in Ephesian letter when he said:

“Husbands, love your wives like Christ did do His church.”

(Eph,5:23)

must be processed differently to the people. Pastors has done a good job by bringing people to churches and to faith in Jesus, but we still have a lot to do for the liberation of women whose rights are in the constitution of our country which says: “Everyone has a right to freedom of expression”, (S.A. const. 1996:9), but not yet in their lives. The commitment of women to Jesus Christ whom the church is preaching on a daily basis requires the liberation also of African women in order that they may be free to serve God. Kubi and Torres (1983:149) argue that children, husbands, friends and colleagues will almost always be obstacles in the commitment of women to Christ. Women, by understanding their roles in homes, society and church will start seeing that their roles differ from those of men, but they are equally important for human life. Because of this feeling of low esteem, some keep quiet even when their voice would make the difference in difficult situations. God did not create them to be inferior to men, but to be equal partners who will cherish each other. That is what He means saying:

“It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a suitable *companion* to help him” (Gen.2:18).

Women must be liberated in order to come out and break their silence concerning their being subordinated to men. It also needs them to understand that the biblical message of submission and headship does not mean that they are slaves or people without say even when things are difficult.

2.10 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION ON THIS CHAPTER.

This chapter concentrates on the image of God which is revealed by God to men and women. Through the fall man started to dominate the woman. African structures use this process even in the church. In the next chapter the author will concentrate on the biblical passages that are misquoted. Proper exegesis will be done in order to correct the wrongs done by African preachers who are not educated.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL VIEW OF HEADSHIP

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of the headship is not only a concept affecting Africans but, among others, there is also biblical perspective that addresses the issue.

It is interesting to see that the concept of “headship” is not a foreign concept from the Bible. It was used in some of Pauline letters like Col.3:18 and Eph.5:21-24. But the question still remains:

“Are the African people understanding and applying this concept the way they should?”

In the next chapter about “African view” the author will determine whether the African view is correct or wrong. From all these passages the author chose Ephesians in order to make short exegetical remarks so that he can try to open up the meaning of this concept from a biblical point of view. The biblical and the African meanings will also be compared.

3.2 EXEGETICAL REMARKS ON EPHESIANS 5

3.2.1 Translation

The NIV translates these verses as follows:

“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the

husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which He is the Savior.” (Eph.5:22-25)

The author wants to point out that in the original Greek they did not have “submit” in verse 22, but it was assumed latter, since it was read in verse 21. Gaebelain (1978:75) is of the opinion that verse 22 may be grammatically attached to verse 21 since the contents coincide more naturally. In other words, the best translation would have been to join verse 21 and 22 into one so that the translation would possibly be:

“Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ, wives to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife.” (5:4)

Robertson (1931:544) says “*be in subjection*” was not in the Greek text of the Bible and Jerome knew of no manuscript with it. There are two reasons for this subjection according to Paul, viz:

Lordship of Christ (v22) and headship of man in Christ (v23).

3.2.2 Important concepts and verbs

There are two main words that are striking here, viz: “submission and headship”. The Greek “*hypotithemai*” in the middle can best be translated as “to bring to subjection, put to someone’s notice, to subordinate, etc.” (Robertson, 1931:545).

Gundry says:

“If the verb is in the middle, it is not a compulsion, but impulsion, not external pressure, but internal prompting. It is also not a yielding under constraint, but with ready mind.”
(1977:72)

The root of the verb is “hupposatou” which means “to obey or to submit”. Gaebelein (1978:75) indicates that the verb occurs 23 times in Pauline letters and denotes subordination to those considered worthy of respect, either because of their inherent qualities or more often because of the position they held. To avoid unnecessary mistakes, it is to their own (Greek “idios”) husbands that wives must subject (Col.3:18). That is what Gundry mean when saying:

“The rule as here laid down in general, binding on every member of the church, regardless of sex- men as well as women, husbands as well as wives. No room for preferential rights.” (1977:72)

According to Vine (1981:142), the dictionary meaning of “idios” is “one’s own or private or peculiar to oneself”. In Acts 4:32, for example, the meaning of the whole phrase is better translated in the following way: “Nor did anyone claim that anything he had belonged to him alone”. The

“idios” which is omitted in the parallel passage in Col.3:18 is something more than a simple possessive. It always conveys the idea of what is special and gives a certain note of emphasis or intensity. It does not mean the husband as lord and master (Robertson, 1931:365).

The word “head” is from the Greek “kephale” meaning “head, top, that which is uppermost.”

“In relation to something, chief or one to whom others subordinate” (Zodhiates, 1992:40). It can be best translated without an article, like : “For a husband is head of his wife”. There should be no article with “aner” or kephale just like there is no article in “Christ is head of...”. According to Thieme the Greek word “*aner*” is man in his noble sense, and is the highest word for man found in the Greek language. By interpretation it refers to Adam, who was a noble man before he sinned. By application it refers to all believers in Jesus Christ, regardless of sex, male or female, bond or free. (1970:3)

Lenski (1963:433) says that the omission of an article indicate that the headship of man to his wife must not be understood as equal to headship of Christ to His church. It also should be clear that Paul is not even, as some think, using the Old Testament figure of “Head” in the sense of a ruler over a body of people as was done in Judges 11:11, 2 Sam.5:17, 22:44 and 2 Chron.11:19.

This is the comparison, but with a tremendous difference which Paul hastens to add, either in an appositional clause or as a separate sentence (Robertson, 1931:545). Blomberg (1994:208) supports the meaning of “head” in Corinthians as either “source or authority”. He goes on to say that “the head of Christ is God” was used as a reference to the incarnation in order to avoid the ancient Arian heresy of claiming that God created Christ. The vast majority of all church history understands “head” as “authority”. The author supports the above view, adding it to Gundry who says:

“The word ‘head’ has been used to prove divine order of command in which the husband takes his direction from Christ and the wife from the husband. But as in 1 Cor.11:3, the meaning of ‘head’ is not that of ‘leader’, but of ‘source’, ‘respect’ and ‘responsibility.’” (1977:70)

Van der Walt describes the meaning of the “head” as follows:

“In the sense of fountain, source, genesis or growth point it fits in beautifully with marriage. Christ as the head should also indicate what the man’s headship should mean. And whenever Christ in Scripture offers men an example to follow, it is not his strength, authority or dominance, but his humility, self-denial and service. In this regard Christ’s

headship (in relevant texts in Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians) always means a source of life, growth and service.” (1988:33)

He goes on to summarize the meaning of man as the head in three ways.

“An unselfish loving and responsible husband.

Unifying principle where man and woman are one flesh.

Head as authority- Jewish view. From Jewish “rosh”, meaning “chief”, it would be derived that something is the head over something else, hence man is head over woman”. The author thinks this meaning was biblically found and the Jews were culturally using it to dominate their wives.

3.2.3 Background

The epistle was not directed to novices in Christian faith, but to those who, having achieved some maturity in spiritual experience, wished to go on to fuller knowledge and life (Tenny, 1975:319). The recipients of the letter were the “Christians” who were saved in Ephesus. According to Matthews (1996:909) Paul shows the recipients that they were saved by Grace (1:2), and they should now persevere in their Christian calling.

The fact that he uses Christ and Church as his illustrations is evidence that he has the Christian home in mind (Wiersbe, 1989:50). In other words, the fact that Jesus is mentioned to exemplify the head it is because

the family that is discussed must be a Christian family. The other thing that the reader should remember is that many church gatherings of that place and time took place in houses of church members. That is why Osiek, Macdonald and Tullock say:

“This may not seem remarkable in and of itself, but when we consider the venue for meetings was the house church, an implicit recognition of the role of the mother in the household codes may have fairly significant consequences for the running of the community.” (2006:131)

About submission, we must not forget that the veils which women used on their heads in those times were also an expression of submission. That is why we need to take into consideration Roald’s words when he said:

“The veil has various connotations in western context. A Christian nun wearing a veil might be seen as an image of sincere religiosity, purity and peace, where as a Muslim woman wearing a veil is likely to be seen as a symbol of the oppression of women and as making a political-religious statement.” (2001:255)

This helps us to understand that the expression of submission by the

symbol of the veil cannot be made a rule because its meaning varies from one culture to the other.

3.2.3.1 Meanings of submission and obedience

Russel (1974:28) has this to say: “Through a steady flow of documents, papers, stories and actions women testify that they have discovered that male-domination and the submission of women is a sign of personal and social groaning. This groaning is not as a result of God’s original design for creation, but by human disobedience and dislocation”. The groaning above makes it a serious case to observe the reality behind the meaning of submission.

Many people usually confuse “submission” and “obedience” to make them synonyms, but biblically they have different meanings as far as their application is concerned. For example, submission can be demanded from both husbands and wives, but it is logically impossible to be mutually obedient to each other. That is why Van der Walt would say that obedience falls under the language of authority while submissiveness does not.

There is nowhere in the New Testament, where the word authority is used to describe any aspect of the man-wife relationship. Even when reading from Eph.5:21-25 we find no question of obedience, but

obedience is only commanded from 6:1, when Paul now addresses children. The subject of obedience is sometimes misunderstood as submission. It is a misquotation to use obedience as if it means submission. Men nowhere receive the instruction to subject their wives to their authority. Therefore submissiveness is neither obedience nor subjection, and that is a biblical truth (Van der Walt, 1988:38).

We should also understand that the submission which is asked from wives towards their husbands must not be generalized, because a woman is a wife to one man according to the Bible, whereas a husband is for one wife. Let us also not misunderstand that when dealing with husbands and wives both the Hebrew and Greek have no specific meaning of husband or wife. In both languages the two words under discussion mean man or woman and any specific meaning is derived from the context. They may be used to mean "man", "woman", "fiancé", "betrothed", "husband" or "wife" (Hardman, 1959:174). The Old Testament uses general concepts of man and woman. There is no specific word for the married or unmarried woman, but we only use the context to detect which type of woman or man is spoken about in the particular text.

The clear implication is that wives submit themselves to their husbands of their own, not to every man. When we carefully read Eph.5:22 saying :

“Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as to the

Lord” and 1 Timothy which says: “Women should learn in silence and humility. I do not allow women to teach or to have authority over men, they must keep quiet.” (1 Tim.2:11)

the due submission is between husbands and wives, not just men and women. Van der Walt (1988:43) shares the same idea with the author when he says that man is not the head of woman outside marriage. In other words, it is a misuse of the Bible to subject women to men in general, simply because they are women and therefore every male gender is over and above her. Our daily experiences are that women are not given the respect they deserve by men under their leadership.

A typical example of subjugation occurred at school. A male teacher used to harass his principal, simply because she was a woman. That is why the same Paul in Col.3:18 emphasized “their own husbands”. The concept “own” help us to understand what type of situation we are dealing with here. This is not general, but specific. This does not rule out that in some cases the Bible speaks about submission to other people in general terms like when Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones argues:

“Since the verb submit was not from the original Greek in Eph.5 22, but was assumed from verse 21, therefore marriage can go well not only when husband and wife

submit to each other, but also to all other members of the community and church to which they belong.” (1973:98)

Gundry supports and emphasizes Lloyd’s argument when he says:

“Bible teachers leap at the word ‘submit’ in verse 22 and chisel it into stone as eternal law. Yet the word ‘submit’ is not even there in the original language.” (1977:71)

Hendricks (1973:31) says that submission is not the exclusive responsibility of the woman. It is the lifestyle of the Christian. To the woman the question is, are you willing to submit yourself, not first of all to your husband, but to the Lord’s plan for you is functioning in marital relationship.

The other point is that since submission is a concept that has something to do with what God expects from us, it means that one cannot do it on his own, except by looking at the exemplarity of Jesus Christ. This is why the words of Kempis (1979:90) are very important when he says that true submission can only be there if we learn from the way how Jesus Christ submitted Himself to His Father.

We are still responsible to understand that other parts of scriptures urge us to submit ourselves to other people as well. Maybe it is also important when we are still analyzing this topic, to mention that, the different types

of submissions must not be confused with the one between husbands and wives. We have, for instance, submission to the state (Rom.13:1, Titus 3:1), submission of slaves to their masters (Eph.6:5, Col.3:22, 1Tim.6:1), subordination to elders and church leaders (1Cor.6:16, 1Pet.5:55 and Heb.13:9), submission of children to parents (Luke 2:51) as well as submission of wives to their own husbands (Eph.5:22, Col.3:18, Titus 6:5, 1Pet. 3:1,5) not *all* women to *all* men. Let me now share Paul's concept of submission where he puts the following categories:

Six of them specifically deal with the marriage relationship between man and wife (Rom.7:2, Eph.5:21-33, Col.3:18-19, 1Thess.14:34-35 and 1 Tim.2:8-15).

Three others stand in context of the woman's behavior in the church, but it is not clear whether they refer to married women or women in general,

since the Greek has one word for both (1Cor.11:3-16, 14:34-35 and 1Tim.2 :8-15).

The other three remaining are: 1Tim.5:2-3 (which deals with how older and younger women should be treated), Rom.1:26-27 (which speaks about unnatural relations between people of the same sex) and Gal.3:28 where he stresses both diversity and unity in Christ.

These submissions must not be treated with equal value since that can lead us into a variety of mistakes, for example, the treatment of the child by parents at home can never be the same as that between father and mother. A child can be chastised when doing something wrong, but a mother cannot. There are different ways of chastising people. In actual fact the relationship which the mother has towards children cannot be equal with the relationship that she has towards her husband. But if we then treat them as equals, the first mistake will be to try to treat the mother equally to the child, and that is where abuse will occur . In other words, the mother will be treated a little better than a child. That is why I want to say that a man's relationship with his wife, after all, is not the same as that between him and his children or his slaves, hence the difference already emerges in that submissiveness is asked of women but never obedience, as in the case of slaves and children.

The second issue is that submission in this context has no connection with slavery, but a voluntary submission in which both the husband and the wife are equal before God and the laws of society, yet they have varying functions and responsibilities.

One should be careful not to draw parallels so easily between slavery and marriage. Slavery is not a societal bond, but a sinful practice dating from a specific era. When we read what Paul say in 1Cor.7:21, we will find that he was also taught about liberty of all peoples and women are included in this concept. That means if we accept certain functions under a fellow human, we must subject ourselves to that individual to accomplish a common goal (Kimathi, 1994:30).

If we ignore the broader imperative of verse 21 in Eph.5, we loose the unique message to the husband and wife in this passage, hence some overemphasize the submission of one towards the other, meanwhile the heart of the matter here is “submission to each other” (Hardman, 1959:46). The author believes it is a mistaken idea to make distinctions between love and submission, because they actually belong together in this context. One cannot love without giving preference to the one loved; the surrender of one’s crowning act of love (1Cor.13:5, John 12:24). Love causes one to submit to the other.

Let us also share 1Tim.2 which says:

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, she must be silent” (1Tim 2:11-12).

Do the above confirm that women must be subjected to men? This is one of the passages that are misunderstood and misused by many traditional African men to subject their wives. We also need to understand the reason why Paul specifically denied the Corinthian women under Timothy’s guidance to neither speak nor teach in the church. A short overview of the background of the church in Corinth will be helpful. Men used the divine services to further their own quarrels and that the women wished to make themselves heard in an offensive fashion. This is another way patriarchs in Africa misuse this passage of scripture. They take it literally, and avoid the context in which it was said.

The Christian women in Paul’s time, following a tradition of thousands of years of suppression, had only just begun to realize what freedom in Christ meant. Accordingly, the Christian women thought that they revealed their liberation by publicly differing from men or dominating discussion while they were not really qualified to do so. They thus wanted to take over authority unfaithfully.

The Corinthian church was confused and carnal, partly because the women were taking precedence over the men, and neither the men nor the women were submitting to the Word of God which was vital in their journey of faith (Wiersbe, 1989:87).

This principle does not actually prevent a woman from teaching or from leading in ministries assigned by the local assembly. But it is clear that Paul was dealing with a complex situation of disorder and disobedience where many women were trying even to rule the men. The situation which Paul addresses in Corinth where Timothy served might differ with the one in our country and our churches today. Therefore it will be unwise of us to automatically read the situation and address the problems out of the context.

Some people still use the expression of “weaker vessel” as Peter says:

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as they are weaker partners and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1Pet.3:7).

Can we also use this expression to enforce women to subjection to male dominance? It is interesting to note that the NIV, unlike the other translations uses “weaker partner” in order to indicate that they are

“partners”. Partnership entails equality, and equality means treating each other with respect. The word “weak” in this sense does not give us authority to oppress and undermine women, but it reminds us of the creation order and purpose in which God created us.

If the woman was created to be a helpmate, it is obvious that she would not be given all the qualities that the other person has. When we look, for instance, at man’s physical abilities we can see that women are not such strong people to compete with men physically, hence women are usually the ones who become man’s punch bag without them responding. God gave women certain capabilities that men will seek help from, but not strength to defend themselves from violent men. They are given the beauty of giving birth as a thing that men cannot do. This is a process in itself that closely reveals the strength they have.

Women use more energy when giving birth, which men never experience, that also limits her physical life. But it does not mean that their weakness in this respect makes them inferior people, because if that was the case men would also be inferior at duties that need women. Vine says that in the spiritual sense, it is said of the rudiments of Jewish religion, in their ability to justify anyone.

The poor legal position which women had compared to men in those olden days resulted also in their weakness (Vine, 1981:204). What is

meant is that the way the community of those times (being dominated by men) treated women (e.g. traditional courts), caused women not to believe in themselves, hence they just thought they cannot do anything without the other person's approval.

Peter says:

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe in the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives” (1Pet.3:1 and 5).

For this is the way the Holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. The phrase “*in the same way*” places responsibilities on both. They were submissive to their own husbands. We do not get any impression that women are subjected to their husbands in such a way that they have no say at all. In this relationship with men Peter here speaks of a divided home, where the husband is not a Christian while the wife is one who believes. The woman is given a responsibility of leading by example with the aim of winning the husband to Christ. That is why Peter did not speak about submission alone in this passage, but he also included respect and honour to indicate that the issue is to educate the man through exemplary life.

Teaching has different methods, for example, teaching by exemplary life is a good way of educating others. In other words, the woman in this situation was not to reprimand or teach her husband like we usually do in the church, but deeds must speak louder than words for her. Maybe the question of “why?” may also be shared. The probability is that the husband might have been hostile to be preached to by his own wife, considering the customs and traditions of that time, but a practical example could be the better way to protect the women. Some of the traditions handled women badly and women were not allowed to stand and preach before men, especially without covering their heads as in 1Cor.11:15. De Haan says:

“We believe the custom of Christian women wearing short hair is contrary to the scriptures and against the clear teaching of the word of God.” (1970:123)

This also confirms that Christian leadership must be done through submissiveness. One clearly sees the works of action in Christ who washed His disciples’ feet in the book of John 13:1-17. The challenge for practical theology is that we become care givers to them who are oppressed.

This was a clear way of submitting but also teaching the twelve apostles what to do in their ministries, and He led them by example. So many may

feel undermined or subjected whenever we speak about submission, but the truth is that we can lead by becoming submissive.

The author is in line with some of the early church fathers, who acknowledged the importance of emphasizing that men and women are equal before God. Van Rensburg (1990:105) made a direct quotation of Father Augustine's words:

“If the woman had been intended to rule over the man, then the Lord would have made Eve out of Adam's head, if she had been intended as a slave of the man, she would have been made out of the bone from his feet. But Eve was taken from his side because the woman was intended to be the equal companion of man.” (1990:105)

When we look at the word “submission” in Ephesians we need to realize the time and circumstances in which Paul lived. To be the “head of the house” was to accept the common notion that authority was the male's rightful providence. Children and women were only responsible to obey blindly. Hence abuse will be normal in this case, because the wife was not equal to her husband as a person or any other way. In Africa, this has become a cultural problem that allows patriarchy to abuse women. (Warunta & Kinoti, 2000: 140)

The contemporary interpretations of Eph.5 that describe the wife as finding total fulfillment in her relationship with her husband, gives an expression that the wife is so “under” the authority or umbrella of her husband that she is not to speak or act except at his direction. This gives us the background that enables us to understand Paul’s commands to both husbands and wives. So the Christian view which Paul emphasizes here is that women are seen as persons of equal worth and value. That in itself upholds human dignity (*ubuntu* in African custom).

We also need to remember that there is a difference between “submit and subject” because whenever we speak of subject there must be an object, which is not the case with submission. There may be problems if the word submission is used only as a command and not a responsibility. In other words, the submission that the Bible teaches is not a blind one in which the woman must blindly accept everything without questioning, but it is a submission that allows her to be responsible also. Let us take an example of Christ’s submission to His Father just like it is written in Matt. 26, when He says:

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39).

His word indicates that He is submitting Himself to someone responsible towards His life. Jesus is very sure that under God’s wings He will be

safe even during those suffering hours of His life. It is quite different to someone who is ordered to be submissive to someone without responsibility, for instance, submission to a man who always beats you.

This submission can not go without trust that I am under someone that I trust and will not forsake my life. So this submission included responsibility, trust and faith towards the protective Father who would take care of His soul even when dark clouds shaded His life. One preacher said that the only medicine to put woman under submission is to love them. If she feels loved the development of trust occurs which will never give her any problem whenever she thinks of being submissive to her husband. Therefore, the good concept which helps to negate submission, is love.

Another issue under submission is the “fear of God”. In other words, Paul’s command must be understood in this way: “Submit to your husband in the Lord”, where “in the Lord” becomes a conditional clause. This would mean that it is not in everything that the wife would submit herself to the husband, but only in issues which are not contrary to the

Lord's word. That is why Van Rensburg says:

“This proves to me basically that the marriage that is being spoken about here is the one of Christians, since we cannot speak about the fear of God to non-Christians. Therefore the submission to your husband is part of your submission to the Lord. That is why the conduct of husband's life towards his wife has to be like Christ's conduct towards His Church.”
(1990:108)

We are of course born sinners through the original sin, hence we can not expect in our sinful status to live a perfect life, even in our marriages, but we are challenged to continue with the struggle. The good thing is firstly to get back to God and seek ways that can help us to live peacefully in marriage, because the patterns of this world alone (culture and traditions included) cannot really meet God's requirements for us to live a holy and happy life in marriage. Hence the author supports this view by saying that this condition is very important because to those marriages that are governed by African traditions, it will not be easy to abandon the abusive practices, but if one is a Christian, he or she can understand better.

La Haye has this to say:

“Women need to be extremely careful that they are

respectful to their husbands, but there may be some instances when they need not be submissive or obedient “to their own husbands.” (s:a:78)

Like La Haye, personally I do not think it is submission and respect when one is forced to do what is wrong in order to secure his/her own marriage. The violation here is of human dignity. It is like being asked to do something that is absolutely contrary to the Scriptures, for example adultery, lying, stealing, etc., which is contrary to the way a Christian has to live. Wiersbe (1989) also followed Van Rensburg’s words:

“Paul was nowhere suggesting that women are inferior to men, or that all women must be in subjection to all men in every situation.” (1990:4)

In the context of Eph.5:21, from which the verb of submission is derived also into verse 22, God’s intention is that of equality of both man and woman when it comes to submission. The Bible reads: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”. The other issue to be remembered is that the word “submission” is not only used to refer to man-woman relationship in the Bible, but it is also used in other spheres of life, for example, between the government and the civilians (Rom.13:1). Therefore, it will be easy to make mistakes if we take the concept “submission” as applying only to the relation between male and female.

Marriage is a true reflection of Christ's relationship to His church. If one reads Ephesians 5 in comparison with 1Cor.11:3, 14:34 and Titus 2:5 the equality between husband and wife becomes a practical one. From God's institution of marriage it has also become apparent that the married woman is meant to be a help to her husband. She has been given a certain status. Husbands and wives are like two cog-wheels, next to each other, a small one and a big one. Their cogs fit into one another; without the big one the small one just cannot function and vice versa. In other words, they are dependent on each other. However, we should not confuse the command given by Paul with a false submission like when the woman is treated like a slave in the house while the man trembles over her. Schalekamp once said:

“We must remember that a spoilt husband is a greater catastrophe than a spoilt pet.” (1990:138)

When we also compare this verse with that of Gal.3:26-29, it makes sense to speak about submission from both sides, depending on the situation (Schalekamp, 1990:138). In short, men and women are to treat each other with grace, respect and dignity.

3.2.3.2 Meanings of authority and headship

Traditionally, in African culture, people take it for granted that whenever we speak about headship, authority is automatically a part of the discussion, because the head is taken to be connected to authority and submission. Van der Walt (1995:8) says that authority in marriage seems to be always reciprocal, in which the two people give the same loyalty to each other. When we speak about “authority”, the African’s view of it is summarized in the following key words: hierarchical, centralized, according to seniority or status. The structure of authority is constituted from the top down, for example, ancestors, chief, father, eldest brother, etc. In other words, it favors men more than women. According to Lee (1968:124), authority is a word with many shades of meanings and it is easy to slip from one to the other unwillingly. Lee went on to give four types of definitions of authority, viz:

“(1). Legal conferred on a person by a reason of the office he or she holds, e.g. minister. (2). Moral authority which depends partly on office and partly on readiness of other people to accept the claim made for him (her) that he represents God in pronouncements, e.g. pastor. (3). Authority that comes from accumulated experience, e.g. scientists and physicians. (4). Psychological authority that is derived from emotional attitude like young and adult.”

Many Christians too still hold a hierarchical view of authority which functions vertically from the top down. In accordance with this God is the highest authority and all the lower authorities also emanate from Him. He delegates His authority to the highest human figures of authority, for example, a king, state president, a chief director or principal who will also delegate to holders of lower offices (Van der Walt, 1995:8-9).

The basic error here is that this view has no distinction between human and divine authority. The word authority (*exousia*) occurs more than hundred times in the New Testament, the first being in 1Cor.11:10 where it is expected of the woman to have a sign on her head to signify her husband's authority, for the sake of the angels.

The second time the concept was used in 1Cor. which reads:

”The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way the husband's body does not belong to him alone, but also to his wife” (1Cor.7:4).

Seeing that authority here is reciprocal, this verse cannot be used to suggest that the man has a kind of authority, which his wife does not share in equal measure, and that in fact is the concept of partnership. If we keep in mind how generally it was accepted and believed that the man

is the carrier of authority in marriage, it becomes a big surprise to learn that there are seemingly no grounds for it in the Scriptures. If the question of who carries authority may be asked here, 1Cor.7 says:

“A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is, in the same way the husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is” (1Cor.7:4).

This may be an accurate answer. Some scholars would try to argue that this verse must be used only when sexual intercourse is the topic under discussion, because they understand it in the context of sexual relationships, but the author believes that we need not confine this beautiful message to that point alone, since the husband and wife do not only live together for sexual intercourse, but for other reasons as well, like bearing children, glorifying God, etc. It is the author’s conviction that in Christian marriage the husband seeks to please the wife, and the wife seeks to please the husband in everything, sexual intercourse included. It is not a good view to understand authority as if one person must suffer like:

“One policeman used violent arguments on his wife and beating her the reason being to express his authority over her” (Vanderpool, 1977:54).

The main question to ask is who owns who in this passage, but the answer will of course be “no one owns the other”. It is mentioned that no one between male and female has authority over his or her body, but each one of them has authority over the other. Headship may therefore not be interpreted as authority or governing or dominion.

When we come to the “headship,” according to Gaebelein, Paul had already marked out a hierarchy in which God is seen as the head of Christ, Christ as the head of the church, and the man as the head of the woman in 1Cor.1:12. Gaebelein continues to say:

“Marriage is thus interpreted in the sublimest terms. Paul regards the husband, even to an infinitely lesser degree, as the PROTECTOR of his wife. That is what the Bible knowledge commentary stress that the husband must be the protector of the wife.” (1978:76)

The Church as the bride of Christ readily acknowledges His authority and seeks to please Him in every respect. When marriage is seen in the light of this higher relationship between Christ and His body, the wife will find no difficulty in submitting to her husband and vice versa.

Wiersbe is very much opposed to “submission as slavery” and he simply does not mean that she becomes a slave of the husband, since the husband

is also obliged to submit to Christ as Christ submits to the Father. The concept introduces a relationship among people who respect each other, centered on trust and love. He emphasizes:

“Headship is not dictatorship.” (1989:50)

This is true because the Bible does not see the headship of man like the pagans of Paul’s time, and as traditional Africans also do. In the structure of the society men are given the role of the head of the house, a role also affirmed by God in Eph.5 (including responsibility in that role). But what is amazing is that their headship is modeled on the way Christ loved His church, and not on the concept of human systems of authority. This headship focuses attention on the variety of services to serve the subordinate. In the same way Christ suffered for the church, husbands are to nurture their wives, seeking always to help the wife grow as a person and as a Christian. That is why the word love (*agapao*) in Greek) means seeking the highest good for another person, where Christ’s sacrificial death gives a clear example of dying for us so that we may be regarded children of God once more.

Robertson (1931:41) is of the view that the Greek “*aner*” which indicated “a husband” instead of “the husband” is in a sense putting any man belonging into the class of husbands. It is best taken as an independent clause, starting in a definite and emphatic way an important point in

which Christ, who resembles the husband in respect of headship, at the same time differs from the husband. Christ differs from the husband in the sense that He is also what the husband is not, viz: saviour. That is why Van der Walt says:

“Christ’s headship of the church is unlimited, that of the man over the woman is limited and qualified, because the man can never redeem his wife as Christ does in the Church.”
(1988:33)

Zodhiates is of the opinion that the husband is in relation to his wife in so far as they are one body (Matt.19:6), and one body can have only one head to direct it, not to dictate or enslave it. John Calvin on the other hand understands that this relation is equal to the law of God in Matt. 22, viz: it is both horizontal and vertical. He says:

“Paul begins with wives, whom he enjoins to be subject to their husbands, in the same manner as to Christ. Not that the authority is equal but wives cannot obey Christ without yielding obedience to their husbands.” (1992:40)

In other words, the obedience to God must first be seen in the household relationship. This is becoming clearer when Van der Walt advocates that the Christian husband fulfils his role as head best when he serves and

loves his wife unselfishly. This concept challenges African traditional men who oppress women, and regard them as inferior. It is also a challenge to care givers. Whenever we speak about the husband as the head, we must also think about the husband as the leader. From the passage of John 13:1-17 Jesus stresses two main things about Christian leadership, which are:

Leadership as a self-denying service, and not domination for the sake of self-gratification. It is important to note that a leader is part of the team, and not in the first place a commander or the giver of command to others. Christ saw the execution of authority as a shared responsibility in which strong, gifted individuals acted as servants to strengthen others, so that they could also participate in the decision-making process.

Although Christ did not make this passage a direct application to the relationship between husbands and wives, the relevance of the passage is immediately clear. That is why we cannot say that the command of submission was the responsibility for wives alone, but for both. Finally, authority is a concept that can be applied relatively according to situations. In other words, one's authority does not apply to all situations, for instance, if one has authority in a certain home, it does not imply that the same authority is applicable in other homes. But above all, Randal teaches that the best message on authority is the Gospel of Jesus which

declares that all authority is given by Christ. He says:

“Christ is the Lord, and South Africa is part of his world and under his judgment.” (1972:80)

No one is having authority above Jesus Christ. This concept is extremely important in helping patriarchal men to know and understand how authority works. It will help to address the issue of liberation.

3.2.3.3 Did Jesus liberate women during his ministry?

According to Cone (1975:82), Jesus the liberator, the helper and the healer of the wounded, is the point of departure for valid exegesis of scriptures from a Christian perspective, hence he mentions that Jesus must reveal Himself in the struggle of the oppressed for freedom.

In other words, if a preacher ignores to preach Jesus as a liberator to the oppressed, the message becomes irrelevant. Jesus Christ defined the duties and responsibilities of His followers without any conditions related to sex or gender. He treated all sexes as equals. That is why Jersild and Johnson said:

“No one is to hide his light under a bushel. Men as well as women are commanded to bring forth the fruits of the spirit which is love, meekness, and gentleness. Women as well as men should be engaged in the great work of public

reformation for they are equally responsible moral beings.”

(1983: 165)

The short message above opens us to understand that even before He liberated those in some captivity, Jesus viewed both men and women as equals and He never gave one special privilege over the other.

Denny says:

“The role and the rights of women and children have to be taken into account in ways in which they were not in the Victorian society. We can learn from Jesus’ attitude to women even in the restricted society of His day.” (1976:45)

Denny’s quotation implicates that he had a serious concern about how women were handled in his time, which lead him to learn how to solve that problem from Jesus Christ Himself, and that is the problem that made the author decided to do this study. The author also wants to take the reader’s mind back to Jesus’ attitude of working with women, that this attitude will be liberating women from the bondage of inferiority.

Fiorenza (1986: 67-68) thinks that the oppression of women in the society resulted from the theology that sees Christian theology as a sexist theology. According to her the Scripture is not only the source of truth, but also the source of untruth, oppression and domination, and especially

women became the victims of the application of the negative parts of the scripture. Therefore she declares openly that she as a feminist theologian approaches the Bible in a biased way when she explores it, with the eye on the women's movement or the rights of women.

It is just a disgrace that her ways of liberating women pushes her into a corner where she starts minimizing the word of God into just a mere work of people. The author does not deny that she feels pain when women are oppressed, but that does not give her a right to blame God's inspired word. It is therefore not good to use a wrong concept when correcting another wrong concept. Two wrong concepts will never make one right concept. My fear is that if we allow our emotions to deal with man's abuse of the Bible we may also abuse it, hence we will be left without God's word and counsel in everything.

We must first understand that Jesus' main aim in coming to the earth was to save people from their sins, which included liberating them from the bondage of sin. Every element that could lead us to sin was forbidden and removed by Jesus Christ, including the element of enslaving women who are also God's intended people.

In view of the above, we find that Jesus lived amongst the Jews who had the culture of seeing women as inferior. In his ministry he did something to show that He did not support the culture or tradition of seeing women

as less important than men, because God created them in God's image. That is why some of the examples of how He liberated women in particular instances were quoted.

He had women as part of His ministry, which was not allowed by Jewish customs. According to the Jews, a woman had to take only the domestic responsibilities and was not allowed to speak in front of men. Jesus Christ's ministry accepted both genders equally. In Matthew we read that:

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and my sister and my mother.” (Matt.12:50)

This brings the understanding that for all the genders, Jesus had an equal feeling. It also clarifies that in Jesus' ministry; women were allowed as equal partners. Even at the climax of things, when Christ was raised from the dead, the first people to visit and find an empty tomb, were women. Maybe that is why, when we read in Luke 8:1-3 we find that apart from the twelve, there were also a number of women who followed Jesus Christ, including Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Susanna and many others.

This chapter shows how important women were to Jesus' ministry. If disciple meant pupil, follower and servant, then these women automatically qualified to be amongst the disciples. That is why Van der Walt goes on to saying that even when the rabbinical parables explicitly

excluded women, Christ used women in His parables like in Luke 4:24-26, 11:31, 15:8-10 and 21:1-4.

The Bible reads as follows:

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41-42)

This is one of the clear indications that Jesus Christ was interested in women as being His audience whom are cared for by Him, and not men alone. Maybe it will also be important to mention that we know from this verse Jesus’ view that all mankind is equal, irrespective of sex or gender; the only thing is that both must do the will of the Father.

An African writer, Ogbu U Kalu related his own experience about women who helped to spread the Gospel in the African continent. He said:

“Since the establishment of Christianity in Africa, there has always been an upsurge of female religious leadership particularly in the prophetic, revival movements of African Instituted Churches of Neo-Pentecostal Christianity. In these churches women have been experiencing a measure of Christian ministerial freedom and equality that was denied to

them by the mainline churches. Not only are they visible in ecclesiastical leadership as founders of churches, bishops, pastors and evangelists, but they also function as prophetesses, prayer leaders, healers and heads of church organizations and departments. One remarkable woman that was even recognized by Portuguese Roman Catholic church was Kimpa Vita in Kenya.” (2005:422-423)

The author agrees with the view above since he also wants to share his little experience about the mainline church and their treatment of women. The other reason why the African Independent Churches (AIC) around our townships grow faster than the mainline ones, is that women feel safe and are treated with care and love. The author wants to share two case studies that he made from his home church.

Two stories are going to be shared in order to show woman’s leadership. Both happened at a funeral of someone. The first one is that we had a woman who left our church after some misunderstandings with some elders. Before she left, the woman was very passive in the church to an

extent that she could not even represent our church in any programmed during public services like weddings and funerals.

But soon after this woman left our church, we attended a funeral of a member of her new church and she was in the programme to represent the church. Her speech is remembered till today by some of our elders who were present at the funeral, since she spoke like a leader without being shy or afraid that she was known to us since she had been worshipping with us.

After some discussions with her afterwards, asking her why she left our church, she indicated clearly that in our church women were not given chance to express themselves, hence she was given the task in her new church and she used it as part of her leadership. Women in some mainline churches are not given leadership chances and enough freedom to express their own talents and gifts; hence they join the AIC where they will be given those opportunities. The mainline churches do not want women in office, but some men who are in office are useless and more helpless than some female figures that are in the church. That is why Kalu indicated that since the 1970's ministries and churches founded by women have multiplied all over Africa. (2005:424)

The second story is of the obituary of another former woman member of

our church which was read at her funeral. Before joining her new AIC, this woman could not even give her tenth to the church. But many of our members wondered when the reader of her obituary said:

“Death was so bad because the deceased passed away when she was trying to pay up the money for the church building that she pledged at a value of five thousand rands. She used to offer everything from her house to serve in the church, but now we lost her.”

Even with this one, the main reason why she was a hard worker in her second church while she was not in ours is that her new church allowed women to take leading roles in the church, and that helped them to see what responsibilities are theirs in the church. Our churches are mainly led by men and women get the information secondarily, even their responsibilities come secondarily, hence they are of less importance. If the mainline churches which are victimized by these incidences do not do something to put women where they belong in church structures, the researcher sees them deteriorating very fast while the AIC will enjoy the rapid growth. Let us analyze how Jesus broke the concept of dominance among women.

3.2.3.3.1 The adulterous woman

We read about this story in John 8:1-11.

An example of a woman caught in the act of adultery is another way in which our Lord accepted women as equals in the kingdom of God. The Jews in Christ's time saw women as inferior and as a result they were quick to condemn her. Jesus showed His compassion to her and treats her equally than He would have a man in this position. In other words, the Jews were very fast in judging women who committed this kind of sin compared to men who committed the same sin. Actually, the man was not even brought to Jesus. It was not necessary, since man was holy.

They got two people (man and woman) committing adultery, but the man was left free while the woman was brought to Jesus for judgment. The interesting thing here is that Christ's answer or judgment to the woman was affirming as he said:

“Neither do I condemn you, go now and sin no more.” (John 8:11)

Although this was painful for the Jews who brought her to Jesus, this was a liberating message, which gave the woman a second chance which they had not expected. Their judgment of the woman was so harsh and that was caused by the way they regarded the woman as a target, since they left the man with whom she was committing the sin out there.

The author believes it would also have been difficult for the Jews if Christ asked them to fetch the man with whom the woman committed adultery as the second culprit, since their intention was to condemn the woman alone. Louw and Kendal share the same view with Jesus here, that no one is entitled to judge others. They say:

“No law, practice, or policy of government at any level shall discriminate on the grounds of race, ethnicity, color, creed gender, or religion.” (1986:158)

This quotation above forms part of the drafts which were used to draw the bill of rights in the South African constitution. Together with Koning, the author understands the fact that since God created everything it means that He is the One to have final determination on every human life. No one is allowed to judge between rich and poor, superior and inferior, except God Himself. (1988:134).

The second story continues to unpack or share equality in service, ministry and liberation.

3.2.3.3.2 The Samaritan woman

He had time to teach individual women by accepting them as children of God. There was a reaction from Christ’s disciples when they found him at the well, speaking to a woman who was a Samaritan, or the lower class.

Their reaction was:

“Just then His disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking with a woman.” (John 4:27a)

Their main concern here was not that the woman was a Samaritan, but the fact that He was speaking to a female which was not allowed by the Jewish people, especially in public. The truth is that:

“No self-respecting rabbi would teach a woman the law, or even speak publicly with a woman for longer than necessity demanded.” (Verhely, 1984:95)

Therefore the problem of the disciples was steered by the discourse that took a longer time than was expected in Jewish customs.

Contrary to what was expected of Him, He broke the law in the eyes of His disciples for the sake of the woman’s salvation. By doing this, although He did not come especially to liberate women, He liberated them since He gave them time to discuss issues that affected their salvation with Him. What really is amazing of Jesus’ disciples here is the fact that they never had a problem when other women followed and supported Jesus’ ministry with their own belongings, but they wanted to show their concern when he taught this woman. The Samaritan woman was known for her prostitution to an extent that she became a laughing

stock in the society. That is why she was going to fetch water alone in midday because she was shy that people would laugh at her because of her behavior. But what Jesus did here was to liberate her from the bondage of prostitution, oppression of man and abuse by the community.

He did not only liberate her, He also changed her life since she now started to call people to listen to Jesus when He taught. Besides this, His redemption also included women as we read: Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:20-31), the woman who suffered from the issue of blood (Mark 5:21), Jairus's daughter (Mark.5:35-43), the widow of Nain (Luke7:11-17) and the crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17). All these women were treated with grace and dignity. Our Lord liberated them from the oppression that surrounded them in that community. With the above in mind let us now analyze the story of the two sisters of Lazurus. Several stories will be explored in order to show how Jesus liberated women.

3.2.3.3.3 The story of Martha and Mary

The well known story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-12 teaches us that Jesus gave Himself time to teach women in their homes. Instead of supporting the human judgments that would judge Mary for ignoring her domestic responsibility, Christ reprimanded Martha, a hardworking person in the kitchen, but praised Mary for sitting and listening to His teachings. She had to sit with men (disciples) and receive the same

teaching. The salvation of both male and female was and is still of an important concern to our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not allow the Jewish set of laws and regulations to hinder this sole purpose of coming to liberate both men and women who were sinners. Once again the following story is another clear example of liberation. Let us now analyze the story of the woman who was sick and rejected by the community.

3.2.3.3.4 The woman who had bleeding disease

We read about the woman who was saved from bleeding in Luke 8:40-48). Women according to Jewish customs were not allowed even to touch Jesus or any male Jew. That is why verse 44 shares that this woman came from behind to touch Him. It was because she did not want to be seen touching him, since she was going to be rebuked or punished for that action, or even be killed. The desperate woman pushed her hand through a broken seam in the crowd and, for a fleeting moment, clutched the corner of His garment. In verse 46 we get the evidence that Jesus did not see who that person was, but He only sensed that someone touched Him. Gire (1989:49) says that the power left Him to surge through the hemorrhaging woman, and immediately she felt a rush of her youthful health returning. Then He said:

“Someone touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” (Luke 8:46)

The woman later realized she could no longer hide herself from Jesus and she openly confessed that she was healed. Jesus healed those who confessed irrespective of color or gender. He ignored the sanctions which the Jewish people had towards women in particular, and saved them from faith instead of using gender in order to destroy the dignity and image of God in woman.

3.2.3.3.5 The first visitors to the grave

Women were the first people to visit Christ's grave as we read in all Gospels (see Luke 24:1). That is why Mark also recorded their question in verse 3 which reads:

“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?” (Mark 16:3)

This gives a clear indication that only women walked to the grave since it was the duty of men to pull away the stone that was used to close a grave in those times. If they went to the grave with at least one male for the first time, this would have been no problem for them I believe, but women alone may have this type of problem.

Men were there, including the apostles, but the Bible recorded that women alone went out to the grave in the morning. Without reasoning too much, the author accepts that this was because of how Jesus accepted

them as partakers of the Kingdom in His lifetime; hence they loved and remembered Him on the third day. Their going to the grave was affirming the One who respected them and treated them with great dignity. The next story will help to affirm the great ministry in which the women participated.

3.2.3.3.6 Women served in Jesus' ministry

Luke recorded about women who served in Jesus ministry with their own belongings. Those liberated women, according to Luke 8:1-3 did not stay behind, but followed Him with their service all the way. Not only women lived during Jesus' time, but men also were there, even saved in the ministry, but we only read of women as those who helped with their belongings for Jesus' ministry to continue. This was not the service that was done once Christ visited them, but the Bible shows that they followed Him from town to town with their help. In other words, they became part of the group which included the apostles in following Jesus' ministry. The author is of the opinion that these women were part of the 120 disciples that were recorded in Acts 1:15. In short, Jesus did not only have men in the group that He personally taught, but women were included also, since He came to save people who sinned.

Another argument which some philosophers use to argue that Jesus was a male figure; therefore He represents the maleness of God, which

undermines women. Johnson says:

“Since the man Jesus is confessed to be the revelation of God, the Christ symbol points to maleness as an essential characteristic of the divine being itself. This is exacerbated by exclusive use of father and son metaphors to interpret Jesus’ relationship to God, and by use of *logos*, connected in Greek philosophy with the male principle, to articulate his personal realities God with us. The statement ‘who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9) is taken literally to mean that we can physically see God in Jesus.’ (1985:108)

The author’s argument against the above claim is that when we read from Acts Jesus’ answer to Saul was:

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” (9:5)

When we go back to 9:2 it states clearly that Saul was persecuting both males and females because it reads as follows:

“He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether *men or women*, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.” (Acts,9:2)

This statement indicates that Jesus was represented by both males and

females who were victims of Saul's persecution. This means that Jesus did not excuse one gender, but He included women in the class of those persecuted. This qualifies the equality of men and women in the eyes of Jesus. Boff says:

“Jesus spoke to the women of Jerusalem on the cross because the crying voices of women expressed compassion for Him.” (1982:59)

The fact that Jesus addressed these women was because He cared for everyone who felt pain for Him, irrespective of gender. The last three stories will be able to finalize the way equality is used as a way of affirming women.

3.2.3.3.7 Women as especially privileged people

Finally, the reader will come to realize that women were important despite the Jewish customs. From the Old Testament we read about women who were privileged to play important roles in the political and community life. A few examples are: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and the wife of Uriah. These women were included in the genealogies of Matt.1:3, 5, and 6. The role played by Abigail when the war between Nabal and David nearly broke out in 1Sam.22 is very remarkable for a woman because she got in to resolve the difference between two men. In other words, despite

her being a woman, she played an important role in solving their dispute. Men were present in the House of Nabal, but they did not think faster than what Abigail did in order to stop the dispute before it bring the unexpected results. Men might have helped in these types of situations in other times, but this time a woman was at the forefront.

3.2.3.3.8 Women as examples of faith

Paul calls Phoebe a deacon of the congregation in Cenchrea in Rom.16:1. Both commentators Wiersbe and Matthew Henry agree that this woman was a deacon, a very important role played in the early church. The word used for “servant” in this verse was the same applied to the deacons. According to Gottwald (1984:398) she received this title because her service and office were influential in the community and the church. How wonderful that after decades of women suppression Paul acknowledged that some women were so gifted that they were given opportunity to take lead in this Christian church. Some men were members of the congregation, but Paul speaks about Phoebe as a faithful Christian amongst them there. 1Tim.3:11 indicate that these women were deacons themselves and not those they were the wives of the deacons.

A great challenge for mainline churches in breaking the chain of oppression of women, especially within the church. When reading the Gospels, we find many places where Jesus healed and helped a number of

women, for instance, He healed Simon's mother-in-law, and He also aided a widow by raising her son to life in Luke 7:11-17. Therefore Jesus' healings as well as forgiveness that he extended towards women established His concern for oppressed women in general. His concern was of course a liberating one (Cassidy, 1978: 24).

3.3 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS ON THIS CHAPTER

Being the head of the wife does not mean to be a boss (Van der Walt, 1988:37). When the author speaks about a "boss" he wants the reader to understand the situation where a man has a final say in everything. The example given by Grace Kimathi (1994:24) of a traditional husband (Moses Marimba) in chapter 3:41-42, is a clear picture of a boss. A boss has an unquestionable dictatorship over his wife, which is not biblical. If man and woman were both created by God to accompany and complement each other, it means they are dependent on each other, and therefore, not one of them is above the other. We may differ in gifts, talents and responsibilities, but that does not imply that either of them is a minor person. De Bruyn (1993:227-228) indicates that we are all stewards of God on earth, and as a steward is someone appointed to look after someone's possessions, it will be unfair for a husband to try and own his wife like property, since she is also a companion to his stewardship.

Given the Jewish concept of oppressing women, it will be interesting to connect this concept in African culture. The following chapter will deal with the African view of headship after an overview of the biblical concept of the headship of man.

CHAPTER 4

AFRICAN VIEW OF HEADSHIP OF MAN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Nolan (1988:51) the most characteristic form of suffering in South Africa, though by no means the worst form is the suffering of humiliation of women by men. Just like when white South Africans humiliated blacks in the apartheid era, women find themselves in the same marginalization where their humanity is degraded by men. This point makes it clear that the domination of women in this country is not only a reality, but also an urgent matter that needs to be dealt with from all angles of life. The oppressive elements of the headship of man within the family became clear at a gathering of women of the Malamulele area at the stadium.

The author attended a women's gathering on 09 August 2005 at Malamulele stadium, and one of their speakers, the station manager of Munghana Lonene F.M. radio station confirmed the problem experienced by women in families. He said:

“Women are still abused in many forms even in our New South Africa, but the government is trying to help them fight

for their rights. We as a station are also helping by employing more women than men and we are still going to do that. We have programmes like “*gingirikani*” (*meaning “be busy”*) which discuss the issues that can help women to liberate themselves from the bondage of male dominance.”
(Mandla Nsoko, 2005, Aug. 9 - Radio programme)

It is very interesting to learn that African people put a lot of emphasis on the headship of man as the one who makes a marriage work, and it is a good thing. Single parents are not welcomed by communities as complete families. A good example is shared by Kimathi who says:

“Many communities regarded the single person as insignificant, a social misfit and an abomination to the land. Distant relatives living far away kept on enquiring whether the single person had gotten married yet. A single person has no saying among the married persons.”(1994:14)

It is interesting to note that on the other hand, Calvin acceded that the unmarried state is very useful and must not be despised (Calvin, 1972:117).

The author's argument is that even though the single parents may be regarded as families, they are not given equal dignified status to the married ones. That is why Kuper says:

“Most widows were encouraged to choose one man from the closer relatives in order to continue with her as the husband after her husband passed away.”(1986:24)

Therefore the headship of man in the house has always been of greater importance. It will not be easy to understand the headship of the husband if the wife's situation is unknown. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, it is important to analyze both situations (of husband and of wife), so as to get the clear picture of how the headship is valued by African people. By headship is meant that men are seen as dominant figures over women, to an extent that they have the final saying in many things. This is a situation where a woman is blindly following all instructions of a man even when his decisions are wrong.

4.2 THE VIEW OF A WOMAN (WIFE) IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

According to “The Star” writer Estelle Ellis, the domestic abuse (towards women) in South Africa has not abated, despite radical new domestic violence laws by the government and the constitution. After five years of research, the Institute of Security Studies says that the first people to

come into contact with abuse survivors, the police, doctors and counselors, need to change their approach. Having been born and grown up in one of the African traditional families, it became easier to detect that the value of a woman in the African community is less than that of a man. (The Star, March 14, 2003:8)

Whether the woman is educated or not, married or unmarried, she must remain an inferior person when compared to male figures. One of the South African lawyers during the struggle against apartheid fought for women's rights by saying:

“Many institutions in South Africa are patriarchy. To challenge patriarchy, to dispute the idea that men should be dominant figures in the family and society, is to be seen as fighting against male privilege, but as attempting to destroy African tradition or subvert Afrikaner ideals or undermine civilized and decent British values.”
(Sachs,1990:54)

The community put a lot of emphasis on the importance of the male at the expense of the female. That is why the birth of a boy was regarded so important in the community (Kimathi, 1994:12). This is what Mugambi is emphasizing when saying:

“Polygamy was potentially allowed by a custom, especially if an earlier marriage did not produce children, or if the children born in an earlier marriage were only girls. The birth of boys was considered to be very important, both for inheritance and for defense of the community.” (2002:25)

The important phrase for the argument here is not polygamy, but the important consideration of boys and at the expense of girls. This practice was done in order to promote male dominance. Girls are not regarded as real fulfillment in marriage.

The relationship between a man and woman in the African tradition differs from that of the whites. There is a different concept because some of the African men marry (active mood) while African women are being married (passive mood). In Shangaan some men would say: “I married you,” with the emphasis on the man being the initiator and head of the household. The woman is from the beginning a passive recipient of marriage since she is the one that is being married, while the husband is marrying. The book of Walter Trobisch “I married you” (Also translated into Shangaan “Ndzi ku tekile” (1979) was written in this African context of male dominance. The emphasis is on man marrying a woman and not the other way round. That is why the author supports Monger when saying:

“The special problems of the delinquent women have at all times been neglected, or glossed over by sentiment and unreliable male intuition.” (1967:179)

The process of African marriage is as follows: Everything in marriage is initiated by man. Man initiates love by proposing it to the girl, he then goes on to prepare *lobolo*, he gives it to the in-laws through his uncles and aunts, he prepares the ceremony and he is also responsible to fetch his wife to his home. After fetching the wife to his home, the in-laws (especially aunts) will give her instructions on how she will live with all people in the home, including her husband. On top of that, the wife relies on her husband for almost everything that will happen in their family. That is why the speeches of the wedding ceremony from the family of the wife would always insist: “Take care of her” and not “Take care of each other”. The author also experienced this one side concept of preparing for marriage. (Baloyi, 2001)

Moosa is of the view that “Women who are married by customary law are seen as minors and thus cannot own a property or enter into a contract.” (1988:205)

It is therefore not surprising in the later stage to find that women are said to please men and not vice versa. That is why Kimathi says that the

woman's part in marriage and sexual intercourse was to please the husband and to bear children. (1994:13)

The author personally understand the African concept of marriage in this context as that of the subject and object, or the owner and the property. This is where the headship abuses women. From the beginning the African marriage is set on an unequal footing. The reader knows that the subject and object are not equal and will never be equal. According to Nyirongo, Harry's wife, was made to believe that she was a slave of her husband when she said:

“It is a shame for a man to draw water, to wash clothes, to pound, to cook relish or sweep the house while her husband is alive. My pregnancy is no excuse for me to lie down.” (1999:36)

In other words she believed that the main aim of her marriage was to do everything for her husband despite her health problems. In the Swazi tradition there is a certain tradition that follows after the wedding. The woman is later smeared with red clay, signifying the loss of her virginity (Kuper, 1986:27).

The custom never shares anything about those who are not virgins, while on the other hand, to the husbands nothing was done to signify whether he still was a virgin. One can understand why men are favored more than

women. Even the traditional rituals uplift men more than women. According to Van der Walt one of the church fathers from Hippo in Africa, Augustine understands the one aim of woman's creation as procreation or childbearing. He says:

“If one should ask why it was necessary that a helper be made for man, the answer that seems most probable is that it was for the procreation of children just as the earth is a helper for the seed in the production of plants. Now if the woman was not made for the man to be his helper in begetting children, in which way was she to help him? She was not to till the earth with him, for there was not yet any toil to make help necessary. If there was such a need, a male helper would be better.” (1988:53)

The author is against Augustine's view that limits the aim of woman's concept of creation to childbearing alone. This is just some typical example of male dominance which enhances African culture to continue oppressing women. If one follows this process we will have a problem with those women who are barren. The society will reject and isolate them further. Men will then ask women to conceive before they can propose a marriage.

As a result of the above, women will be considered properties of men. How will Augustine react to barren woman? This would simply allow many men to go only for women who can bear children for marriage and as such would humiliate them and place them in a difficult position of relating to men. This would give room for the argument of people who say that it is important to have premarital sexual intercourse so that one can marry after being aware that the woman can bear children, hence some weddings are conducted while the bridegroom is expecting a child.

The author is convinced that the woman has more than one aim of procreation. The above concept of marriage places women in an inferior position and lead women into sexual objects.

4.3 WOMEN AS SEXUAL OBJECTS

Women oppression in the society is never a matter of open force only. It always seeks to become socially incorporated and operate through modes of cultural conditioning which make subjects internalize the image projected upon them by men and community. In other words, the subjection of women has become socially accepted as a normal code of conduct. African culture does not only approve seeing the woman as an object of sexual fulfillment, but it also has ways and means through which it instigates men to see it that way through a process of raising children, as well as treatment and rituals performed in their community.

That is why Frazier (1975:415) quoted Ruether by mentioning the fear of sexuality as the primary way of experiencing the alienation of and from the body. Through this alienation woman is depersonalized and turned into a body-object to be used or abused sexually.

According to Lopez, in male supremacist cultures women are believed to embody carnality, hence he says:

“Women are sex. A man wants what a woman has - sex. He can steal it (rape), persuade her to give it away (seduction), rent it (prostitution), lease it over a long term (marriage in the USA), or own it outright (marriage in most communities).” (1979:176)

It becomes very clear after this explanation that there are men who are controlled by their sexual feelings; hence they see every woman with lustful eyes. In the above quotation, men tarnish the image of God in the way they treat women.

The “*City Press*” dated 13 November 2005 confirmed that the Commission on Gender Equity (CGE) has a complaint against those who use women as advertisements of sex. The mobile telephone companies such as MTN, Vodacom and Cell C and the SABC and etv are the main culprits who were summoned about these adverts. In its reports on page 8 it says:

“The use of women as sex objects in advertisements has angered the CGE which listed some of the adverts in a report to the parliament. The CGE has listed 28 advertisements that led to complaints from the members of the public to the Advertising Standard Authority (ASA), the body that regulates advertising.” (City Press, 13 Nov 2005:8)

In her book “Is nothing Sacred,” Marrie Fortune (1989:29) unveiled two stories of women who were victims of sexual harassment from men in America. One woman from her case studies quit her job after the male co-worker was severely begging to have sexual intercourse with her. It is clear that many men use women’s beauty and attractiveness as an excuse to victimize them sexually. Any man who uses a woman that way, has lost his own dignity given to him by God.

The relationship problem developed in the book clearly highlighted the problem experienced by women in Africa as well. Men still see women as their sexual objects to an extent that some are even forced to have intercourse with them because of circumstances to get employment. Others will use their bodies in order to get promoted. In other words, economic circumstances will force them to do things that are abnormal. They become sex workers in their places of employment. The author is aware of a case where another marriage was destroyed by a manager of the company where he offered sexual intercourse as a condition for the

woman to be employed, and for the sake of getting a job, she was obliged to do it. When it was found later by the husband, the marriage was dissolved. The selected conditions caused the woman to lack in her values or ethics. The desperation was because of economics. She also thought that it was a once-off thing.

It is quite astonishing to learn that even in some African cultures women's status is lowered to that of a mere sexual object. When Clemens (1971:24) emphasized this he used a concept of "dehumanized sexual object" or "a status symbol" as he was explaining how men view women. That is why most men expect their wives to respond immediately to their sexual needs. In many cases, whenever a man sees a beautiful woman, he thinks of having sexual intercourse with her. Certain African communities will grow the woman as a sexual object. They will stitch their vaginas so that they could be virgins when they marry.

Even the Jews in Jesus' time seem to have the same concept. (Hocking, 1984:75). That is why Christ's words were harsh towards such men. He said: "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully that person already committed adultery (Matt. 5:28)."

This type of sin plus others come not from the practice itself, but from

the heart and mind. The sinfulness of man makes him to only see one phase of life in a woman, that of being a sexual object. One may come to understand when Malan (1990:14) contends: “The female body is seen as a means of attraction for the purposes of advertising and is thus commercialized.” Many sexual adverts on TV, newspapers, magazines and others are centered and portrayed on the female body. At a certain stage, even women themselves may fall into the trap of seeing themselves as sexual objects to men. A good example is that of Pharoah’s wife who saw herself good for the purposes of sexual intercourse with Joseph in Gen.39:7 (Malan, 1990:14). The modern world through advertisements portrays women as objects to be used.

In the case of Pharoah’s wife the author thinks that it was not wrong for her to be attractive to her husband alone, but it turns her into a fornicator when she tries to entice other men outside her own marriage. It is a pity that we still have women today that is helping to destroy their good images by thinking that they can hook every man into their blankets. De Bruyn (1993:161) emphasizes that unmarried women often give into the temptation of having sexual relations with married as well as unmarried men. In this way women help men to see them as mere sexual objects rather than what they were created for.

In central Africa women are seen as mere sexual object because of the male discrimination factor. Faith also plays an important role in subjugating women in an inferior position. The traditional rituals that are performed to their bodies teach them more about how to behave sexually. Their clitoris is removed (clitoridectomy) and the vagina is sewn up (infibulation) in order to prevent them to have sexual intercourse since they are not yet married (Warunta & Kinoti, 200:142). Only a small opening is left to menstruate and urinate. This process is done so that girls can be virgins when they marry. It is only after the wedding that the operation is performed again to cut and open up the vagina so as to allow her to have sexual intercourse in her marriage. (Thiam, 1986:57-58)

Another way in which a society sees women as sexual objects and prepares men to have the vagina spared for them. No one makes sure that men are virgins when they marry.

From the above, we can learn that the sole purpose of a female person is to be there for men, for the purpose of sexual intercourse. In other words, she would only have freedom over her body when she is entitled to have intercourse by marrying a man. Before the permission is granted, she is seen as something useless. It is a serious question to ask what happens when a divorce occurs or else if the husband passes away, would they sew the vagina again in order to prevent the unmarried woman from

fornication. This is one of the most difficult parts of life for women in that situation, but it indicates that women are viewed more as sexual objects than as being created in the image of God.

One will also understand why women are raped, because they are seen as properties. The Limpopo provincial commissioner (Mr Sengani) spoke during the Anti-crime road show in 2002:

“In 2002 alone 4810 rape cases of women and children were reported in the province. A week ago I was in Nebo where a 75 five year old woman was raped by a boy of about 25 years old.” (22 March :Mukhomi, Malamulele).

The road show was an organized campaign lead by police where the police were educating people of the village on how to deal with crimes, especially domestic violence and rape issues.

This to me is a sign that some men, even when they are still young, view women who are fit to be their grannies as sexual objects. The dignity of adulthood has lost meaning in our communities.

Many men think that women are the first to draw attention to the epidemic of rape and abuse. They spoke up and spoke out about the connection between rape and a male dominated culture. Women are today taking responsibility to stop what men started (Speech at Mukhomi

provincial anti-crime road show on 22 March 2003). The “Sunday world” newspaper explained what rape means under such heading:

“*When sex becomes a rape.*” “It does not matter whether the victim is your wife or not, but even if you started sexual intercourse in agreement, whenever she call you to stop you have to, because from that moment onwards, if you continue, it is called a rape because it is no longer an agreement”. (Sowetan Sunday world, 19 January 2003:11)

The women abuse and rape statistics that are growing day by day in South Africa are initially the results of men viewing women as sexual objects. If they refuse, you force them because they are to serve men as sexual objects or slaves. The above happens because men view themselves as subjects. We would not be reading about rape in our daily newspapers in South Africa, if men were not seeing women as mere sexual objects. The daily newspapers are full of rape and abuse, which shows clearly how men view women as objects of sexual intercourse. Therapy has to restore the concept of *ubuntu* (humanness) between men and women. It is the author’s conviction that when men propose to women, not many of them take “no” for an answer, but most take “no” as “YES”, and that is why in some communities abduction is accepted, where a woman is forced into a marriage. Once abducted, the man is allowed to have intercourse by force, and a message is sent to her parents

so that negotiations for marriage are arranged. In other communities, when you have raped a woman, the man is forced to marry, because the woman is regarded as damaged goods.

Trobisch (1975:115) advocates:

“A boy whose first stirrings of sexual arousal came in the context of seeing women’s underwear may thereafter call up the image of woman’s underwear whenever he wants to re-evoked the original sex rush and in order to aid masturbation.”

(1975: 115)

This is a clear indication that women are seen as sexual instruments rather than what they were created for. The “City Press” shares a painful story under the heading: “The minister’s daughter raped in the church”. A certain 43 year old church elder who was a closer friend of the pastor raped the pastor’s daughter. This elder raped the pastor’s 13 year old daughter inside the church when she was cleaning. This was abuse and misuse of power, but also defiled the girl and the church where worship is to be conducted. One can detect that during his usual visits to the pastor’s home he was seeing the girl as a sex object and he burned with lust until he raped her inside the church (City Press, December 08, 2003: 4). With the above in mind, let us now analyze the Jewish view of women as objects. Several cultures are also caught up in this kind of process, i.e.

viewing a woman as a sexual object. Let me conclude this section by sharing a last story from South Africa.

The author read in “Sunday Sun” newspaper about the incident of a husband from Bethal, in Mpumalanga, who was involved in the gang-raping of his own wife with two other men. The reporter says that the husband sent the other two men to fetch his wife and brought her to the forest, where he became the first to rape her in front of these men, and the other two did likewise afterwards. They also assaulted her before they left her for dying without transport in the forest (Sunday Sun, 24 July 2005:31).

This barbaric incident can only be done by a man who is not normal in his head. Should we blame culture for this mental sickness? Analyzing the process, therapy or care givers need to create in man a culture of ubuntu, where men and women will be respected as human beings. The process needs to rise a new generation that will respect the body as a sacred temple worthy to be treated with dignity.

4.4 JEWISH VIEW OF WOMAN

The Jewish community also struggled with this issue of women being regarded as sexual objects.

The status of Jewish women was lowered to less than that of a male servant or a boy in the family. From the context of 1Cor. 14:34-35 we can understand Paul's exhortations to those women in the Jewish culture. He brings out the image that is worthy to share. Women were treated like any piece of property that was owned in the house. She would not say a word nor give her input as to how the family should be run. According to Bennet (1974:182) the message of 1Cor. 14:34-35 was based on the Jewish ordinance which stated that women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies, or even to ask questions.

Judaism did have appreciation of marriage, but so often at the expense of women. Van der Walt says:

“The wife was literally locked up in the house. She had to be seen in public as little as possible, because she would with her innate cunning, seduce the innocent men. The Talmud warns us that men should not converse with women, even with their wives, too often because this would ultimately make them fall into immorality.” (1988:21)

The Jews would not permit a woman to read in the synagogue, though a male servant or a child had this permission. It is interesting to note that in the later Judaism changes came (Bennet, 1974:183). The reaction of Jesus' disciples when they find Him speaking to a woman in John 4:27

taught them how women were viewed by Jews even during the time of Jewish strict rules. It says:

“Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking to a woman.” (John,4:27)

Their surprise was not because He spoke to a Samaritan woman, but that He spoke to a woman in public, whereas a rabbi was not supposed to speak to a woman publicly. The author believes they would be surprised even if he was speaking to a Jewish woman.

When we read about the miraculous feeding of the five thousand men on the mountain the Bible says:

“The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children (Matt.14:21)”.

This is another way of viewing women as secondary people. They were not important, hence not counted.

Why would women and children be left out in counting? Were they part and parcel of the multitude or rather a property of men? The idea is clear here, that according to Jewish traditions women were not counted among men. As men were more important than the women, therefore only men were counted. Some commentators say that it was because women were not allowed to walk that distance to the mountain while others indicate

that even though they were not many, they were present and should have been counted also. St. Matthew, being a Jew, would not violate his tradition of seeing women as minors, and that is why they were not counted in this episode. This is not surprising because cultures had not taken women seriously.

According to Clemens the myth of feminine inferiority has become a more widespread belief, and he says:

“In the ensuing centuries the church fathers spoke of women in quite contemptuous terms. The women were to be avoided as dangerous temptress waiting to beguile men.” (1971:23)

That is why even the divorces mentioned in the Old Testament were done unjustly towards women. For instance, in the divorce practices as recorded in Deut.24:1-4, women were seen as disposable toys which could offer man pleasure for a while.

The Pharisees who derived their definition of marriage after the fall of human beings saw man as the ruler of the woman, and he could even determine how many wives he wished to have. That is seen from their reaction to Jesus in Matt.19:3-12. In fact, they did not only see a man as the ruler, but having all the power and might so that he could decide when to expel or leave his old wife for a new one. An image of

bubblegum comes into the author's mind, where one can chew for some minutes and after its former taste is finished, one can simply spit it out on the ground because it has lost its sweetness. The status of women is less than that of a piece of furniture in the house.

Rabbi Yehuda (150 AD) taught that every Jewish man should praise God daily and his prayer must include these words:

“Praise is to you that you have not created me a heathen, a woman and not a slave.” (De Bruyn, 1998:1)

Orthodox Jewish men still say this Morning Prayer:

“Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has not made me a woman.” (Bennet, 1974:68)

The concept is that a woman is an inferior being. Ryrie (1991:35) says that the right of divorce in Jewish culture was at the discretion of the husband, and if he so chose, the wife would expect was a bill of divorcement. There is no question but that men dominated the religious scene in Judaism and oppressed women. The major contribution of a Jewish woman was their service in the home, where they were accorded a place of honor in carrying out the privileges of motherhood.

The Rabbinical teachings of the time emphasized that this should be a man's daily devotion. It is important to emphasize that this prayer is not

only bad, but it also took the image of women into a very low standard. Readers must not forget that what we say in prayer is what we do in our daily lives. Therefore it did not come as a surprise when Jews treated women so badly, because that is what they prayed for. They lived according to their prayers. To them women were a lower being that needed to know their own position. They are not far from the way African cultures treat their women. It is clear that the father in the Jewish tradition was recognized as the one having all final decisions in the home (same as African culture). Even when the daughter was engaged, the father was to decide whether his daughter may continue to be married or not. Which means even if the agreements were reached for marriage, but if during the course of engagement the father changed his decision about the marriage of his daughter, all were supposed to agree with him without questioning his decision? A good example is in the letter written to the Corinthians which says:

“In case of an engaged couple who have decided not to marry: if the man feels that he is not acting properly towards the girl and if his passions are too strong and feels that they ought to marry, then they should get married, as he wants to. There is no sin in this. But if a man, without being forced to do so, has firmly made up his mind not to marry, and if he

has his will under complete control and has already decided in his own mind what to do, then he does well not to marry the girl. So the man who marries does well, so the one who does not marry does even better.” (1Cor.7:36-38)

It was a custom in those days for the father to choose a husband for his daughter. According to De Haan:

“No marriage was countenanced without the consent of the father of the girl involved. In many instances the bride was chosen exclusively by the father (e.g. Isaac’s case as their reasoning). Today we have a faint reflection of this custom when the prospective groom goes through the formality of asking a father for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Then the phrase “flower of the age” means maturity of age. But if the father thinks that refusal to let her marry after she has passed the flower of her age may be misinterpreted or bring scandal upon her and her suitor, then let them marry.” (1966:88)

The author’s concern in this process is that the mother of the girl is not in the picture, in other words, her husband will always decide for her. This means that even if the mother would decline the decisions of her husband, she cannot because she is inferior, and let alone the husband take

decisions even if they are wrong. Jewish women were not allowed the permission to give their own view, objection nor opinion, but they blindly followed their husbands.

The researcher went to marry his wife in the magistrate's office in 1994, but what touched him was that only his father-in-law was asked to be there in order to take an oath that he allowed him to marry his daughter. The thinking of the author was that the question to be asked by the official should be: Do you allow this boy to marry your daughter? The response was to be answered by both parents. But he decided alone while his wife back at home did not take part. The researcher's understanding is that, if parents must participate in this, they should both be present, or if not allowed, both of them must be excused. They are both parents and no one is a minor parent, hence they should both be given equal responsibility to take an oath for their daughter.

Coming back to the Jews, the author believes that their opinion about women was just polluted by sinful attitude they mixed with their culture.

In his book "The essential works" Josephus says that he realized a woman was a person who was formed from man's rib with the sole aim to bear many children. He says:

“Since Adam had no female consort and looked with astonishment at the other creatures which had their mates, God took Adam’s rib while he slept and formed woman from it. In Hebrew, a woman is called “*essa*” but the name of that first woman was Eve, meaning “the mother of all living, hence a woman is created to be a mother.” (1988:19)

The author personally understands that if the aim of woman’s creation is motherhood alone, then the liberation of women will not be easy because the author’s understanding is that the first aim of the creation of woman is “helpmate” to man as written in Gen.2:18. The author wants to concentrate on the word because this idea cannot respond to the question of women who are unable to bear children; the implication is that they are created for nothing.

On the other hand, the well-known philosopher Nietzsche said that the woman is the second blunder of God (Van Wyk, 1985:38). In other words, the Jewish understanding of woman pushed them into an extent of blaming God for creating a woman, yet they (men) cannot live without a woman. I understand very well that the biblical story of the creation of the woman and the purpose thereof (as in Gen.2: 8), escaped the minds of many clever and educated Jewish teachers of the time.

In some parts of Africa, even today, the bride is paid for and regarded as common as a chattel. Muslim mosques have signs that say:

“Women and dogs and other impure animals are not permitted. Men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence.”

(Habermehl, 1976:258)

In the Islamic belief, woman is believed to be of a lower level, she is thought not to have eternal soul. Four wives are allowed to each Mohammedan male, even up to today. For women are regarded as sexual object to please men (Habermehl, 1976:260).

According to Mnisi (classmate at UP) the traditions governing the widows of Sotho people do not allow her to attend normal church services during the period of mourning in early stages of death. She said this after she visited one of the victims around Warmbaths. There is also a custom of dressing the widow in black clothes until the unveiling of the tombstone or a year later. During the period when she is still in black she is restricted to many things, for instance, sharing and being with friends (she must usually be with the elderly people), using her own plate and mug and not changing clothes as she wishes. She is also not allowed to get another husband until she is permitted to do so by the in-laws, and

that mainly takes a long time, while this process treats men in a simple way. They are treated differently.

In other words, they do not have to follow the process that woman undergoes.

The author also had this experience when his father passed away in October 1985. His step-mother who was present faced a lot of difficulties. One of the cousins went on to take the two vehicles of the father when this woman was there without any objection about the belongings of her late husband. She was taken to the forest and one day she came home tied up in ropes crying while the old widows were beating her from behind. Unfortunately we could not hear what they were saying because while others were beating her, others were singing the songs while the ritual was being performed on her so that we could not hear what was said. From then onwards she was dressed in black and while still in the period of mourning, the father's relatives were taking whatever they wanted that belonged to the deceased. When the period of mourning was finished she found out that nothing that belonged to her late husband was left, except his clothes and she decided to leave the house for good. When a man dies, his relatives can easily jump into his position and decide on his behalf whatever may happen towards his widow and children.

The author also became a victim because his father's death did not only bring sufferings to his step-mother, but it also brought poverty to his life as well, since after his father's death, he remained a helpless beggar. All these happened because the woman takes no decisions on her husband's behalf. This is one of the bad sides of the rituals that oppress women in African customs. The community will watch these rituals on woman, and allow a man to break the rules.

4.5 AFRICAN SAYINGS ON THE DOMINATED WOMAN

The reader needs to understand that language also plays an important role in our daily lives, and it can be oppressive. Our hopes, beliefs and lifestyles are shaped by what we say. African languages have the so-called "sayings or idioms" in the wisdom literature. Some call them riddles while others call them proverbs. These sayings emphasize the unconditional subordination of women under their husbands. This is another way in which women are oppressed by men through these idiomatic expressions.

For example, a Sotho idiom says: "Lebitla la mosadi ke bohadi" (literally meaning "the grave of a woman is in her marriage or her in-law") (Kriel, 1991:27). This saying strongly emphasizes that a woman must stay in her marriage even if it causes death. In other words, only a wife (not a husband) is bound to remain in marriage even when things are bad. In

other words, she would not be permitted to get out of it. In literal terms the implication of this saying is that a woman is not allowed to initiate a divorce or separation, but that right remains with the man. The inferiority complex of a woman in this situation enforces her even to death, while it remains very quiet about men or husbands. It is questionable whether this is not another way of pushing women into a far corner of life, where they remain without any say in the family at all. The person who initiated this saying was influenced by the tradition that allowed men to oppress women. It would be fair if the grave of both is their own marriage to force both of them to die in it, or say that they both are not tied to the marriage for life, especially when the marriage becomes dangerous to at least one of them.

Another Shangaan idiom says:

“Nsati wa le nhongeni anga yingisi” meaning “a woman who is always beaten with a stick does not mind being beaten anymore.” (Junod, 1990:188)

In the first place this saying is one-sided since it only refers to the woman as the object of the beating, while the man is the one who beats. English people had the same concept as “the rule of thumb” (olden days) which allowed men to beat their wives with a stick that is the size of a man’s thumb. The main question to ask is: When will the man be an object of

the beating since he also commits mistakes? Another possibility of research for someone. Secondly, the author believes that men who always beat their wives might have also been influenced by the fact that the wives are no longer worried about being beaten; this is a myth followed by some men. Thirdly, new couples may learn from this saying that a wife is someone who may be beaten at will. If being beaten is painful, then how is it that a woman gets used to it? That should be called severe domestic violence.

The author's classmate in a high school says that whenever he holds a broomstick, his wife gets under a double bed in fear of the beating. A newspaper had the following headline:

“Where am I wrong when I beat *my own* wife?”

The newspaper went on to say: “This was a consensus at a recent safety and security *imbizo* in Driefontein near Piet Retief in Mpumalanga. (City Press, 18 Feb.2007:10) Another man in this meeting voiced out that he is still trying to understand why he was arrested for bringing his wife to order (referring to wife beating). Driefontein, like many parts of Mpumalanga is in ruins because of violent crime. Many people still do not believe that assaulting a person (women in particular) is a crime” (City Press, 18 Feb. 2007: 10).

The other saying:

“Vavasati ava na huvo”, literally meaning “a woman’s word has no value or her words will not have the same weight as that of the man in court.” (Junod, 1990:188)

If both man and woman’s words come from the mouth, then what is it that makes the one weighty while the other one is inferior. This is another way of saying that a woman is useless in the society. Pastoral care needs to address therapeutically the culture as well as the domination by men.

The opinion of the author is that there are men in the community who are more useless than many women. In some of our church councils there are men who share their useless ideas compared to women in their meetings, but this saying is one-sided. Personally, the author knows of many women who are active in bringing success in their communities and churches where men are doing nothing at all. Therefore some women are powerful when given a chance by men and community.

Junod also shares another saying that continues with the process of oppression:

“Loko homu ya ntswele yi rhangela emahlweni, ti ta wela exidziveni” (If a female cow leads the herd, all cattle will

fall into the pool). This means that when a woman is in the lead, the life in the village deteriorates.” (1990:190)

From the perspective of this saying, a woman will never have a leading role either in the society or family. That is one of the reasons that the houses or families of the single mothers are underestimated even though they raise children with good values. This denies the fact that it is God who gives the gifts of leadership to the people. Our people should learn to see the difference between the gender and cultural issues. Paul says that some people were given the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, evangelists and teachers, but he did not mention men alone. These gifts of the spirit are given to people according to faith, and not according to gender. The scriptures says:

“It is He who gave gifts to mankind, He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers.” (Eph.4:11)

On the morning of 22 March 2003 the researcher was watching TV news where people around the world were demonstrating against the ongoing war of America on Iraq. There were women in the streets of Washington who were also protesting against their male president and leader, George Bush. To me that was a sign that women can analyze the mistakes that are being done by their president while he, being a male and a leader can not

see that his decision to attack that country was wrong. The final consequence was that women and children were going to suffer more than men.

The researcher started thinking about the concept of a woman being president of America, then the war we are speaking about today would not have been there, and those who lost their lives in the battle would have still been alive today. There are women who are so gifted that they can lead families and communities better than men. It is an unproven belief that a woman cannot take the lead in society or home.

“Vukati bya katinga” (meaning “marriage roasts”) only applies to women. It is a woman who always suffers in the marriage progress while it is quiet about the man.” (Junod, 1990:180)

One can also wonder if it is woman alone who should struggle for marriage, it is said:

“Ku teka iku hoxa nyoka enkwameni”, which means “to marry is to put a snake in one’s handbag.” (Junod, 1990:181)

As we know, a snake is something that is feared by many people in African life, while on the other hand, during the fall God declared the enmity of man and snake. The behavior and lifestyle of the snake is

something of concern, because to the author's understanding this saying is trying to draw our attention to make similarities between a woman and a snake. In the fall, both man and woman sinned; hence we cannot blame a woman or give her the responsibility of Adam's problems.

This saying seems to have a relationship with the other one:

“Wansati u fana na xigalana emirini” (Wife is like a tick on one's body). The meaning of this proverb is that marriage brings trouble.” (Junod, 1990:186)

In Shangaan, it literally means “to marry a wife brings trouble”. There are still many other sayings that are used to pull down the image of a woman so that she can be seen as a mere doormat for a husband. These proverbs are used often in order to discipline women and their meanings are always in the minds of many people, especially men.

4.6 THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF MAN'S HEADSHIP

Olthuis (1974:28) says that the interpretation of headship is not common because most interpreters have confused the order for creation and the disorder of the fall. An African man or husband who believes that his wife is like “the snake” or one of the mentioned idioms above, will obviously treat her without respect and dignity. The reaction of such a husband to such a woman will be defensive, and he will always want to

be a better person than the wife who is explained by the idioms. It is obvious that the man will try more and more to distance himself from the bad woman. Pastor Walter Trobisch (1979:29) describes an African traditional view which compares a woman to a piece of unclaimed land. She is more like a garden without an owner. A man is compared to being a gardener, for he claims the garden and sows his seed. If the seed do not grow, the land is considered infertile and the gardener has the social mandate to acquire another piece of land in order to grow his seed. A man can have several gardens but a garden can have only one owner. This concept illustrates why men are more leniently judged for the sins of adultery than women.

Trobisch was so affected by African customs to an extent that some of his ideas are not good when analyzing our society. His allegory of equating woman with a piece of ground does not portray a good picture of woman, especially when you view creation of humanity with God's creation. If his thinking is the way some African people live, then every woman would like to find herself far from such a society. That is oppressive and extremely abusive.

The first example, of the traditional headship of man is drawn from a man called Moses in Kenya of whom Kimathi says:

“Moses Marimba is a traditional Christian husband. As soon as he comes home from work he washes and goes to the shopping center to meet his age mates. After enjoying his company he finally leaves for home at about 8.pm. when he estimates that supper will be ready. Quietly entering his house, he occupies the big chair in the sitting room and start playing radio alone while his wife enjoys the company of the children in the kitchen. When his food arrives at around 9 pm. he hungrily eats alone while his wife eats with children in the kitchen. It appears to me Moses was not delivered from the traditions. His father taught him that an African man must behave like the unapproachable, lordship and chief in the house.” (1994: 42)

The researcher personally feels that such kind of husbands is a disgrace to their families and society, especially if they are Christians. Men live in two worlds, the outside world of work, and the abusive one in homes. From the above short episode, it is clear that some husbands are very good with sharing and relating to others outside their homes, but they turn to be equated with lions (so to speak) when they arrive at home. Such is one of the characteristics of a real African traditional man. It is a problem since even some of the Christians, like Moses Marimba, are still hooked

in this type of life. They are the type of men whose wives run until they injure themselves because of fear when they have to prepare the husband something. There is no time to share the blossoms of life with his wife and children, let alone the society and the church.

Wimberly believes that it is not only possible, but also important that pastoral care should move people from being dominated and shamed to realizing their worth and importance. He goes on to say that oppressed and victimized women must be brought to realize that they are important people both in the families and communities. Pastoral care must not only look at the oppression by men, but also by the evil spirits and actions portrayed by violent men. Wimberly shares a powerful story saying:

“I was approached by an African Christian woman whose background was dominated by a sophisticated worldview that included demons. She said that she was beaten and raped nightly by a demon, leaving her scared and tired every morning. She continually felt humiliated and abused by the demon. She was tormented by the low self-esteem and mental illness, but her husband was not abusive, instead he was supportive to her.”
(1999:93)

My view to this is that whenever we speak about liberation of any kind, or oppression of any kind, we must not be mistaken to undermine the spiritual side of things. The pastoral care can help liberate women from

the oppression of men, but it must also help to liberate them from the spiritual forces that the devil uses to dominate people's life.

Tchividjian (no year: 70) says that another way of liberation is when everyone takes his or her own responsibility. He says:

“Liberation comes as a mother takes her own responsibility in life, e.g. ministry to husband, to children, to the community and also to the church.”

When the abusive husband calls his wife, she is frightened because she does not know exactly what is going to happen, whether she is going to be beaten. We still have in our communities, even in the church, such men who is the boss of his wife to such an extent that she cannot even ask where he was when coming home late is problematic. Some are beaten or expelled from the home if they do so. It becomes very difficult for her to detect the difference between headship and lordship.

Zinn and Eitzen (1990:271) say:

“The society assigns a superior status to husbands. He makes more money, he has more prestige in the community, he works outside home and he has more power.” (1990:271)

The author disagrees with Zinn and Eitzen because making more money is part of his responsibilities as a man, but it does not promote him into a

superior person to abuse the wife. We also have women who work outside the home and earn more money than their husbands, but they remain inferior to their husbands. This proves that this argument is not convincing. After the fall of man into sin God in Genesis 3 gave husbands not woman that responsibility to work hard in order to get food. Then it can not be used as a good excuse to abuse women.

Romano says:

“In some societies, primarily non-Western societies the woman’s role is to the man including hard physical labor deferring to his judgments and socially subordinating her in such ways walking behind him and eating after he has eaten.” (1988:43)

The researcher does not condone this since it is a result of human’s sinful nature. There is nowhere in the Bible where God teaches or commands us to treat women in an abusive way. That is where our cultures (if it comes from culture) should be revisited so that we can have a better life for all people irrespective of gender.

Clemens (1971:24) contends that some traditional men could see women not only as evil, but inferior and unimportant as well. Even today many men think of women largely in terms of dehumanized sex objects. The above facts remind us of the concept of *lobola*, especially how it can be

used by men in order to oppress, turning women into property, for example. They will remind them that they have paid the bridal price for them. I have already indicated earlier that women were not created only for the purpose of pleasing men sexually, in Biblical terms it will be regarded as a heresy. They have more important reasons than that one.

Lobolo also influences the behavior of a man as the husband in the family. Some researchers believe that wife beating and harassment result from the fact that after the final payment of lobolo the man immediately owns a wife (Baloyi, 2001:51). Because of the fact that there is no credit left, she is owned to an extent that she has no saying in the home at all. She may become a slave that can be ordered around and beaten without excuse. (Warunta & Kimothi, 1994:105)

The emphasis on the statement:

“I do not understand why I am arrested for beating my own wife because I have paid *lobola*, she belongs to me” is given more value by the fact that the man paid everything to make his wife his own like one buys a car (City press, 18 Feb. page 10).

Moosa (1998:199) responds to the issue of human rights by saying that despite human rights, the Muslims in the Cape maintain that men should still dominate women.

Alsdurf on the other hand contends:

“The man, once a church deacon raped his girlfriend before marriage, strangled, kicked and bruised and repeatedly threatened to murder her.” (1989:33-35)

This type of behavior is not a result of African culture or religion (not even Islam), but it may have been as a result of some health problems within that man. If that church did nothing to discipline him for such actions, then this church must revise some of its governing rules and regulations. Although we still have such husbands in our societies, it cannot be allowed as a good thing. The reader needs to understand the concept of ownership.

By ownership the author means the fact that a husband claims to take his wife as owned property like a piece of land that was bought as a result of the *lobolo* payment. The argument here is that if one pays a lot of money for *lobolo*, some traditional Africans become confused to an extent that they think that there is no difference in handling the so-called “bought wife” and “bought furniture”. The result will therefore be to treat the wife like any other thing bought.

The researcher attended an “Anti-crime road-show” that was conducted by the Police staff from Polokwane and social workers from Malamulele

at Mukhomi village on 23 March 2003. Amongst the speeches that were delivered, the author had to work out a programme of an education plan. The first one being the social worker, Mrs. Bila (March 23, 2003: Speech at Malamulele), had this to say at the workshop:

“A woman was created for a good purpose, to be a helper rather than to be a punching bag. In the past I know mothers used to feel proud of being treated in a harsh manner (by their husbands). If the husband did not assault her before he left, she would feel not being loved. I believe that not all men are abusers; there are good men out there whom we encourage to form a forum in order to address this epidemic. Let us break the silence. We know that when we work together we will overcome.” (Bila,2003:speech)

The researcher believes that after reading the words above, one can get another picture of how some traditional husbands look like and are caused to believe in a wrong way. They do not only beat their wives at will, but they also abuse them as well. It is a pity to learn that some traditional women are also in favor of being abused, since they do not want to break the silence. The word “punchbag” reminds the author of the picture of a half-naked woman called Ntombifuthi Zwane of Brits in the City Press of 09-03-2003 on page 6. The first thing to be remembered here is the meaning of the “punch bag” (City Press, March 23, 2003:6).

The woman was naked because the husband beat and battered her until she went out of the house naked since she felt that if she should take time to fetch clothes it would be too late with the beating that was continuing.

This is a bag that is hanged somewhere on top so that boxers use it for training by punching it, just like they are boxing in the ring. One can hit this bag as much as he pleases, for the purpose of strengthening his punching abilities while in the ring. Back to Ntombifuthi, this woman was young in age but her body looked old since she claimed that her husband used to beat her until she reported the case to the local police station. On top of that, she claimed that the prosecutor who held her case told her husband to assassinate her in order to nullify the pending case, since she was a woman. Another concept of regarding women as property.

The author personally knows of women in the church who do not want to spoil their husband's name or to put them in the situation where they can find themselves under a certain type of church discipline. The wife of an evangelist in another church, broke the news about her abusive husband in the home to the author's wife, but when the author asked this woman that he may take it further with the church council responsible, she refused. Her reasons were that it might spoil her husband before the entire church and it might cause the missionaries to stop paying his salary and

the children will suffer. Her view was that the children first had to grow up and then finally we could tackle the problem. (Case study)

The tradition of the so-called “untouchable husband” also brings some negative consequences to churches. The question is, are the churches collaborating with the perpetrators? The church must receive blame and criticism for using theology that uplift men more than women. Is it because we still have some husbands in our society who use the Biblical concept of “man is the head” to strengthen their argument in favor of women abuse? They say that God is on their side when treating women as inferior and minor beings. Some of these abusive issues can be addressed through an education plan, therapy and workshops that train the church in order to review cultural issues that oppress women. Highlighting them is important.

The researcher also conducted a personal interview on 24-03-2003 with Mrs. Maluleke V.M. of the family court at Malamulele Magistrate’s office. The first thing the author wanted to know was the statistics of domestic violence that were reported in their office. She said that in 2002 alone, the cases of domestic violence of husbands to their wives were 165 while in 2003 until the above date there were 367.

This means that if things were going that way, every three months they would have to deal with more or less 367 cases, then it means

mathematically that by the end of 2003 they would have dealt with more or less 1468 cases. This indicates that the statistics of women abuse in the home are competing with HIV/AIDS in growth. She went on to indicate that these were the cases where traditional men were harassing and mistreating their wives at home. When I asked about the main reasons for these cases she mentioned the following:

*Unfaithfulness - When the husband becomes unfaithful in the marriage relationship, he expects the wife not to have a say nor ask anything, since she is entitled to unconditionally respect him. As he is the boss in the house, he would reward her with beating and maybe threats of expelling her if she asks questions. Women suffer because they depend on men financially. The power of finance and traditional belief that “man has unquestionable authority” plays an important role here. Many husbands do not shoulder the blame of unfaithfulness but they try to shift the blame to women by threatening them. The researcher is reminded of one incident when he was passing the house where the couple was fighting about a problem of infertility. They were married for more than three years and did not have a child. The researcher repeatedly heard the man shouting these words: “Where are the children, go and fetch children from your mother!” This was a sign that the woman was in trouble since she was now the victim of lack of children. According to the author it is

unfair since there were no medical tests done yet in order to prove that the woman was the cause of the problem. The cause could be the husband, but he became fast to judge the wife.

*Alcohol or substance abuse - Most men, when drunk, cannot control their temper and they would beat and mistreat their wives without valid reasons sometimes. This is the most disturbing problem even in Africa.

Getui says:

“The effects of chewing the gum, glue and petrol the street children sniff are equally dreadful. These substances are soaked in cloth or kept in plastic containers and are inhaled through the mouth and nose. Sexual abuse is suffered by both girls and boys; however, the girls are more hit.”

(2000:158)

Although the author has no argument against this, he can only emphasize that our society is being disturbed by the fact that men who use substances are always found guilty of mistreating their wives. The question to ask is, why do we have street kids doing all these? Is it not because of the abuse at home?

*Tradition - The patriarchal tradition allows men to take, and give them power more than women, therefore in some cases a husband would come

late at night with a concubine and try to expel his wife from the main bedroom. If she refuses, the reward is beating and harassment. The result of their actions places women at the risk of aids. The tradition of putting husbands above their wives is also supported by Dr. Michael Mawema in Zimbabwe. This medical doctor sees nothing wrong with wife-beating as a corrective measure, hence he claims that wife-beating reduces divorces and blames women movements for instigating Zimbabwean young women who leave their husbands after the first fight (Wasike & Warunta, 2000:184).

Some of the causes of wife-beating and battering are:

*The influence of the in-laws

When mother, brothers or sisters to the man report negative things about their sister-in-law, for example, they may say that she is mean and does not share with them generously. In some situations, even before the husband listens to his wife's side of the story, he will descend upon her and beat her without any discussions.

*Beating as accepted way of keeping peace and harmony. The beating, as one man explains it, curtails the bad behavior in women and disciplines them in order to keep in line with what is wanted by the man.

*Unwed mothers who remain within the home. These are girls who have given birth to children without being married and they stay bitterly with their brothers because they believe their brothers do not care for them like before, especially after the brothers get married. In some situations they may quarrel with the brother and his wife because they want to claim some of the inheritance from their father's house.

*Others are financial problems and barrenness. (Warunta & Kinothi, 2000:128-129)

When reading about this doctor in Zimbabwe for the first time the author could not believe that a medical doctor can promote things that can also lead to medical problems. He said to himself that this doctor probably wanted as many people as possible to flock to his hospital or surgery because in a beating anything can happen, including sustained injuries that would need a doctor to cure. But on the other hand he could not see wife-beating as a way to reduce divorce because God did not plan divorce when he initiated marriage. It is also true that differences between husband and wife do not automatically lead to divorce.

The tradition on the other hand expects the woman to tolerate everything that the man does, even wrong things that are done deliberately. She is bound to obey and follow him even when he leads her to death. Therefore, if ever she shows some signs of resistance, it is the time she

would be beaten and harassed. A woman is not expected to debate with the husband on matters that touch his moral life.

Alsdurf quotes a husband's position to his wife saying:

“My wife thought that being whatever I wanted her to be, she would please me, which she did, but her success also frightened me terribly.” (1989:44)

The author says that being someone else must not depend on what someone does for either husband or wife. She would be beaten for doing exactly what the husband wanted her to do. This way of doing things indicates that this man used stimulus to make his wife do something he wanted. It is not very different from using a stick for animals to keep them doing the right thing, which is to run or turn the other way.

Kuper writes about the Swazi marriage:

“In Swazi marriages, if a husband dies, the woman is inherited through the custom of the levirate by one of the male relatives of the deceased in order to raise the children in his name. Even in the case of death, the woman is not allowed to voluntarily marry a second time. During the day of the traditional marriage ceremony the girl's mother while crying, tells her daughter to behave with restraint in the

husband's home though she be subject to unaccustomed restrictions and accusations." (1986:24)

Therefore the understanding here is that marriage is restricted and regulations oppress the wife, while it is not the case with the man or husband. It is very disturbing to see those women who are told that the marriage is going to harass women before it even starts. They enter into marriage expecting to suffer at the hands of the husband, the in-laws and the society.

The emotional and physical abuse will be extreme in relationship with partners because of being a female. There is also a Swazi idiom that asks:

"If your mother and your wife are both drowning, which one would you save?" The right answer would be: "My mother, I can get another wife, but I cannot get another mother (Kuper, 1986:29)".

This idiom teaches that a wife is of less importance compared to parents, especially mother. The other point is that a wife is something that one can more easily get than the mother. This undermines the status of a wife and causes her to be of less importance than the mother or a car, which can be replaced at anytime if it has mechanical problems. The general attitude of man to woman, not only in Africa, has made woman in many cases

unable to take her rightful place as a complete human being both in the family and in society at large. When married, she would not be considered to own her own property (Kisembo, Magesa & Shorter, 1977:151). This cheap way of understanding women and their capabilities is not only wrong, but also sinful according to my understanding.

According to the writer Estelle Ellis (The Star, 14 March 2003, p8) nothing much had changed in women's experiences of domestic violence in the past few years, which raises serious questions about the efficacy of existing measures. The police added that many of the victims are women who were considered to be cheeky and aggressive when they demand attention by their husbands.

What kind of men abuses their wives? Alsdurf answers:

“Quite often, the suspicious and jealous husbands and the low esteem ones are the culprits.” (1989:41-44)

On the other hand are those who misuse alcohol and other drug substances. One drug addict who was recovering was quoted saying:

“Drinking was like pouring gasoline on smoldering coals.”
(Alsdurf, 1989:82)

In fact, some husbands use drinking as a reason for acting wrongly while they are the problem themselves. When they are drunk, they do many bad

things, including wife-beating and the next day they claim that they did not do it intentionally, but they were under the influence of liquor or another substance. That is why, in some instances, drinking of liquor is more or less like accelerating their bad behavior towards their wives. The next intensive teacher of violence is the media, especially films.

4.7 FILMS THAT RELATED TO THE TOPIC

4.7.1 Neria (oppressive film)

This section will deal with films and other concepts that oppress and abuse women in our culture. This is a traditional film acted in Zimbabwe. It is about the man who died leaving behind his wife, children and a younger brother. According to the custom the younger brother should take over the caring of his brother's widow. People were taken by surprise to learn that instead of taking care of his brother's wife and children, he started persecuting his brother's wife and children. He misused the riches left by the deceased and even took over the town house that his brother left. He went on to take his brother's banking accounts and facilities, which broke the widow more and more. The rescue only came after her friends advised her to take legal steps, but before, the tradition allowed the man to do as he pleased with his brother's properties, while the wife was suffering.

Another incident that humiliates women is the story of Sarah Baartman who was taken to England for display. She was used as an object for people to view her body for 200 years. In Britain she was viewed as an object and people could pay to view her body.

4.7.2 The return of Sarah Baartman

This film shows how the colored woman was taken out of the country to London and was abused both mentally and sexually while other people were making a lot of money out of her display in a museum in the UK. The reader will learn how women were discriminated against in our society and abused even when they were deceased. For years people would visit the museum in order to see her behind on the display.

4.7.3 Amapantsula

This film was showed on SABC 1 between 21h00-22h00 on 2003/03/02. This Zulu acted film taught something related to woman's compromise on abuse. One of the bully husbands followed his wife to work (she was a domestic worker) to get money for beer and cigarettes from her since he was not working. As she was, all she earned belonged to him. When they were still quarrelling about this money and the husband started manhandling and fighting her, the white owner of the house called her and asked what was happening, but she protected her husband by saying:

“There is nothing mam, we are just laughing.”

The female inferiority complex taught her to protect her husband even when he was endangering her life. Humiliation continued. The fear of revealing the truth becomes a problem in the abusive relationship.4.7.4

4.7.4. **White handkerchief**

This film was broadcasted on SABC1 at 20h30 on 21 September 2004. The film was about the traditional wedding where the representatives of both sides of the in-laws were gathered at the house of the newly wedded couple. The main aim was to witness whether the girl was a virgin or not, after their first sexual intercourse.

It was painful for the girl to allow the husband to sleep with her since she knew that she was not a virgin, therefore the husband immediately went out of the house shouting to the people gathered outside: “She is not a virgin!” After that the marriage was dissolved and the girl committed suicide because of the fear that the community saw her as a disgrace, especially members of her family. But the main problem is that culture does nothing to use the same process with men. Even films continue to portray women by undermining them; while on the other hand, men walk free even if they are the guilty party. In short, young men grow up with these portrayed images of women as inferior and lesser beings.

4.8 CULTURAL BONDS THAT BIND HUSBANDS AND WIVES

4.8.1 *Lobola*

While researching about *lobola* for the purpose of the M.A.degree, the researcher discovered that *lobola* is of special importance for the marriage bond amongst African people. According to Warunta and Kinothi (2000:123 and 128), some of our men think that the herds of cattle, goats and sheep that they pay as bride-wealth for their wives give them the right to own and beat their wives at will. Therefore, men own the women for they have bought them, just like shoes, cars or other properties. *Lobola* is viewed as a gift, which replaces her in her family, reminding the family that she left them but she is not dead. This is a way to show that she changed her place of stay in order to stay in her marriage. The author does not agree with Mbiti's view when he says that after *lobola* has been paid she is bound to her new family to an extent that there is no coming back, since the replacement was done. This clearly connects with what the author has already mentioned in chapter one when using a Sotho idiom saying: "Lebitla la mosadi ke bohadi", meaning "the grave of a woman is her in-laws". According to our culture, the power that the *lobola* has for one's marriage enforces one to stay in it even when the marriage is life-threatening. That is why, even during the time when the parents of a girl are receiving *lobola*, they will call the girl to make a solemn promise that they may use the *lobola* since she will stay in her marriage. The author was personally involved in this process where one

of his sisters' *lobola* was being paid, and there was a time when his uncle called his sister into the house. This was the time when the total amount of money for *lobola* was put on the table and he asked her:

“Xana wa tiyisa leswaku hi dya xuma lexi ke, na swona u ta ya tshama evukatini ke?” (Meaning: Do you swear that we may use this money and do you promise to stay in your marriage?).

To the researcher this is a sign that *lobola* binds women into marriage in such a way that the wife may not decide to divorce because she cannot pay back the money. Another concept of *lobola* used as property and ownership of women by men.

4.8.2 Children factor

The author's experience as a minister taught him that in some African marriages there is a process that forces a wife to stay in marriage even when things are difficult, simply because she has children with the husband. If she leaves him, she won't be able to support herself; hence dependency is the main problem. He is, of course, not a supporter of divorce, but sometimes in a life-threatening situation, the only way out is by divorce, especially after everything has been tried to save the

marriage.

The author knows of a woman who is without teeth today because of her abusive husband who is still beating her today. When people ask her: “Why don’t you divorce him because everything has been done to stop him from this bad habit?” she would always answer: “He is the father of my children and there is nothing I can do but instead I have to stay with him, till death do us part”. There was another woman who was married to a gay husband. When people ask her about that, she would always say that she has nowhere to go since they have children together - how will she support herself and her children?

4.9 POWER AS A REASON FOR THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

Looking at the physical appearance of males and females, males always look stronger than females. The other important thing is that women are naturally dependent on men for protection. In other words, God gave men more courage and physical fitness so that they can also protect women. That is what Pobebe means when saying that the male is the source of the woman’s spiritual protection. (1979:131)

This means that when God gave men physical strength and power, He intended that this double gift will also be used for the benefit of the weaker partner, the woman. That is why Col.1:15-17 indicates that the

origin of the power was in the creative purpose of God. The Greek New Testament has two concepts referring to power. The origin of this power is God Himself. The concepts are “*dunamis* and *exousia*,” but the power that men abuse when mistreating is not one of these. The reason is that the two concepts refer to the power that is given to man by God, and is used for the good purpose in developing God’s creation.

Although some people confuse power and authority to mean one thing, in this case Yonder teaches us that we must learn to distinguish between the two since power has much to do with the physical while authority has to do with emotions. (1972:139)

When coming to the African concept of power, the male, who is the source of income, is automatically given the whole power to take final decisions in every matter. That is why even the meetings of the community used to be handled and decided by men alone without women, even if the decisions were going to affect women in either way. That is what the researcher is arguing against since that is misuse of power.

That is why he fully supports Pobee when saying:

“Power is a delicate thing which has to be handled with great care. Power is like an egg. If it is not handled with care, it destroys both the wielder and those over who it is

wielded.”(1979:147)

This is echoed by White who believes that power can be wrongly used. God even bestows power on fallible immature human beings when he makes them his partners in the Gospel. He says:

“The greater the power, the greater the danger.” (1988:121)

In his “*The Deceptive Morality of Power*” Fowler indicates clearly that the intervention of both America and Iraq in the Kuwait war was as a result of misuse of power. (1991:4)

Without denying the fact that the war was a result of abuse of power, the researcher’s opinion is that Kuwait had a good reason to call its allies in order

to assist her when she discovered that she was invaded. The same concept can be applied on an abusive relationship.

This gives Dobson more sense when he says that at times there is an underlying possibility that the oppression and battering produce stubborn and cruel women in the society. This is one of the dangers that the misuse of power can have. (1974:17)

The impression here is that any form of power can be misused, depending on how the one in power is handling it. When looking at African leaders, whether a king or chief, all people under his power are oppressed, since power to them means dominating other people’s lives. Husbands

who beat their wives are also victims of abuse of power, since they were given their wives to take care of them and protect them, but instead they abuse them. On the other hand, Shaw indicates that every power that is used for destruction or to the disadvantage of others is an evil power that does not come from God. (1983:204) That is why Chafer and Walvoord say that there is the power of Satan. They say:

“The power of Satan cannot be estimated. Sometimes his demons merely influence men and possess them so that man’s physical bodies as well as their speech are controlled.” (1974:195)

Man’s given power either at home or in the community does not entail that he must impose his will on the woman, nor always dictating his final decisions, but he should instead follow the way of Mol’s understanding that the man should direct the woman in a loving and caring manner. (1981:111) The rule of man over woman in Gen.3:16 did not imply that the woman will be treated like a piece of property, without being listened to, but it meant that the husband is given a weaker partner whom he should support and journey with in life with tenderness and appreciation. Mol goes on to say that the physical power of man must be used for the benefit and protection of his wife, family and community. (1981:112)

How can a fallen man redeem himself as far as dominating women is concerned? Gladwin has a good point when saying that the revival of man's good use of power can only be found in Jesus Christ. (1974:46)

The salvation of Jesus teaches us that oppression is not only brutal and barbaric, but it is a result of the fall of human being into sin. According to Wimberly the victim must be helped therapeutically to overcome negative personal mythologies that were brought to her by the abusive actions. He says: "Women must be helped to overcome that she has no control over her being abused. She must also be helped to accept and understand that she is not responsible for the battering or any form of abuse. She needs not to blame herself". (1994:65)

The other important thing that abused people need to know is that it is not God who caused the entire misdeed, but the devil. Therefore this serious sin, like other sins, needs the redemptive work of Christ so that the renewed and the reborn man can start over again where he left to do what pleases God, including his renewed view on women.

Gladwin says:

"When we think about power, position, authority, and glory, the lifestyle to which we are committed in belonging to Jesus Christ radically reshapes our traditional inheritance of

a fallen social life.” (1979:47)

When the word “inheritance” is mentioned, it takes us to the thinking of Boesak when he indicated that power is social reality and cannot exist on its own. He went on to argue that John Locke believed that power is a relational reality. Therefore the man is seen as powerful when compared to women. Ruether has this to say:

“The abuse of environment and the imbalance of the distribution of male-dominated political power over centuries are intimately connected.” (1996:122)

That is why Boesak goes on to say that one cannot simply say that power is good or evil, because it depends on how and against whom it is applied. (1981:47)

The fall of man into sin made it possible for him to misunderstand what God’s intention with the creation of woman was, hence the treatment of man towards her was also affected because of that. No man saved by Jesus Christ will continue to view a woman being inferior or subordinate, but all saved people will begin to realize that women are important and better people in the society. That is why White suggests that we must engage ourselves in the battle against the powers of darkness. (1976:223)

In conclusion, the researcher, like Freire, is convinced that all domination involves invasion. Because of the misuse of power by men,

women find themselves invaded by the rules and unjust judgements by men to an extent that life becomes more difficult for them.

(1986:151) That is why Robbins says:

“I define power to be an active force that unifies, rather than destroys. It allows us to create our visions, be successful and influence events and people.” (1996:11)

In this way he sees power neither as domination nor invasion. That is the way how we should understand and use power.

When looking at some of the results of this oppression, it becomes very difficult to raise good children in the oppressive society. That is why Freire (1986:152) concludes by saying that a rigid and oppressive social structure necessarily influences institutions of child rearing and education. That will justify the “cause and effect philosophy of David Hume in which he argues that the effect result is always likely to be the same as the cause. (1988:36)

4.10 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS OF THIS CHAPTER

4.10.1 The society view an African head of the family as the boss, unapproachable, lord and chief within the family

The sovereign and absolute power of the husband in the traditional African family makes him something like a boss, since he has the final

say over the home territory. He can decide how and when things should be done without consulting even his wife. When most traditional husbands enter their homes, wives and children become frightened to an extent that they even fail to know what to do and for what reason. If we can take an example or a picture of Moses Marimba, one can detect that even when his footsteps are heard from the gate, children and their mother start speaking softly while on the other hand, everyone tries to remember what he or she must do before he gets into the house. Even during his absence, he rules them with fear. (Kimathi, 1994:42)

If ever such a husband may decide that eating must stop, everyone in the house must stop eating irrespective of how hungry he or she is. His decision is final. The wife is only entitled to what she is told without any question or correction. This type of husband can commit a lot of mistakes but do not correct them since everyone fears to advice him. He does not have time to discuss any business with his wife. The fear in the house is not mere respect that the father deserves from his house.

4.10.2 Headship implies that one must treat his wife unconditionally

When the author was still studying fulltime at a University one of his classmates once beat his wife until she lost three of her teeth. He wants to believe that even today, whenever this woman falls or see her open gums in the mirror, she would remember the incident that removed her teeth.

Another way of emotional abuse. We have read and analyzed the statistics of domestic violence, and there are still many men in our country today who are living under the influence of this epidemic.

If it's true what the social worker (Mrs. Bila) indicated, that in the olden days women enjoyed being punch bags, then the husbands who severely beat them did these things with pride. The author is reminded of one man saying that it is only after he has beaten his wife that life goes on well in the house. It has become a normal way of living to some husbands to beat their wives, while it has become a norm for women to accept such treatment with both hands. Some of them are persevering in those types of marriages since they are threatened to be expelled from marriage and family. Dependency syndrome is the biggest problem faced by women in our community.

Like the Swazi idiom which emphasizes that

“I can still get another wife, but not another mother,”

(Keane,1988:65)

it is evident that women must be mistreated because they are very cheap.

One can simply get another one if the first one gives some problems.

Since they are objects of sexual pleasure, she may be demanded to have sexual intercourse even if she is not ready, since she is owned by her husband.

This reminds the author of a case of a couple who related to each other in an abusive way. The woman indicated that since her marriage (they married in 1993) she never enjoyed sexual intercourse because her husband would grab her like a lion grabs an animal for food. In other words, the moment the husband feels he wants sexual intercourse, she is told nothing, but she would be forced in doing it without her consent. It is he alone who decides when his sexual feelings should be aroused and nourished the wife's part is just to please him.

The traditional Kamba woman avoids sexual excitement. If she shows evidence of sexual excitement and becomes an active participant in the sexual act, it is an indication to the husband that it is time he marries a new wife. At its best, therefore, the sexual act is for the enjoyment and satisfaction of men only. Generally, the woman's part in the act is to please the husband and to bear children. (Kimathi, 1994:13)

4.10.3 Headship should command unconditional subordination from the woman

If in the Jewish days a woman was to be treated more or less equal to a slave, there is no reason to deny that the status of women was lowered.

When the British singer in those olden days said:

“Freedom of life is a fundamental human right, but not in South Africa”, I would say today: “Freedom of life is a fundamental human right, but with the exclusion of women”.

The wife’s inferiority pushed her into unconditional submission, which makes it difficult for us to differentiate between a woman and a slave. That is why it is also important to mention that by so doing, instead of producing better women in our society, because of the poor perception by males towards females, we always have revolting women who lack love and tender care towards our nation. Because of that, Nietzsche indicates that in a state of hatred women are more dangerous than men because their hostility has been aroused and they allow their hate to grow undisturbed to its ultimate consequences. (1990:154)

Both African and biblical views on headship have been discussed individually, now we need to compare them in order to see where they differ and where they overlap, so that we can heal our people. Therefore the next chapter will make a comparison of the two views and come to a conclusion with a way forward therapeutically.

CHAPTER 5

POSSIBLE COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN VIEW AND BIBLICAL VIEW OF HEADSHIP OF MAN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

When we look at both the biblical and African view of headship of man there are many things that indicate that something went wrong when Africans were constructing their own way of life on the question of how men and women should live together as husbands and wives. This was as a result that they made their own policies without thorough understanding of what God, the initiator of everything, intended with marriage. A few examples on this concept will be used in order to expose the problem of traditional/ biblical view.

5.2 TABLE OF COMPARISON IN SHORT

AFRICAN VIEW

1. Man-initiated marriage
2. Woman as sexual object

BIBLICAL VIEW

1. God-initiated marriage
2. No object-subject, but equality



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|--|--|
| 3. Man's headship by power | 3. Man's headship by love |
| 4. Woman as object of submission | 4. Both submit to each other |
| 5. Woman protect man's evil ways | 5. Both protect each other |
| 6. Wife-beating | 6. Respect of human beings, male and female. God created them. |
| 7. Man has unquestionable decision | 7. Decisions reached in consensus |
| 8. Sayings dominate woman | 8. Sayings equate man and woman |
| 9. Wife as a source of children | 9. Both responsible for childbearing |
| 10. Procreation as sole purpose to marry | 10. Sole purpose of companionship |

The main problem is to understand the headship of man that was written in the Bible, but the real meaning thereof slipped from the minds of our people and their behavior. That is why man sees himself above his wife to an extent that he acts as if she is his property in his house. The message is clear: our African traditions are very rich in respect of human life in some elements of life, but the issue of headship needs to be revisited and understood better since the application thereof becomes abusive to women and wives.

Firstly, God created everything, including sexuality for us in order that we view it as good. That is why He initiated marriage and made it good. But the question of women as sexual objects comes in, even though sexuality was created good by God, human beings defined it badly and began to misuse it, especially men.

Out of the good things that the Lord God had made, human being turned some upside down so that the word good can be replaced by bad or evil, to be the process that the devil uses to trick us. Genesis indicates that God's creation of woman and bringing her to the husband for them to be one was a very creative thing to do (2:24-25). Therefore, what followed after Gen. 3 when human beings fell into sin, is that the whole order that God designed was disordered by humanity. In emphasizing the importance of God having created both sexes, Van der Walt says:

“We are not simply born man and woman. We also have to develop that way. We have to live out our gender identities in everything. Especially because God wants us to live as man or as woman and to serve him and our fellow man (sic) in that specific way. Each sex therefore has a set of basic, unique gifts and contributions to make.” (1990:79)

That is true because when God created male and female, He expected them to have different responsibilities in order to overlap and assist each other.

The concept of male dominance did not come up at the creation order of God, but it came as a result of man's fall. According to Rush the domination relationship style is born out of the conflicts that occur in the retaliation mode between man and woman. (1989:68) In fact, we cannot enter into a domination relationship until the struggle for control is over and someone in the relationship emerges as a victor, using that control to get his or her needs met at the expense of the other. The dominator is always committed to self's needs and develops a superiority attitude. He goes on to give the characteristics of a domination relationship as follows:

“The person being dominated begins to avoid conflicts

The personality of the individual being dominated is suffocated. The dominated person's creativity is stifled. The oppressed person eventually becomes the slave of the dominator. The person under domination resorts to manipulation. Both parties lose respect for the other

The dominated person eventually moves to an isolation style” (Rush, 1989: 70).

In creating marriage, God never intended that women would be oppressed by men, but that they should be equal companions. Gen.2:18 clearly indicate the main aim of the creation of both man and woman was partnership in marriage, which she will be of help to a lonely man. According to Warunta and Kinothi Dr Eddah Gachukia affirmed that the misuse of the Bible has caused much suffering in the lives of many Christians. They say:

“The question of women’s submission to their husbands has made the husbands to assume the superiority complex and make women to “obey” the Bible even out of context.”
(2000:124)

Even if some people argue that the male was created first, which does not condone that woman is secondary and inferior, but it emphasizes that God had an order when creating things. That argument cannot hold water since it would be possible that if He wanted, God might have created a woman first, but He chose His own order that must not be used as an argument for male dominance. That is why Paul says:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female: for you are all one in Christ.” (Gal.3:28)

Paul teaches us here that the Rabbinical and Pharisaic teachings that were derived from Mosaic Law, find their fulfillment in Christ. This means that the laws that were used to govern the people of God during Moses’ times, must not be misused to oppress other people, but must be read in the light of what Jesus has done for the people at the cross. Some of those laws were very much oppressive to the other gender, but Jesus’ coming on earth also helped to define them better than before. For instance, the decree of divorce which was in practice in Moses’ time was explained in more details to give it a true meaning by Jesus in Matthew 19:1-9.

This verse teaches us that oppression of women does not only take place in our society, but it also took place in ancient Jewish society. This is to clarify that God is not interested in our debates about gender and so on, but He is interested in the salvation of human beings through Christ. The responsibilities in marriage vary, but for a common goal. That is what Van der Walt means when he says that the two sexes need each other. (1990:79) One most important but forgotten issue by African husbands is that when the Bible speaks about two people in marriage, both husbands and wives, it does not promote any type of inequality. The Bible has its

emphasis on the principle of man and woman being equal in the eyes of God where no one is more important than the other.

Man and woman were created as equal partners in the community. From an apartheid government we learnt that men were ruling the country alone, while women just had to follow their laws. Women were actually seen as minor and could not sign any document without the permission of the husband or father. But presently, in a new democratic South Africa we find some women being able to take the lead the country in a responsible way, a good example is that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, which is exceptional. We may find that very few men can compete with her in what she is doing for the country now. Our church is composed of about 40% of people being mothers who are single parents while we also have plus/minus 30% of those who are married and maybe 20% of young people plus 10% elderly people (unpublished church statistics).

Out of these groups, when analyzing the statistics, it becomes evident that most of those in single parenthood (women in particular) are managing their households very well. Even some of those who are married are not to be compared with them when coming to managerial skills, both in the church and the homes. The author used to tell people who say that if Adam had to live in Eden alone for the rest of his life, the trouble in the

garden would have been unbearable, that are why God saw that it was important to create a companion for him.

The terms of submission and obedience are very much biblically found, but they are misused by men in order to be in the position of power, which sometimes ends up destroying the creation of God. The author strongly agrees with Rush (1989:76) that many Christians wind up in domination relationship styles because of their spiritual convictions. In some religious circles there is an over-emphasis on the husband as a leader in the home and church with the wife in a submissive role. This makes both the church and the home oppressive structures.

The author disagrees with the way some husbands carry out their leadership roles, especially if it affects their wives negatively. During the apartheid times the Bible was used in order to promote oppression of other people. A good example is that of the “creation theology” where people would claim that God created everything in order and placed everything in its own place for a purpose, but if we try either to mix or move this order it is not allowed, meaning that whites and blacks should not be mixed or touched as such. That is why Engelbrecht and Van Dyk say that creation theology was also used in Nazi Germany to support a policy of racism. They go on to say:

“In South Africa too, the so-called orders of creation are often used to accentuate differences between the races and to legitimize the policy of apartheid. The argument runs as follows; it was God’s will to create various races and therefore one should acknowledge and maintain these differences.” (1987:31-32)

They used scripture to justify their own position of superiority. Creation theology according to my understanding was as bad as apartheid itself because it promoted nothing other than separation, segregation and division.

When McArthur explains what Paul meant in 1Cor.7:4 he says:

“According to this verse, you give up the right to your body; it belongs to your partner. You have released the authority over your own body to your partner. The present tense of “exousia” which means “to have authority over” indicates a general statement that is always true.” (1986:36)

Besides the fact that this mutual authority over one another’s body must continue and last throughout marriage, it must be done willingly from the heart. Smith says the same:

“Oh, be generous in your self surrender. Be glad and eager to throw yourself completely in his loving arms and to hand over the reigns of government to him. Whatever there is of you, let him have it all. Give up forever everything that is separate from him.” (1983:199)

Therefore, we also encounter the same thing here. An African man finds very good words in the Bible (obey and submit), then he uses them to mean that woman must have no objection if it is not only to obey and submit herself to man. It is very disturbing to see that this obedience and submission is unconditional and unquestionable to an extent where even after the woman has been beaten, she would run to the kitchen and bring food to the man without asking any question. Smith’s argument is that Christian obedience must bring joy, hence she says:

“Perfect obedience would be perfect happiness if only we had perfect confidence in the power we are obeying. Then the Christian obedience in this context will be to surrender oneself without limitations or reservations. This can only take place if the figure to which one surrenders herself is responsible and loving.” (1983:196-197)

Learning from women like Abigail that God did not create woman only to listen and follow what man said, but she would sometimes initiate

something different. This woman understood that Nabal was her husband, but he also made mistakes as a human being. That is why she ran to meet David and pleaded with him to stop the planned battle that erupted from the stubbornness of her husband. Because of her presence, the battle that would have taken her husband's life and maybe the whole family was stopped before it took place. (1 Sam.22:14-38)

The author remembers one court case where this man aged 45 was guilty of raping a 16-year-old girl around Malamulele area. When the magistrate asked: "Why did you do this?" he answered: "Because I used to see this girl passing by our street, wearing very short skirts that could make me feel like sleeping with her." Can we condone his acts because of the way the girl wore her clothes?

The sin started here with him thinking about her in her mini-skirts, and then he allowed his own lust to control him. That is why when Jesus went on to explain verse 29, He teaches us to take care of our own bodily parts especially when they mislead us into sinful desires. The author is of the opinion that women must be given the value they deserve, rather than being seen as mere sexual objects.

It is also important to note that sometimes women degrade themselves, because of having lived in that type of world for a long time, some of them turned to understand that they were born mainly to please men

sexually, that is why some proudly allow men to see them as such. That is what Warunta and Kinothi (2000:125) mean when they say that women have developed such low self-esteem that they feel worthless and lack confidence in their capability to manage on their own. Sometimes they are convinced by their husbands that they are responsible.

The Bible has many verses which indicate that women are very important people in our communities and have special roles to play. From the Old Testament we read of women like Esther, Ruth, Abigail and others having played important roles in their times, which is still remarkable even to some women today. Therefore, undermining them by seeing them as sexual objects for men is putting them into a position that they do not deserve.

Most women are seen as doormats for men, hence they are found protecting their husbands even when it is not a good thing to do. For instance, since many women fear to be socially stigmatized as “divorcees”, they prefer to stay in abusive relationships and protect men who use and abuse them (Warunta & Kinothi, 2000:125). The fact that men are superior and alone deserve such protection, speaks volumes.

The researcher wants to argue against Ryie who supports that men are superior by saying:

“If men were responding to the call to vocational Christian service, the question of the ordination of women might not arise.” (1991:42)

This view is like when one is saying that women must be allowed to take leadership roles only on condition that men are failing. The author believes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit that Paul taught about in Ephesians does not first search whether the male or the female is ready, but they are given to every individual because of God’s own choice and reason. That is why the author understands Ryie’s (1991:49) argument as unfounded when he says that Phoebe, who is called a deaconess in Rom.16:1 was not a deacon, but she was just given the title of her husband since she was accompanying him to serve among the widows.

The reader needs to know that this is an opinion, not God’s word. Maybe he was also influenced by the tradition that women are inferior, and writing from such a perspective.

One member of a certain church at Malamulele was divorced simply because her husband heard rumors that his wife was having an affair with his neighbor, meanwhile it was the husband who was involved in an extra-marital affair. So let us try to imagine if all women would respond to their husbands’ extra-marital affairs in the same way as men are doing, how many marriages would still be surviving. In many marriages women

fight with all their might for the marriage to continue, while men enjoy themselves without working hard in their marriages.

When this attitude is compared with the Bible, one finds that God's ordained marriage emphasizes the issue of woman as a "helpmate" to man, which the author understands being that even when coming to the issue of protecting each other, it was supposed to be on equal bases. This equality is supported by Moltman who argues:

"Since all human beings reflect image of God as in creation story, then all human beings are equal with one another in their essence." (1984:11)

The author is not propagating that marriage is there to cover or protect sins that people do, but he means whenever protection is needed for the good of the word of God, that is where this supplementation must come in. If it is a matter of sin, the church must apply its disciplinary measures instead of protecting men. If Paul understood man as the protector of his wife, then the issue of women trying to protect their husbands becomes just the reverse side of the story. (Gaebelein, 1978:75)

The tradition of restricting a widow for an extended period of time from other activities cannot be biblically founded, for example black garments for widows. It is not well balanced because there are no such restrictions

to the husband when he loses his wife through death. The most painful part is that when such a widow is not allowed to speak to other men nor change black clothes until the unveiling of her husband's tombstone, the man who is in a similar situation walks freely without any restrictions.

Many people in our hometown grumbled because one Christian church elder's wife died, and just before the unveiling of his late wife's tombstone, he was engaged to another girl. Many people in our town, including Christians, were complaining that if it was the woman who did this, people would say that it was too early for her to get another husband, and that may cause them to suspect her of killing her husband in order to give the second one a chance. But the author understands that there would have been no complaints if women were also allowed to do the same as men when approaching this problem. The issue of dealing properly with men and women is an important element that needs to be dealt with equally.

The above problem follows traditional customs and not the biblical values. Therefore, we can understand how African people underestimate women and put them to subjection. Men and women should be seen as equals, particularly in terms of going through sorrows and joys of this life. This is why the feminist theology becomes so aggressive when masculine forms are used in a way that they define God in masculine

terms. They ask how we can allow men to do such horrible things to the feminine side of humanity. That is why Van der Walt argues that liberation of the woman cannot take place without the man. It also means that if a man does not allow his wife and all other women to be themselves, he only denigrates himself.(1994:154)

The reader needs to accept that even our fore-fathers who played a role in the compilation of African idioms or sayings, were more influenced by their culture and tradition to an extent that even some of the sayings written about women, will need re-evaluation and balance, for the sake of freeing men and women from this bondage. We can take for instance the Shangaan idioms that were quoted in chapter 3, which not only violate the image of women completely, but also the men who wrote them. Can we make it a general statement by saying?

“A woman’s word has no value or her words will not be the same as that of man in court.” (Junod, 1990:188)

Ogbu Kalu remarked about the flourishing churches under the leadership of female leaders although “many women leaders also face resistance from male authority”. (2005:440)Then this saying remains meaningless, especially when, after some observations, men can be found who use domination and oppression or saying useless things in courts. We do have

men in leading roles of our country that used to speak useless things in villages and courts. The example is of a ward counselor below.

The incident occurred in our township where a young man was shot by his workmate. As one of the councilors of the village stood up to respond, instead of comforting the bereaved family and all the people who were at the funeral, he steered up an attitude of hatred to the co-workers of the deceased. Unfortunately, the real culprit was in jail by then, and those coming to the funeral were innocent men, for instance, pastors and community members.

The situation was almost out of hand until the author preached and comforted the people. Even women were grumbling about the words of this man this day. So we started having a picture how some men are more useless than women, therefore, our sayings are proven wrong since they are one-sided.

If the society assigned a superior status to husbands because of the reasons mentioned by Zinn and Eitzen:

“He makes more money

He has more prestige in the community

He works outside home and has more power.”

(1990:43)

then such a society misunderstood the responsibilities assigned to each of the two by God the Creator in the Garden of Eden. The biblical message of God's judgment when man fell into sin said:

”Cursed is the ground because of you, through painful toil you will eat of it.” (Gen.3:17b)

The verse clarifies what man must do. It is not an excuse that can be used by men to put their wives in subjection because this is what God said... The author thinks it would even apply when a man is unmarried. It is his responsibility to make more money for his family and he must work outside the home because he was commanded to do so.

But on the other hand, if the issue of making more money was to be taken as literal as possible, the problem would be to answer the question: “What about the situation where women gets more money or salary than their husbands do?”

The author's argument here is that if making more money in the family implies that one becomes a head, then women who earn more money than their husbands should be given the headship task in their families. The author is of an opinion that they will do a good job. Then the biblical message that man is the head will automatically be affected.

We do not have to use this reasoning since it would mean that the husband must then be subjected, which many husbands would hate. Let us accept that the husband and wife's responsibilities that God gave unto them must not play a role in order to disturb women's rights in any way, but their responsibilities must complement their relationship without hindering their equality.

Following in the same thought let us analyze the problem of clitoridectomy and infibulations. Clitoridectomy and infibulations were done to girls and are still being done in some parts of central Africa. They are not having their roots in the Bible.

The Bible never taught people to do such disgraceful things to women, right from the beginning, but it should be as a result of cultural and traditional influences to human life. According to Thiam, the process was done in order to prevent the woman from having sexual intercourse before marriage, which is a bad teaching because the author believes that it is true that the biblical message condemns pre- or extra-marital sexual intercourse in the strongest terms. It only teaches without allowing us to humiliate the woman in the above described manner.

If such humiliation was promoted by the Bible, God would also have designed more or less the same humiliation to men since He values us as equal partakers in His Kingdom. According to Nyirongo (1994:51), all

men are equal and society must strive for maximum equality because they are all created in God's image.

But if our traditions maintain this view on women, children that are abandoned by their fathers, aids victims and broken marriages are still going to be our problems from generation to generation. Our country is fighting poverty which occupies more than half of our population, of which in many cases the cause is that sexual abuse and rape bring unexpected children who need shelter, care and welfare. On the "Sunday Sun" of 24 July 2005 the main headline of the front page has bold letters: "I cheated on my wife." The honorable president of UDM was confessing that his tradition of seeing women as inferior let him to cheat on his wife until his girlfriend told the media about the child that was born and he was supposed to pay maintenance for.

According to the author the president, because of the traditions of undermining women, took advantage of and cheated on her and now the outcome makes him accept that he has cheated on his wife. If we are still having such leaders who undermine women this way we have a big problem in our country. Therefore it seems that women's rights will remain one of the major battles even in future (Sunday Sun, 42 July: 1 and 5).

The issues of poverty and women's rights are related, because if women are not treated the way they deserve, that is according to the Bible, the consequences thereof will include poverty. Many women would rather choose to stay in an abusive relationship, instead of facing poverty alone. This becomes one of the reasons why many women stay in the abusive relationship; they just want to get food and shelter, hence Warunta and Kinothi say:

“Many women remain in abusive relationships because they have nowhere to go. Many women are economically totally dependent on their husbands; leaving marriage for them would mean living in poverty with no shelter and security.”(2000:125)

This is true because the author also came across a woman who were always being beaten by her husband, who even confiscated some of her properties like a cell phone, but she still said that she would die in that relationship because she did not have other resources to make a life, except staying with such a husband as long as he brings food home.

Some men still misuse the Mosaic Law in the first five books to unjustly divorce women, like when Clemens pointed out that the letter of divorce

mentioned in Deut.24:1-4, was seen as a scape goat for men who thought that women were seen as disposable toys which could offer man pleasure for a while. This believe of humiliating women was there even during the times of Moses. The researcher thinks to understand this passage clearly; one must read it in the light of Matt.19:1-12. Of course if it was only a matter of writing a letter of divorce which was only allowed to men, then men would use this chance to divorce and remarry all the time. This tradition is a fruit of the rabbinical schools of Shammai and Hillel. Shammai accepted divorce on grounds of unchastely, while Hillel accepted divorce on grounds of physical blemish or even a trivial cause of dislike. (Ryie, 1991:44)

This is one of those reasons that are mostly used in our country to an extent that marriage is seen as something that lost its value. If this type of understanding continues to dwell in the minds of people today, women will continue to be treated as clothes which are used by men or used in the way fashion clothes are used. Once the fashion passed, they are given away.

But Jesus cleared the air by indicating that Moses allowed them to divorce, not because God allowed it, but because the people of that time became so hostile to an extent where Moses as a person would fear for his life, hence he allowed them. In other words, the fact that a leader allows

something to be done, does not guarantee that God also allows it. Some situations can become so violent towards church leaders and pastors that they may find themselves accepting even bad things for the sake of relieving their lives from danger.

The Bible does not condone any form of divorce, unless there is a proven record of unsolved adultery, as Jesus mentions in Matt.19:9. If we want to maintain God's order of creation, including the good view of woman, we must not trace the definitions of concepts like marriage, love and others from after the fall of man into sin, but we must look for those concepts right from before the fall, where God's creation was still in order.

That is why the Lord Jesus challenged His questioners in Matt.19 back to the original institution of marriage and showed that the bond was intended to be indissoluble (Ryie, 1991:141).

The author says this because human beings became corrupt after the fall, which made him see many things on the reversed side or upside down, for instance, the people of Moses' time defined their marriages in terms of the fall that resulted in women being subjected to be victimized by their husbands, which was never the case in Eden before Gen.3.

The inheritance of a widow by one of the relatives that Kuper mentioned is done not only in Swazi marriages. The author witnessed the situation when his father passed away, when the widow, his step-mother, was forced to choose the man with whom she could continue her life. The researcher was one of those called in the house and because he was still a very young schoolboy, she chose him, knowing that it would not work. His uncles who were there were also waiting to be chosen, but she didn't choose them. Nyirongo narrated this well when he discussed "oppressive widowhood". He said:

"The widow was not expected to remain single or refuse a second husband assigned to her by the elders. Should she refuse she would have to endure much ridicule and even accusation of witchcraft. Sometimes she would become an outcast for that reason."(1997:118)

In other words, even though her husband had died, she was supposed to remain bound to the decisions that were to be taken by her in-laws. This would lead into a forced marriage where the woman was still going to be abused by her new husband because she did not choose to marry him by herself.

It is a pity that this custom undermines the status of women because in some cultures it is still such a strict rule that disobedience can lead the

wife of the deceased in trouble with her in-laws. But is this custom from the Bible? These customs might have been practiced by some of the Hebrews and Jews of the time, but the Bible does not support them. Lev. 20 discourages such kind of traditions. The researcher comment on that is that if a brother has died of aids, then the custom will be enforcing his brother to die the same way. Even after loosing a husband, the widow must not be forced to do what she does not want to, but she must be granted the right to decide whatever she wants to do.

When we look at the cultural bonds that the Africans use in order to bind the marriage, because of *lobola* and the children factor, then there is a lot to be asked when compared to the Biblical view of marriage bonds. When Nyirongo says that *lobola* is a legal proof of marriage, he also says that it gives the husband an advantage to claim children in case of divorce. (Nyirongo, 1997:114)

If one has to take an oath of staying in marriage even if it is dangerous to her life, for the sake of *lobolo* that was paid for her, then it is obviously going to be negative to her dignity. Is *lobolo* still of value in connecting them to marriage? Is there any love? What about Christian values? Do we just stay for the sake of shelter? Adam and Eve were not enforced to stay together in their marriage because of having children (a concept rooted in African culture), but they were bound together even before children were

born. This simply illustrates that children are gifts from God, but we therefore should not make use of them in order to strengthen our marriages.

Above all, the African traditional view of man's headship does not fit the biblical definition of valuing people. The headship in the Bible is that of loving, caring and supporting our wives rather than seeing them as minors or inferiors. In other words, the loving and supportive husband cannot, for instance, beat his wife, but will look for the ways how to solve problems without bodily abusing her. Let us forget about the question of subject and object when coming to male and female, but think about equality, with human dignity and respect from both. The author concurs with Rush when he says that respect and dignity can be showed by supporting each other's talents and abilities. (1989:128)

Having learnt the differences and similarities that were compared between African and biblical view of headship, and then we need to create a way of counseling, in order that we should correct where the Africans are wrong. This process will help us heal the wounds that were caused by those mistakes or misunderstandings caused by dominant men.

5.3 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter was dealing with the comparison between the traditional African view of headship and the Biblical view of headship. The findings

are that the traditional view oppresses women while the Biblical one liberates them. Therefore it was unfortunate that in some areas the African view tries to use some Biblical verses as its source, while not clearly understanding the interpretations of the verses in the context. The conclusion now is that the two views are clearly opposed to each other. The next chapter will concentrate on the pastoral guidelines.

CHAPTER 6 PASTORAL GUIDELINES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The words of the former South African deputy president Jacob Zuma are worth mentioning here. He said:

“When you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” (SABC 2, 19h30 News on 31 August 2004).

If all African men understood and dignified women, then there would be neither problem of inequality nor subordination between women and men. The value of woman must not be restricted only to her household, but also to the whole country, since they also have a role to play in our country. It is my belief that if women have been treated as better people from long ago, the movement of feminist theology would have been of no value at all. They would have contributed to a healthy society if their criticism were observed and implemented.

6.2 BIBLICAL MEANING OF “IMAGO DEI”

Many references to the image of God have been discussed by theologians, but Mouw emphasizes that to understand that, we need to understand the purpose of God in creating human beings. (1979:27) Borreson says:

“According to Genesis, human nature as such has been made in the image of God, a nature which exists in both sexes and which does not allow of our setting woman aside when it comes to understanding what the image of God is. As regards to ‘homo interior’, the woman possesses the quality of the image of God through her soul, which is identical with that of man, for souls have no sex.” (1986:28)

In agreement with Folwer, human beings are distinguished from all other creatures as the “image of God”. (1991:4) It is God-relatedness that sets the human person apart from all other creatures. Amongst all the created things of the earth, only human being is said to have been created in God’s image. If there is something we need not make any mistake about, it is to try dealing with issues that pertain to man on the level of any other created thing. Human beings are different from every creature; hence we must look at him or her alone as an image of God.

Various people have come up with various interpretations of what the “*image of God*” means. We need to understand that a symbol of an image is something that reflects the thing that is absent. According to Nyirongo the term should be understood in terms of man’s relationship with God as his Creator and Father. (1994:32) Humankind was created to glorify God in all areas of life (for example, in marriage, social life, economically, etc), but human being lost the privilege of *imaging* God when he or she sinned. This is the same message that is echoed by Anderson (1982:78) in his “On being human” when he said:

“Human persons cannot be complete without glorifying or enjoying God, for that is their nature and their destiny as God created in the image and likeness of God. Being in the image of God entails freedom, independence, responsibility and hearing.” (1982:78)

This image was violated and dented when human beings disobeyed God. This means that anyone who is not obeying God cannot reflect this image; therefore it takes salvation by Jesus Christ to be back in the original image. That is what Nyirongo argues when he reasons that he or she can be reinstated as an *image* only when he or she is redeemed from the fall by Jesus Christ. (1997:107) Therapy must help the abuse in changing the conviction that they are forsaken by God. Many people,

while in crisis, think that Jesus is no longer of help in their lives.

Wimberly has this to say:

“Many people bring to church and pastoral counseling a belief that God has abandoned and forsaken them. Deep down inside they harbor a thief who is robbing them of their self-esteem and hopeful outlook on life. Therapy must help them revive the feeling of God’s presence in their lives through Jesus.” (1999:54)

In other words, for them to realize that their image is violated they need to be helped therapeutically to know who is bad between God and devil. That will open their minds to know and understand that Jesus can bring restoration to their lives.

On the other hand, Needleman, Bierman and Gould agree on the opinion that “the image” is man (sic) in his natural state. They go on to explain that man comprehends what we call intellectual life (the nous) and the spiritual life (pneuma), and it is these two realities which constitute the true and the basic man. (1997:307)

That is why Van der Walt is also correct when he says that it is not easy to reflect God’s glory in our present state of corruption and imperfection. God’s image is reflected in man (sic) when he lives in correct relationship

with his Father, and this can only be corrected through the renewal of the Spirit which is done by Christ in our lives. (1994:165)

According to Heyns the image of God in man exists mainly in representation and relation. (1970:100) In this he follows the view of Berkouwer (1957:119) and Berkhof (1969:26-31). Munroe is of the same view when he says:

“Humanity cannot reveal God’s image and likeness apart from a relationship with Him. God created humanity to reflect His character and personality.”(2002:30)

In full agreement with the scholars above, the author says that representation means that every human being is God’s representative on earth. Relation means that something of the infinite greatness and glory of God’s existence and conduct is also found in man (sic) - even in the very limited sense. In the conduct the image of God is found in man in deeds that are found also with God. (Heyns, 1974:88)

Thieme makes the argument more interesting when he says that for as much as the man (sic) is the image and glory of God, the woman is the glory of man. His argument is based on the issue of women covering their heads as Paul taught in 1Cor.11:7-17. (1970:3) The author views his

argument as a shallow one because it would bring us to a point where we see women as people who can not be the images of God apart from men. Then this will mean that all unmarried women cannot reflect the image of God, because they must first reflect the image of their husbands before reflecting that of God. Readers must therefore not be taken by his view since it still brings us back to say that women are not important but men are.

The researcher agrees with Moltman who believes that the starting point for an individual is to know that the dignity of man (sic) has its roots in the fact that every human being is an image and reflection of God. (1984:11) The “*imago dei*” (image of God) concept is one that comes up in this discussion. It is as women and men together that we express most fully the image of God (Keane, 1988:7-12). This, according to Keane raises the concern - again following the undermining of the image of God in women, by saying:

“The move to ordain women has caused ministry, sacramental life, liturgy, ecclesiology and the doctrine of Trinity, among other fundamental aspects of Christian life, to be re-examined. Far from fostering unorthodox thinking, feminist theologians claim that such re-thinking will play a significant role in the renewal of the church.” (1988:62)

Warunta and Kinoti see women, just like men, created in God's image, hence they say:

“They are fully human beings entrusted with giftedness, potentialities and talents. They were intended by God to be co-creators on earth in community and interdependence with other people. Women are called by God to be responsible persons, accountable to God for the stewardship of their giftedness and talents.” (2000:130)

In agreement with the two scholars above, it is the researcher's conviction that women are not objects but a subject who are to be treated with respect and honor. It is important for both men and women to constantly be aware that as human beings we are born incomplete and in a distorted and pervasive world of humanity. The human task is to struggle towards wholeness and completeness.

The researcher believes the women's dignity and worth mean a right to personal integrity of their mind and body. They must have the right to express their own thoughts, forms and opinions. That is in line with the fact that women, just like men, have the right to privacy, self-determination and self-realization (Warunta & Kinoti, 2000:131).

McGrath admits that the way things are today is not the way things were meant to be. (1992:214) That is why he agrees that men and women were created in the image of God, but on account of the fall the relationship between men and women has been disrupted and distorted through sin. On the other hand Van der Walt emphasizes the same point when he says:

“Scripture is far richer than our generally male representation of the figure of God. In the Bible there are clear examples of God also revealing Himself to us in female terms. But it should be remembered that since God is not an earthly creature, we must take these as simple images because God cannot be a being with gender.” (1990:80)

The researcher thinks this is the right way to portray God since the meaning of “in the image of God” should not be understood very much in the literal sense, but in essence of qualities and abilities. We can of course not think God as either a male or female figure since He is omnipotent. The emphasis of God as father does not help us to point to Him as a male, but it is another way to portray His responsibility towards our lives. As we work with women through these images therapeutically, we will be restoring their dignity, and healing their inferiority complex.

From the beginning the Bible explains it clearly that human beings were created in the image of God, irrespective of gender, abilities, failures and so on. Genesis says:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”
(Gen.1:27)

When emphasizing that man and woman are created in the image of God Snyder says:

“Man and woman were created for God and for each other. Neither one fully express the divine image, it takes the partnership of man and woman, and their community together to fully express God’s glory.” (1983:27)

Why did God create human beings as a male and female? This is one of the things that troubles people to an extent of thinking that may be the female were created for unimportant reasons, hence she is to be oppressed. Firstly, sexual differences intimately connected to the divine image and to the intended fellowship between man and woman with God. Secondly, the ruling, stewardship commission is given jointly and equally to man and woman. Genesis says to *both* man and woman:

“Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature.”

(1:26)

Man rules together with the woman. There is no question of autocracy nor is authority as far as ruling concerned. Both are stewards in ruling. Because of this equal status, the only way man and woman can possibly relate fully and harmoniously together as God intends is through mutual submission. While mutuality was undercut by the fall, Snyder (1983:228) indicates that it has been restored in Jesus Christ.

Therapy must also concentrate on the above, restoring *ubuntu* (humanity) to both man and woman. Helping men to explore what their concept and the role of women are.

It is wonderful that the creation of a human being was very different from the creation of all the other animals, hence in the above verse God speaks to His divine council and says: “Let us create...” which was not the case with the creation of the other creatures. We were created in His image, irrespective of gender, color or sex. The Bible emphasizes that both the male and the female were created in His image right from the beginning. There is no discussion about inferiority in this passage. So therapy must also concentrate on the concept view by women of submitting to men.

Being created in the image of God cannot be restricted nor changed because of the situation we find ourselves in, but we remain God's images even when we are living in marriage or as single people. That is why Clinebell says:

“In the anthropology of the Jewish Bible, all aspects of persons, not their minds or spirits, are seen as created in the divine image. To develop our unique personhood in the likeness of the divine is the goal of the Christian life.”
(1966:51)

The above process in therapy will help correct the mentioned wrong images in relationships.

We need to understand that even when human being fell into sin as recorded in Gen.3, God did not give any human being power to no longer see others as His images on earth. That is why He continued to bring Salvation through Jesus Christ because He wanted us to remain in His image. Therefore, counseling must help people to remove the fear, hatred, low self-esteem and pride, because those are the results of lack of understanding of man's image of God. That is why Mokgotho says:

“Realizing one another’s plight is to help to handle the problem one has, thus building healing to brokenness. This will be restoring the image of God to its fullness.” (2003:69)

Being a woman does not mean that one is not created in the image of God, hence the treatment she receives from fellow creatures must not be harsh. If all human beings could treat each other as fellow beings created in the image of God, then the concepts like “abuse, rape, wife-beating” and so on would not be found in the world’s vocabulary. Both men and women deserve harmony and living together as equal partners of different responsibilities in the same world. Therapy will deal with broken relationships that lead man to destroy God’s image. No one is a lesser image of God. The other important thing to keep in mind is that God is not the Father (masculine form) in an earthly sense, but in a spiritual sense. Likewise, God the Son is not the son in an earthly sense, but in a spiritual sense. On earth there is no son without mother and father and the son is always younger than the father. However it is not the case with Triune God because Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of “equal eternity” concerning their Names and Work. (De Vries, 1978:90)

The importance of man’s existence in this world is very equal to the importance of woman’s existence; hence we need each other in order to

face the challenges of life. The term “helpmate” as in Gen.2:18 also emphasize that equality. McFadyen says:

“Eve’s designation as Adam’s helpmate did not mean that she is a subordinate assistant, but a help-corresponding-to-him, denoting the closest physical and spiritual of help and understanding, joy and contentment in each other.”(1990:33)

Therapy will have to help partners work on the above images, so as to correct broken relationships. Seeing a woman as an inferior person is foreign to the Bible, and by so doing the creation order of God which proclaims the “image of God” is being tampered with. As a result it needs therapeutic work, for instance, God’s command to rule and subdue the creation in Gen.1:28 was given to both male and female, and this is one of the characteristics of image ship, which an inferior woman cannot be. Let us go back to basics, i.e. take care of each other in God’s way, without making unnecessary hierarchical structures that break down God’s intended plan with the creation of human beings. Counseling must encourage those who feel undermined and tormented by being put up as doormats for men, to stand up and fight in order to restore their images, instead of folding their hands while men tremble over them time and again. Pastors must also take it upon their shoulders to educate people from homes, tribal institutions, churches, schools and other institutions

which are still holding on to the wrong message of inequality while dealing with their respective issues. Inequality in therapy means teaching with the issue of power, helping couples to deal with this issue.

The author is arguing that pastors must be involved with their community structures where they can be of help with this message. For instance, if pastors are not involved when the community gathers in the form of “indaba” or traditional council and tribal councils, the message of “imago dei” will remain only in the pastor’s home and not get to the people that God wants us to reach. Group therapy will also be helpful when dealing with the community, working out their understanding of “imago dei” and the relationship between man and woman. Sermons and preparation of liturgy are other ways of working with imbalance issues. This can be done in house visitations and involvement in the societal gatherings and meetings.

6.3 CHRIST BROKE THE BARRIERS OF GENDER

Driver clarifies these when he mentions that the theories of atonement have tended to concentrate their attention on the removal of barriers between individuals and God. He says:

“The concrete barrier which separated human groups from each other (males and females) was removed by Christ’s death.” (1986:220)

Therefore, a therapist represents God as he or she works with the couple.

This is a simple statement to indicate that all forms of barriers and separation between human beings are only conquered by learning from how Jesus Christ treated women. That is why we cannot separate Jesus and the issue of atonement.

According to McGrath Jesus treated women as human subjects, rather than as objects or possessions. (1992:215) A male therapist can help to handle abused woman in a way that they may learn to relate to other men equally. Throughout His ministry, Jesus can be seen engaging and affirming women, especially women who were treated as outcasts by the contemporary Jewish society on account of their origins (e.g. Syro-Phoenicia or Samaria) or their lifestyle (e.g. prostitutes). Even the traditional view that a woman was “unclean” during the period of menstruation was dismissed by Jesus, who made it clear that it is only moral impurity which defiles a person (Mark 7:1-23).

In Jesus’ life and ministry both women and men were seen as people, irrespective of their gender. That is exactly what Jesus says:

“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household, Susanna, and many others. Those women were helping to support them out of their own means.” (Luke 8:1-3)

We find in Jesus’ ministry women from different situations, for instance, those serving in the palace, married ones and so on, all treated as equal partners with the disciples. Only faith, and not sex, was a condition for discipleship. The Bible never teaches us that in this group, women were treated as inferior to men.

Jesus Christ understood that men and women were equal before God. Maybe it is important that the concept of “equality” be exposed in this context. The author knows of men who feel undermined whenever this concept is mentioned. The reality is that “being equal” does not merely mean to be identical. People do not become similar because of being equal; man will remain male while woman will remain female. That is what Sachs says:

“Being equal does not mean being identical. Affirmative action does not require that unqualified women be given preference over qualified men, but it would permit special opportunities for women in the same general qualification bracket as men. Constitution should clearly affirm the equality in rights, status and dignity of men and women.”(1990:55)

The researcher strongly supports Sach’s idea because if we want to make women better people in South Africa, we are not actually replacing men by women in the society; men will remain as they are.

Jesus used to break Jewish rules by accommodating women in His ministry and having time to focus to women’s individual problems, which was a taboo according to the regulations and laws of that time. Maybe this was one of the reasons why the Jews disliked Jesus, since their tradition did not allow them to treat women with respect, humility and love. This way of thinking requires a therapeutic way of changing their minds, since Jesus was the only man able to break down the barriers caused by the sins of human beings. Hession emphasizes that only by the washing and cleansing of His blood will every barrier be removed. (1978:199)

6.4 MY HELPMATE, MY PARTNER

The Biblical message about the helpmate is not very common amongst Africans; hence we are reaping the fruits of the lack of this beautiful message. It is quite interesting to note that the answer to the question what the meaning of “helpmate” is, will also help us to solve this whole problem. In Gen.2:18 the Hebrew word “kenegedo” which literally means “fit or suitable,” clarifies that the author has had enough time to evaluate what was lacking so that the “suitable helper” may be found. According to Van der Walt this happened when all animals were brought to Adam so that he could name them, so they all passed in pairs, and he said:

“Adam seems to have said that every animal has its partner
but I have none.”(1988:48)

It would have been of no help if God created another man to be a helpmate to Adam, since the same qualities that are lacking in Adam would remain lacking in the other man. It was more than wise for God to create just the opposite sex to complement that which was lacking in Adam. This means that the man was given responsibilities, gifts and talents to execute what he was told by God, but then he needed a helper to do so. On companionship, Hocking and Hocking say:

“The intimate friends must spend time with each other. Close friends who have been apart from each other for any length of time have found that it takes time to rebuild the intimacy closeness that they once enjoyed.” (1984:115)

The author agrees with Van der Walt saying that the biblical concept of *helpmate*, used for the woman, is also used of God (God is our helper), so that the woman is not a (weaker) servant of man, but is the supportive one who has to support the (weaker) man. (1990:78) People must be careful not to confuse this helper with the “Divine Helper” that Jesus promised to His disciples after the resurrection. That is why McArthur emphasizes the importance of “*allos*” which means “another helper” who would come in His place. (1994:134)

In therapy, the helper is not only important, but his presence is also a necessity. Egan, in his book “*The Skilled Helper*” says:

“Throughout history, there has been a deeply embedded conviction that, under the proper conditions, some people are capable of helping others to come to grips with problems in living. Counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers are expected to help people manage their social-emotional problems.”(1986:3)

In other words, for therapy to be successful, a helper or helpers are needed.

If it is said in Genesis 2:24 that the man will cleave unto the woman, it clearly indicates a dependent taking sanctuary, as Israel does in God. Therefore the helper is a true friend.

Whenever we speak about true friendship in marriage, many Africans may be tempted to think that it is an unequal friendship. This type of friendship is where agreements are reached in consultation with each other. Van Belle says:

“A marriage in which one partner dictates the terms of agreement and where the other obeys without questions lacks intimacy. Marriage is two individual personalities with differing ideas, needs and expectations of life constantly recommitting themselves to do things together in a complementary way.”(1999:44)

The friendship and fellowship between husband and wife gets a stronger impact when we also understand it in terms of being complementary to each other. That is what Snyder contends:

“Man and woman were created for each other. God intends a relationship between men and women of equality,

complementary and mutual submission, not one of domination.”(1983:227)

The researcher totally supports Snyder because the reason why women are abused and victimized is because their values are not as well explained by former theologians; hence they are seen as people without value. Therapy must also deal with theological understanding of the concepts. The value of women as complements of men was taught as Snyder and other scholars explained it from the beginning. The problem of women as inferiors would have not been here with us today. Even from the fact that Eve was created after Adam, does not imply that she was inferior. Whoever uses this kind of argument, will also have to accept Adam inferior to plants and animals which were created before him. (Van der Walt, 1994:153)

A married couple is meant for friendship. A friend is someone you like to be with. You enjoy his or her company, you like his or her personality; you can play and work together. You have shared interests. It involves companionship, communication and co-operation. This friendship is based on love which is based on decisions, promises and commitments. That is why Wright says that friendship is part of God’s intention for marriage. (1995:14)

In the Gospel of John, Jesus takes everyone to the level of being a friend, women included. He says:

“And you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” (John 15:14-15)

If we may live with the friendship spirit that Jesus teaches in this passage, we will not have problems when treating women, since it will be obvious that we will recognize them as friends also. It was not fit for us to be called friends to Jesus Christ since our sins caused His death. But since He came to save us, He continues to call us friends, brothers and partakers of the kingdom. Therefore we must ask ourselves who are we to treat others as slaves and inferior people, while He gave us what we do not deserve at all. That is why the author says that it cannot be an easy thing to understand this equality of men and women without understanding the biblical teachings about the creation of man and woman.

The other thing to share about restoring a relationship which has been destroyed by male dominance, the following can be used as advices from Rush:

“Recognize the need for the relationship (Eccl.4:9-12)

Admit your contribution to the problem (Matt.7:3-5)

Ask for forgiveness (Col.3:12-13, Matt.6:14-15)

Decide to put the other person’s needs first (Phil.2:3-4)

Begin acting out the qualities of love (1Cor.13:4-8)

Decide to focus on the positive (Phil.4:8)

Trust God for help instead of self (Jer.17:5-8).” (1989:96)

According to Egan it is the social relationships mentioned above that help a client therapeutically. He says:

“It is very necessary to help isolated clients to develop the resources for the social support.”(1986:347)

One of the mistakes that human beings commit is to understand men and women as helpers only in a physical sense like cooking, cleaning, etc. Men and women are created that they can mutually also be spiritual helpers. That is why even though they differ so much from each other in body and soul, they definitely can supplement and enrich each other in meaningful relationships. According to Brillenburg, in this way they can make each other into “complete responsible” human beings. (1951:63) In other words we need to change all systems that promote the subordination

of women therapeutically and theologically. Being a helpmate means being equal. That is emphasized by Genovese who says: “Justice is required that women enjoy equality with men in all spheres of life. The promotion of equality between men and women appeared natural and overdue”. (2000:26)

6.5 REMEDY TO LONELINESS AND SOLITARINESS

According to Hocking and Hocking people from all walks of life have experience of the problem of loneliness. They say:

“Like the hurt child who is soothed in the arms of his mother, so we often find encouragement through the physical affection that others show to us.”(1984:124)

The Hebrew “*lebed*” which means “alone or in solitude” does not only have a sense of alienation, but also being on one’s own and a feeling of loneliness (Eldwolde, 1998:505).

God foresaw that man was not going to enjoy the beauty of the nature of God in Eden because of lacking someone to share those joys with. All animals in the garden were created in pairs, perhaps with their own language in order for them to communicate about the joys of Eden, but the man was left in solitude. That caused God to perform the first surgical operation in order to make man feel at home with a companion. In other

words, Adam's loneliness worried God to an extent that God created a second person.

The suitability of this partner prompts an idea that the help she was created for would be like to overlap or supplement. If this message can clearly be understood by African men or husbands, then women will be treated as they deserve, that is to be companions and not slaves of men. The Garden of Eden was filled with everything that man would need for survival as well as for pleasure, but only a suitable helper for Adam was missing (McDonald, 1975:19). The word "companion" is important because it introduces company with each other on equal level.

Men must be counseled to understand that it took God time and concern to create helpers for them, so they need to keep in mind that those important gifts that God gave them must be taken care of.

Then counseling and confession must be used in order to repair broken relationships subsequently. This is what Koehler (1982:46) means when saying: "In counseling confession brings sin or guilt to light where it can be judged as such".

In other words, when counseling men who abuse women, it should be made clear that women-abuse is not in line with the scriptures and must be denounced. Sometimes we need to try to imagine how the world

would be without women, then we will acknowledge what they are worth in our lives, irrespective of whether she is married to me or not.

The idea that God was not happy with man's solitude does not mean that the creation of the woman gave him something else to keep him busy, but he was given someone who also needed to be respected while sharing life with him. In fact it must be emphasized that man would not enjoy everything that God created without a helper. It is important to give women special places in our lives. That is the responsibility that God has given us men towards women.

6.6 THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND IN THE HOME

The biblical message as to the primary responsibility of the husband in the home is to love his wife. That is what Paul urged to the Ephesian church when saying:

“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it” (Eph.5:25).

In his *“Heaven help the home”* Hendricks asks a serious question:

“Wives, are you making it easier for your husband to lead you, and to love you?”(1973:35)

This question clarifies very well that sometimes women are responsible for the abusive attitude that the husbands have towards them. They are, as

women, responsible to play their role so that husbands will have no alternative but to love them. In other words, wives can help in shaping men the right way instead of making them as rough as possible. There are men who always say that their mistreating and wife-beating is a result of women's behavior, so the researcher wants to highlight this before getting to discuss what the role of the husband in the home is.

It is wonderful to understand the responsibility that God gave to men or husbands. Unfortunately, some husbands are used to shift this responsibility to women or their wives. But if we do not misinterpret the scriptures here this command was given directly to man alone. Well, the wife was also given her responsibilities, but this one is for men or husbands. Maybe to understand this clearly, we need to explain some Greek translations of the concept of "love". There is more than one meaning of love in the New Testament. The author selected from the Greek three kinds of love, which are: "*Agape, Philia* and *Eros*."

The first one, "*agape*", means, "to love with appreciation or loving concern, or the love that gives." (Louw and Nida, 1988:293) This kind of sacrificial love was demonstrated on the cross where Jesus offered His own life for our sake. With this love one can volunteer to shed his own blood for another person. Wright discusses the manifestations of "*agape*" love in the following way:

“First it is an unconditional love. Agape love is also a transparent love that involves honesty, truth and sharing both negative and positive feelings. It is the readiness to move closer to another and allow him or her to move closer to you. It is the heart of marital love and a healing force. It has a deep reservoir to draw from, so no matter what occurs, the love is felt and provides stability during times of stress and conflicts. It is when things get tough that the true level of commitment is evident.” (1995:15-25)

The second love is “*philia*” which can be defined as “love with affection or kindness” (Vine, 1981:21). Wright says that it is an unselfish dedication to your partner’s happiness. He goes on to say:

“True friends do not attempt to control each other, because they respect each other too much. Friends try to understand the other’s preferences. They can disagree and it does not damage the relationship.” (1995:15)

This type of love is read in the book of Acts which says:

“The natives there were very friendly to us. It had started to rain and was cold, so they lit a fire and made us all welcome.” (Acts 28:2)

It is also read in Titus:

“But when the kindness and love of God was revealed, He saved us.” (Titus 3:4)

This type of love is what other people call “compassion” and a brotherly feeling for someone affected by something. It is not necessarily the one that is used for married couples. This has much to do with humanity.

The last one is “*eros*” which refers to the physical nature of man or sexuality. In other words, it is a desire and attraction, which draws two people of opposite sexes together. It is found from Matt.5:28, 1Cor.7:2 and Prov.5:15-20. Baloyi said that this type of love is dangerous when practiced outside marriage because it can open a door for adultery and fornication. (Baloyi, 2001:30)

Therefore the love that God commands a male to have towards his wife in Eph.5: 25 is “agape”. The love with appreciation and concern is the one that must prevail between husbands and wives. If every man loved his wife with this kind of “sacrificial love”, then the problem of having women as people of less value would not have been with us today. The author wants to suggest to all those who are still going to marry that this message must form a greater part of their pre-marital counseling in

strongest terms. Working on the meaning of love will help couples to deal with their relationship before it is bad.

Hocking and Hocking use six metaphors to answer the question; “What does it mean to love your wife, according to Eph.5:25?” In answering the above question he says that this love means that:

“Next to Jesus, she is number one in your life

The husband will give to his wife as much as he would give to himself

You never resent her presence or her opinions

You do not make her live in fear

You are sensitive to her needs

You are willing to sacrifice your own interests on her behalf.” (1984:129-133)

In this way, the headship of man is not oppressive, but it is a service with responsibility towards the wife or woman.

But above all these meanings, “*eros*” is used for the relationship of man and woman. If we try to substitute or replace this type of love with either one of the others, everything is not going to connect. We may love

animals, birds, mountains and so on, but not with the same love as we love our wives.

This is the only kind of love that can be exemplified by the love of Christ that was demonstrated on the cross. In other words, before we understand how the episode of the cross communicates the love of Jesus to us, it will always be difficult for us to understand how men should love women or their wives. If this type of love can be practiced in the home, no one will feel undermined or subordinated because the family will be ruled by love and not domination.

The other thing the researcher would like to mention is the fact of man being the head of his wife. It suggests responsibility that leads to the following issues:

- Leading her in faith to Christ
- He must know that his authority is not his physical strength, psychological, or intellectual, but because God placed him in the position of authority and for His Kingdom's sake. He is therefore going to account before God for his conduct toward her.
- Being responsible for her material and spiritual well-being, just like when Jesus Christ accepted the responsibility for the salvation, sanctification and glorification of His church.

- Headship is a calling to service, where man will take care of the wife, like Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. (De Bruyn, 1988:54) Even if we can not say that men should wash women's feet, but their support and help must aim at promoting their status in the church and community. Therapeutically, men must be taught to accept and assist women as their equal partners.

Jesus Christ through His loving care, healed all the spiritual wounds that the devil created in the lives of many. Love must bind all the people among themselves. That is why Boff says:

“The conversion sought by Jesus and the liberation he won for us are related to a love that knows no discrimination.”(1978:69)

This love expresses itself in radical formulas as, for example, in the sermon on the mountain: “Not only one who murders, but also one who is angry with a brother or sister will answer for it before the judgment” (Matt.5:22). In this sermon Jesus announces a fundamental equality: All are worth of love. Hendricks (1973:151) reasons that because God's love is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, human love, which is conditional, should be unconditional just like the divine love that is unconditional.

Although polygamy is not part of this study, but since it is another form of abusing women, the author will highlight it so that other people can make a study on it in the future. For instance, Dwane puts it clearly that polygamy is another form of subjecting women, hence he mentions:

“Men may not easily appreciate what it costs a woman to share her husband and the father of her children with several wives. When wives of a polygamist compete with each other and quarrel frequently, this is not a manifestation of petty jealousies, but a loud reminder, for the realization of basic human need and right, especially on gender equality.”
(1989:127)

The relationship between wives can lead to oppression and abuse.

This statement makes it clear to understand that polygamy is another form of discrimination against women since one’s wife is bound and forced to share what she is supposed to receive alone.

6.7 SEXUAL DIFFERENCES HELP US TO COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

If people learn how nice the Godly-lead conversation between men and women is, the importance of women in our communities would be realized. Smalley and Trent summarize this by saying: “It was not until

we understand why males and females think and speak so differently that we began maximizing our communication.” (1988:32)

Therapy can work with men who abuse their wives in a way that will teach them to relate better.

God created us male and female (Gen.1:27), and that is why Hocking and Hocking say:

“God want us to maintain our sexual differences. Men are unique from women, and women from men. Our emotional and physical responses function differently. As a result of the difference, men will sense friendship with women in a different way than they do with men, and vice versa.”(1984:125)

There are people who take it for granted that sexual differences between man and woman imply inferiority and superiority. Another responsibility for a man towards his wife is to understand and recognize the feminine difference of the wife; that he must have insight that she is weaker than he in some respects and he must not reproach her for it, but he must recognize and help her in it (1Pet.3:7). That is what Habermehl means when he says that there are biological differences, males and females have inborn differences, independently or mathematically. (1976:260)

But these differences are not there to enforce the inferiority of one by the other. It is very important to note that man and woman differ practically, because the man turns to the outside world, when the woman turns into the inside realm; the man inclines to be objective, the woman to be subjective, etc. Therapy must concern itself with inner and outer emotions. That is why the author fully supports the idea that the differentiation of the biological sexual function in the man and the woman has its counterpart in the mental and spiritual nature of both sexes. (Brunner, 1939:353)

Van der Walt sums up some differences between males and females as follows:

WOMEN ARE	MEN ARE
Weaker	Strong
Soft, tender, sensitive	Harsh, course, without feeling
Submissive, dependent, shy	Dominating, aggressive
Followers	Leaders, decision makers
Open, giving	Closed, self-centered
People oriented	Task oriented

Concrete thinkers

Abstract thinkers

Subjective, impulsive, emotional

Objective, calculating,
rational

Aware of beauty

not aware of beauty

(Van der Walt, 1990:80)

Van Belle suggests :

“This blurring of sexual differences is not all bad when its concern is to stress the equality of men and women before God. Christians who know that both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image and that there is neither a male nor female in Christ will recognize the kernel of truth in today’s relativization of sexual distinctions. Men and women are always more than men and women because they are also people. Created in God’s image, people were made to stand in his presence. Therefore, before his face, men and women are equal, for God is no respecter of persons.” (1999:2)

God created two different sexes for a purpose, hence Rock laments:

“How wonderful that God made each of us different. All of us have different skills, talents and personalities. A wise

couple will take advantage of this diversity and not get into conflicts over roles.” (1978:59-60)

The author completely agrees with Rock, because each of us has his or her separate and interchangeable role, but they should always be subordinate to our common goals.

With this information about the position of women in God’s creation, one can understand that undermining or subordinating women is not only wrong, but it can also be rated amongst one of the sinful acts of males. The author believes that if God created a second man to be a helper of the first, there would be have been a lot of confusion on earth today. But God wanted a different sex to supplement what is lacking in the first one, which makes them a very wonderful combination of the creation.

Why did God create male and female differently? One should look at Genesis 1:26-28 with the possibility in mind that sexual differentiation may have more significance than mere biological reproduction. According to Snyder, two reasons are outstanding: Firstly, the stewardship in Eden was a joint responsibility. Secondly, the sexual difference is connected to the divine image and to the intended fellowship of man with God. (1983:226)

There is no way in the Bible in which we can use sexual differences to observe who is weak and who is strong, inferior and superior, clever and stupid, and so on.

6.8 THE CHURCH AND WOMEN

It will be useless if the church continues to preach the Gospel without taking into consideration the culture and the circumstances of its audience. The cry and problems of the very same people who are to listen to the Gospel of God must be accounted for, especially by those who preach it, the church in particular. That is what Kritzinger is referring to when saying that the Gospel has to be translated and adapted to the culture and thought processes of the people.(1994:10) If the church ignores the cry, for instance of women who are being oppressed in the community, then its Gospel will always be irrelevant. The author supports Cook when saying:

“The church should be the place of greatest freedom for all God’s people (males and females), to be and to become part of a royal priesthood that we may declare the mighty deeds of God.” (1985:242)

The above quotation emphasizes that the priesthood of believers has no gender barriers; hence the proclamation of the good news must include both genders equally.

When Peter speaks about priesthood of believers in 1Pet.2:9-10 he does not make any mention of men or women, but he only speaks about *believers*, which includes both males and females.

Patriarchal theology that has prevailed throughout most of Christian history in most Christian traditions, had rigidly barred women from ministry. Women are denied leadership in the churches for the same reasons they are denied leadership in the society and in marriage. The first and most important point for the reader is that the church must realize that God created everything, but before the woman was created, the creation was incomplete. Before the church understands and accepts this reality, there will never be any effort to make women important people in the church and community. It took God an extra mile to create a woman so that the creation could be a complete reality. (Westermann, 1974:86)

The very first advantage that the churches in South Africa must acknowledge is the “bill of rights” as stated in chapter two of our constitution which says:

“Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.” (SA constitution, 1996:7)

It is just disturbing when some church leaders criticize this bill because of lack of understanding while in the end they find themselves wanting to continue in the footsteps of those who saw the rights of life belonging only to them while they restricted it for others. Like Novak, the first thing church leaders must do is to accept and embrace the bill of rights as a way that opens reality to mankind. (1986:51) Thereafter the church must task itself to study and explain the bill of rights in the eyes of the Bible. He argues that the American bill of rights is not a piece of eighteenth century rationalist’s theory, but it is far more the product of Christian history. He says that behind it one sees the philosophy of the enlightenment.

It is a pity that we, at this moment, have churches which are still having problems in addressing the issue of women in the office. These churches include the Reformed Churches in South Africa in which the author is also serving. According to Macquarrie the Anglican churches are also divided on the issue of women in the church office. Some tried to ordain women while others rejected the idea. (1986:188)

It is the author’s stand that this is the time that we are supposed to give women a chance to prove what they are worth in the church. It is unfortunate that the book is being judged by its cover while his belief is

that there are certain women (like men) who have a God-given talent to lead in the offices of the church.

The author joins Mosala and Tlhagale in saying that the black church, like all other churches, is a male dominated church. (1986:130) The difficulty that male ministers have in supporting equality of women in the church and society stems partly from the lack of clear liberation-criterion rooted in the Gospel and in the present struggles of the oppressed people, hence, women have no role models who are leading in the churches. This type of leadership will help women build their confidence.

An educational strategy is needed to create more workshops for the ministers and pastors so that they may learn to deal with the problem, because before the pastors accept women as they are, we cannot expect the church members to accept them.

According to Lopez, all women are bedeviled by male-dominated institutions, particularly Catholic and Orthodox Jewish communities. (1979:175) That is why Mosala and Tlhagale go on to emphasize:

“Priestly traditions also define women’s uncleanness in religious terms. The most used expression to deny women in the Orthodox thinking is typified by their usual

question: “Can you imagine a pregnant woman at the altar?” (1986:131)

This is very humiliating and oppressing to women.

On the other hand Brown is saying:

“The demeaning still persists in the Roman Catholicism today, where women are still excluded from leadership roles.” (1988:101)

These statements could easily steer up male figures to aggressively debate against women’s leadership in the church. This shows the extent to which the rejection of women as maternal flesh adds another dimension beyond the simple negation of women.

These statements indicate how much the church has helped in the marginalization of women in the church. But what are we supposed to do when churches act in the above way towards women who were created as equal partners in the Kingdom of God? The main danger is when the church pretends as if this issue is not important and remains quiet while some of its members (especially women) are being traumatized. It is also ironic that the church that preaches and teaches about love, is reacting in a negative way towards its message. In short, the message of love between males and females must also become the central point in caring

for human beings. If there is a strong message that can heal the wounds of all forms of domination in the church, love is the basic one and the central message of caring.

If members of the church can be taught about the importance of love towards a fellow human being, that can open a way to start healing these problems, as a result that people will start accepting each other. Mott says:

“Love is the basis for any form of justice.” (1982:50)

Justice is a virtue, as it is present in love, and it also articulates love completion. All forms of discrimination and exploitation plus religious harassment are a result of lack of love.” Every Christian healing process must start with the teaching of love. That is why Paul insists that the biggest and the most important thing above all is love in 1Cor.13:13. In other words, the church should include among its educational programmes a process of love as a caring element of teaching.

A researcher personally thinks that this is the reason why it is so much easier for church members to go and join liberal churches than those from liberal churches to join mainline churches. One of the reasons is that women are not given equal opportunities to share with men in the church, especially are they not allowed taking leadership roles. If this is a result

of dogmas and doctrines, we must understand that such dogmas must be revisited because those who wrote them at that time did not have to face the challenge of injustices, subordination and oppression of women. In those days it was a norm to take women as second class citizens. Young quotes an angry woman denied to pray at the same place with men because of the above problems saying:

“When you men pray, I must go outside. I cannot pray with you because you do not consider me as an equal before God. You talk about the white men, but it is you black men that oppress me.”(1986:80)

Therefore it is true that people may use the same Bible and even worship the same God, sometimes in the same sanctuary, but their experience will differ as a result of who is dominating who (Muzorewa, 1989:54). The church must close every possibility of seeing women being doormats in our churches, homes and communities; instead, it must help them to realize that the church is a home for equal individuals. Members of the church in this instance must be taught the biblical message of love and acceptance of all people regardless of gender in all its activities.

The church must join the bishops who once wrote a statement in their church:

“The human being - every human being is God’s beloved creature, made to his image and likeness, endowed with intelligence and will, and therefore called to be free and live in community.” (Berryman, 1987:112)

Hofmeyer says that the mainline churches of South Africa, for example Dutch Reformed, Methodist and others played a pivotal role in fighting against apartheid (Rustenburg conference in November 1990), but they did not do enough to challenge the women oppression especially in the church. (1994:377)

One of the mistakes the church has made in the past, according to Mace, has been to treat marriage theoretically and legally and to make rules and regulations, often put together by celibate monks and priests, which simply do not relate to the interpersonal realities of the everyday lives of husbands and wives. (1980:100) Although his view of women was wrong, in marriage Mace quotes Tertulian saying that the church must see Christian marriage as a couple of equal companions in every respect. It is important to understand how the church views the marriage itself, before dealing with its view on women, because the treatment of women by men starts in the marriage. God calls on every church member to fulfill the God-given task irrespective of gender (De Bruyn, 1996:237).

Snyder says:

“It is impossible to estimate the extent to which humanity has suffered by the unreasonable and unscriptural restrictions which have been put upon women in the churches of Jesus Christ. If women were given the same rights as men, since the days of the first Apostle, this world would be quite another world.” (1983:225)

The church has a mission to be a visible sign of Christ’s presence in the world. The presence of Christ which is aimed at salvation and restoration of mankind is very important here. Osterhaven emphasizes this by saying that John Calvin was of the opinion that the destructive tendencies of sin which resulted in equality and oppression can only be overthrown by the salvation and restoration of modern man. (1982:168)

The vitality of the Church depends to some extent on the health and integral well-being of the society and the culture within which the people of God live. The same view is shared by McGrath who sees the church as an institution which has oppressed women in the course of its long history. She says that we must begin as a church to note the fact that sin affects the structures of the church as much as it does the personal lives of the individual believers. (1992:214)

The lives of women, even in the church, are those of inferior people. They are not only undermined, but mistreated and marginalized. That is why Warunta and Kinothi say:

“Salvation in its fullness includes care for the wholeness and health of persons and of public life. Following in the example of Jesus Christ the Church is committed in solidarity to heal and to challenge evil irresponsibility. The Church attitude in all these evil conditions especially those caused by abuse, exploitation and irresponsibility. The Church’s attitude in all these evil conditions is one of therapeutic and loving liberation rather than that of a judge.”
(2000:134)

Whenever people speak about salvation and redemption the mind of the author is overclouded by Buthelezi’s expression as quoted by Muzorewa when he mentions that black liberation theology in South Africa, like women liberation on the African continent, must begin where the people are today (situation analysis) and seek redemption in Christ from that point. (1989:63)

When Pobee understands that male is the source of the woman’s spiritual protection, the author wants to add that men and husbands are supposed

to be taught on how they can become women's protectors instead of being a threat to them. (1979:131)

The church must treat the problems of the abused as its own problems. It is advisable that men as oppressors must join the campaign against female domination because women may feel encouraged when they hear their former abusers denouncing what they once thought was good. That is why Cone says that it will make women more enraged if men continue to say that there is no oppression in the black church. He says the statement will sound like white people saying there is no racism in the white church. (1982:121) Therefore the question would be how we can observe racism where one race is not mixing with others?

It is the church's ministerial service to promote humanity, enabling it to develop its full creative potential. This ministry must seek to redeem both the oppressed and the oppressor. That is what Samuel and Sugden mean when emphasizing that the church must change those systems that oppress the people (women in particular) and rob them of their dignity and freedom. (1987:225)

Victims of domestic violence, especially women, deserve much more support and comfort from the church. The church must establish centers where professional pastoral counselors will Endeavour to direct the abused and the abuser towards Christ and his reign of love and peace.

Sometimes temporal economic support must be made available in such centers so that those women, who are victimized by their husbands because of their dependence, can be helped while the healing takes its course. On the economic support of the victims Wallis stresses it by saying:

“The scriptures are not neutral on questions of economics, but they indicate that God of the Bible is clearly and emphatically on the side of the poor and the exploited.”
(1984:63)

On the other hand Isaiah taught that God delights us to be involved in breaking the yoke of oppression, sharing our bread with the hungry, and bringing the homeless into our homes (Isaiah 58:5-7). It is these institutions that Novak is crying for when he mentions that the claims that liberation theology must press its thinkers to become more concrete by making a haven of safety and restoration of the abused and abusers a reality. (1986:34) The church must affirm to battered women that they are not to blame, but they need to be encouraged to see the better side of life. According to Warunta and Kinothi battered women can be encouraged to be counselors to themselves by forming support groups. (2000:135) This is one of the points which the church must look very carefully at because we find that in many cases men (who are their former abusers) are given

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the task of counseling the broken women, which is not easy because the man does not share much in the pain of the woman. The author is of the view that if women can do it themselves, they can do it the better than men.

The church should engage itself in this fight in order to replace those negative concepts and sayings about women by positive ones that are acceptable to our communities. For instance, Lauer mentions that women were categorized as intellectual inferiors with smaller brains, acting emotionally like children. (1986:344) The language and phrases used for women tend to relegate them to an inferior place in our society.

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The church should start discouraging such phrases, categories and words not only at homes, but also behind the pulpit and teach about new and acceptable concepts which build better women for the community. Maybe another example to make women feel at home we also need to avoid those terms that promote masculine superiority like: chairperson instead of chairman, police officer instead of policeman. The traditions which

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Young says that are promoting the oppression of women were created by men and can also be abolished by men. (1986:88) The oppression which was made “*forcible*” by men needs to be revisited and corrected by the very same men who created it.

Sometimes the church must take a stand where it can advice believers who are living under the conditions of oppression in a territory held by an enemy, to migrate. The author fully agrees with Kly that the Bible condemns divorce very seriously, but when such a marriage is a life-threatening situation to the wife, a true preacher must advice her to evacuate. (1990:13)

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It is unacceptable, both in the church and society, for a woman to be abused for the sake of work or income; it may be better for her to quit and start looking for a new employment. Therapy must work with her until she decides to quit such a work. There are situations where people sacrifice their lives under oppression simply because the pastor is keeping quiet as if nothing is wrong. There are those people who believe the advice of their spiritual fathers can save their lives; hence keeping quiet is like keeping such people in those oppressive situations. Ministers and counselors must act in this regard, after a lengthy, prayerful research about the matter of course.

With regard to the fact that some women are dominated and abused because they are not financially independent, an article which can be helpful is the report of Nagwako Malatji of “*The Sunday Sun*” newspaper. Under the headline “Finance our women” the president of the

South African Women Entrepreneurs Network, Nonhlahla Mjoli-Ncube is fighting to bring women to a better financial status. She says:

“My preliminary investigations revealed that financial institutions decline to give money to women’s businesses because the woman had no collateral and also lacked negotiating skills needed to persuade the banks. Our dream of bringing the dominance of men in business to an end will remain as it was before, if women do not get aid from financial institutions. This is daunting but I will stop at nothing until it is addressed.” (Sunday Sun, 24 July, 2005:31)

If women were marginalized both spiritually and economically, the church must not turn a blind eye by helping them regain their status on the one side, while ignoring them on the other side. We must take care of them in totality.

The church also needs to repent for convincing women that they are not really, in the final analysis, equal with men in the church and in God’s sight. In his article, Forsyth implicates that women are not allowed to take a leadership role in the church. He says:

“Practically, for a woman, it means not trying to lead the man or calling him to follow. Thus a woman may not be an

elder in the church, nor lead in the form of teaching, preaching, directing a meeting, a worship service or a department where there are men present.” (2001:1)

The researcher is against Forsyth’s view on women because of the following reasons:

Firstly, Forsyth does not mention a Biblical verse that directly says that women must not do all that he mentioned above, but this is his own interpretation or perception. (2001:2) This is because he later allows them to share the Gospel with men, which is also in the form of teaching. Secondly, he later emphasizes that men and women stand as equals before God, which is directly opposite of seeing them as passive recipients in the church while only men are active. His later statement,

“Both bear the image of God Himself, women are not limited”

cannot be true in the context of what he has earlier said that women should do nothing. (2001:2)

The other argument is that if we limit women only to the household duties as their Godly mandate (like “*oikourgos*” said), then we will not need women in all church services. Lastly, Forsyth says that there are ways in which women can use the gifts of the spirit in the church, but he

does not mention the duties. His research continues to oppress women theologically.

This means that from theology to praxis, theologians must also engage themselves in searching for Biblical ways in which these wounds can be healed. Male preachers and pastors must come with the message that will ensure women that they are no longer oppressors, but helpers. From the first South African feminist conference held in Hammanskraal in 1984 (dominated by black women) and the one held at UNISA (dominated by white women) it was noted regretfully that whereas women form the majority of the oppressed, the black theology had not taken women seriously, but saw theology as a male domain. (Maluleke, 1996:10)

Snyder says that submission does not really mean inferiority or inequality. This comes from history that the church has restricted authority and leadership to the clergy, rather than to the whole people of God, and to men rather than to women. (1983:225)

The above has caused a problem for female theology because tradition kept the woman out. The Gospels frequently portray women as being more spiritually perceptive than men. For example, Mark portrays the male disciples as having little faith (Mark 4:40, 6:52), while commending women; a woman is praised for her faith (Mark 5:25-34); a foreign woman for responding to Jesus (Mark 7:24-30); a widow is singled out as

an example to follow (Mark 12:41-). These are a few of the examples to show that Jesus Christ did not follow the Jewish traditions of seeing women as inferiors; instead, He saw them with compassion. What Jesus did here is supported by the author and the authors Villa Vicencion and Gruchy when they emphasize that God, as the first creator of the universe, invited people that through their labor they could join Him in the continuous work of creation, both *men and women* (1985:128)

If the early church has done its homework faithfully in making sure that women are treated equally, then the problem of African male dominance would not have been there today. It is very painful that even some of the early church fathers were also convinced and found the Biblical justification for attributing subordinate status to women. They blamed Eve for the original sin and Tertulian called the woman “*The devil’s doorway*” while Jerome charged women with *heresy*. Women were regarded as weak and trouble markers (Maimela & Koning, 2000:127). The above encouraged men, community and church to treat women as second class citizens.

The researcher’s argument against these church fathers is that we cannot use Eve’s sin as an excuse in order to get rid of women because there are a few questions that we need to ask ourselves before we reach that conclusion. We need to ask ourselves the following: Who was the initial

law-bearer between Adam and Eve? Why did he forsake Eve, and let her alone in the hands of the serpent? Was his action a responsible one? Why did he accept to take the fruit when Eve gave it to him, especially when he knew the requirements of God? With these questions in mind, there is no way a woman has to shoulder the blame alone.

These questions indicate clearly that the initial sinner is the man who left the woman who was created for him in solitude, particularly where she was unable to defend herself when the enemy betrayed her. The researcher's belief is that maybe if the man always stayed with his wife, the serpent might not have come to spoil the paradise in fear of man. It was because of man's absence that the serpent seduced the woman alone. Therefore, those who point at the woman as a cause are shifting blame to women whereas the initial responsibility was the husband's. Man must still be responsible for this misdeed, hence God judged both of them. The church fathers were men who, in this case, wanted to defend themselves with arguments that cannot hold water. In other words, they destroyed the concept of equality between husband and wife.

Therefore, the first thing that the church must do is to reach out to battered women, their children and their husbands in order to therapeutically work with them towards healing. The message of hope must be brought to their attention. The church, according to Carson must

correct what has been done wrong for many decades by teaching women to see God in pain. (1978:56)

The church should bring God's compassionate and healing presence to such families and individuals. Like Christ the Good Shepherd the church should do as Bernard Haring was quoted by Warunta and Kinoti saying:

“Jesus heals the lepers by touching them, giving them the healing experience of human love and divine presence. Similarly, he rescues men and women who were social outcasts scorned by those who did not feel their own need of healing and redemption. Jesus treats sinful women as persons and gives them back a sense of dignity.” (2000:132)

The teachings of the church must be on the side of those who are oppressed, speaking about practical issues of life, and be the voice of the voiceless, including women in their position in life.

According to Hinga women must be urged to unearth and reject conditions of marginalization that lead to their victimization. Even from the Old Testament times, there were some women who fought for the liberation of women from masculine oppression. (2000:138) To prove this, Halkes says that according to Numbers 12 Miriam and Aaron rebelled against Moses, apparently because he took a Kushite wife, but in

reality the other reason for rebellion was that women were not awarded any leading function in Israel. (1986:105)

The practical example is that there is not even one part of the human body that is less important or inferior to other parts. It is not easy for pastors to preach the Gospel truly and faithfully to abuse women who are subordinated since whenever they see a man standing before them in worship or other places, they see the oppressor. It also happened during the apartheid time in our country, especially when blacks saw a white man - they thought of him as the oppressor, even if he was not a South African.

How can we define the equality of man and woman in the church situation, while the message of “headship” remains unharmed? It is not easy, since our tradition, even in the church, is to see women under the leadership of men. But it is not because of political rights that the researcher advocates for women, it is because of the biblical message that was undermined for ages. The church must make sure that it becomes the first instrument through which the oppression of women and the headship of men are truly maintained. In the “mainline churches” men are the ones on the leadership role all the times. The church must learn from Karl Bart when saying:

“Faith is the use of freedom which is granted corporately to all Christians, both males and females, by which they may affirm the word of God, put all their trust in Him, and obey Him wholly.”(1986:116)

Montgomery also supports Bart’s view by saying:

“The very proclamation of the Gospel requires freedom to decide for or against it, and where human restrictions are placed upon man’s free choice, the result is a closing-off of the way of salvation.” (1975:215)

Because of the above freedom becomes the door through which everybody, including women can accept or deny the preaching of the word of God.

Without enough freedom it is difficult for one to make good decisions about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Those women who are gifted to be in leadership roles of the church must be given opportunity. It was interesting when women belonging to SACC began to make their presence felt when they held a meeting in June, 28-29, 1987. This was a national divisional women’s consultation where women representatives from member churches came together and looked at the position of women in the church and society (SACC:1988:126).

Pastors must first be willing to compete with women in the church as far as church activities are concerned. Another woman who used to preach over the radio (Munghana Lonene) preached better than some of the pastors of the day. The researcher is a pastor who believes that some women in the church are gifted more than he is in some areas of God's work. They only need to be encouraged and offered a chance to prove what they are worth.

The challenge for the black church is to be a presence, a sign of liberation and hope among the black people and all the peoples of South Africa. The author becomes supportive of Goba with the idea and a strong belief that the church becomes alive only when it lives up to the calling of Jesus Christ in the ministry of liberation. (1988:46) It is very long that African women have been dehumanized and marginalized, and the time is now that the church must stand up and denounce all forms of oppression of them. They deserve to be in the church where they can enjoy sharing responsibilities with their equal partners in the Kingdom of God. Today, the South African government is trying to implement strategies to fight against women discrimination and its citizens plus the church should join and support it to achieve this goal.

That is what Berger and Godsel are trying to point out when they say that although the youthful township activist mostly used girls rather than

incorporating them as equals during the times of struggle, now the issues like “affirmative action and gender equity” are on the route to take women where they belong. (1988:113)

Both the Christian church and South African citizens must support the government in mending all the wrong ways of the past so that we can have a society where both men and women equally participate for the benefit of our country.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we learnt that although our tradition taught us and is still teaching us that women are minor and inferior people, the Bible instead teaches us that we should treat them with respect and dignity because they are equal partakers of God’s Kingdom. To those men out there, who still think that they dominate women and overrule them, the lesson above teaches us that such a Christmas must be over and it is time that we share the joys and sorrows of this life with women on equal basis. My personal message to men who undermine women in any way: let us start with our language, to talk not only of bad things about women, but also the good things they do. It is discouraging to hear Swindol saying:

“After an extensive survey, it was found that one positive statement was made by husbands towards their wives, and there were ten negatives - ten out of one.” (1988:63)

Women must also take their stand and fight against male dominance in all spheres of life because that is unchristian. The last lesson is that those churches which still dominate women and think that only men can run things in the church, must also look for some possible ways to involve women in leadership of their church, not only because women deserve it, but because their churches will not enjoy prosperity as women move out to the churches which will recognize them as responsible human beings.

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