

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

MARITAL DISHARMONY AMONG AKAMBA CHRISTIANS: A
CONSEQUENCE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OR
IMPROPER CONTEXTUALIZED THEOLOGY?

BY
JOSEPHINE MUNYAO

A Dissertation submitted to the University in partial fulfilment of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theological Studies

Approved:

Primary Supervisor:

Prof. William A. Dyrness

Internal Examiner:

Prof. Samuel Ngewa

External Examiner:

Prof. Esther Mombo

July, 2017

STUDENT DECLARATION

MARITAL DISHARMONY AMONG AKAMBA CHRISTIANS: A
CONSEQUENCE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OR
IMPROPER CONTEXTUALIZED THEOLOGY?

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

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Africa International
University or the Examiners

(Signed): _____
Josephine Munyao

July, 2017

Abstract

The marriage crisis in Kenya is so serious that its presence defies the preaching and teaching of the evangelical church. While women's empowerment and the quest for gender equality have radically changed the cultural situation the people live in; and that the teachings of the church do not adequately address themselves to this situation. Basically, the church dismisses women's empowerment as unbiblical and as secular movements driven by Satan to destroy marriages, church and society – a position that causes confusion in the church as empowered wives and their husbands find it to be biblical and beneficial to their marriages.

Tracing this problem to its roots, this dissertation argues that the church's teachings are ineffective because they are disconnected from the changing situation and that the church inculcates an outdated marital instruction of inequality informed by a contextualized theology developed in the 1960s and 70s. This theology, it is established, appropriates the women's subordination reflected in biblical cultures – at a time when gender inequality was at its peak in Kenya, but a situation that no longer exists.

As a result, the marital teachings do not speak to the needs and challenges of empowered women and their husbands calling for a more appropriate theology on marriage. The dissertation further challenges the church to desist from a reading of Scripture that does not take into account God's active involvement in the world today; and to consider that women's empowerment could be God's agenda in His mission of restoring the world and humanity to express His justice and righteousness

Dedication

To Tony, Shalom and Abby,
For giving me the precious gift to be both wife and mother
My most cherished of all relationships.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has been a product of many people's contributions. I wish to acknowledge my dear husband Tony, and our children Shalom and Abby, for sacrificially supporting me in all ways through my studies. Secondly, I appreciate Langham Partnership for believing in me enough to commit their resources to my scholarship, and going out of their way to ensure that I have prayer and pastoral support throughout. I am specifically grateful for the contribution of the Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church in Denver for their generous financial contribution to Langham to make this support possible. I particularly thank David and Doris of Cherry Creek and their entire family for their gracious spirit and making personal contacts with me in Kenya and in the United States, and even planning to attend my graduation personally.

In the final year of my studies, I got an opportunity to take a three-month resident study program in Calvin College, Grand Rapids as a visiting scholar where I also had an opportunity to make a presentation of part of my work with productive feedback from the faculty and students. I wish to thank Nagel Institute for hosting me for those three months in the Prophet's Chamber and making sure that I am well taken care of so that I could devote my time fully to my studies. Particularly I wish to thank Donna Romanowski, Professor Joel Carpenter, and Nellie for this and their close associates Brianna and Dr. Neil Carlson for extensive conversations around my work. During the three months, I fellowshiped with Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church and would wish to register my appreciation for their pastoral support, and particularly Rev. Mike Baynai, Rachel Wahome and Henry Gachini for their gift of understanding

friendship and encouragement during this stay. They made me feel at home far away from home. I also thank Daystar University for reducing my workload and giving me leave of absence to enable me to devote more time to my studies, and my supervisors for their understanding support as I attempted to balance my studies and teaching responsibilities for the greater part of my studies.

I also wish to thank the Africa International University fraternity, and especially the various lecturers especially in the various doctoral programs. I particularly acknowledge my supervisors Professor William Dyrness and Professor James Nkansah-Obrempong for their devoted guidance and encouragement throughout this study and their supervisory role that brought out insights from me that I never knew I had. It has indeed been a learning and growing experience for me at the feet of these servants of God, fully committed to Scripture and to what God is doing in Africa in His Spirit. I also thank my fellow student Rev. Jacob Kimathi for inspiration and encouragement to soldier on, and for productive conversation moments we had in our common field as he was working on the importance of culture in Christian formation. Above all, I thank the Almighty God for impressing upon my heart the call and burden to participate in His restoration mission by contributing albeit in a small way in the process of rebuilding the broken walls of marriage; and for giving me good health, strength and insight that dissertation work requires. All the work, all the credit and honor for this work, and any other work subsequent to this study go to Him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
List of Abbreviations	x
Definitions of Key Terms and Glossary	xi
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1. Background and Problem Statement	1
1.2 Purpose of the Study.....	3
1.3 Research Question	3
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Research Objectives	4
1.6 Scope and Limitations	5
1.7 Significance of the Study	6
1.8 Main Conversation Partners	7
1.9 Methodology	15
1.10 Chapter Outline	17
CHAPTER 2	19
THE CHANGING SITUATION OF MARRIAGE IN KENYA	19
2.0. Introduction	19
2.1 The Situation of Marriage in Kenya Today.....	19
2.2 Marriage Situation in the African Traditional Setting.....	26
2.3 Government and Non-Government Organizations’ Intervention Efforts....	34
2.4 The State of Marriage in the Church	39
2.5. Conclusion.....	44
CHAPTER 3	46
WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND ITS EFFECTS.....	46
3.0. Introduction	46
3.1 Women’s Empowerment – Meaning and Scope	47
3.2 The Background of Women’s Empowerment in Kenya	51
3.2.1 The Traditional Setting	51
3.2.2 The Colonial Era	58
3.2.3 Post-Colonial Situation	62
3.3 General Effects of Women Empowerment	66

3.4 Women’s Empowerment, Marital Disharmony and The Church’s Challenge	74
3.5. Conclusion.....	79
CHAPTER 4	81
MARITAL INSTRUCTIONS AND COUPLES’ EXPERIENCES	81
4.0. Introduction	81
4.1 A Brief Description of Mikuyuni Sub-location.....	82
4.2 Pastors’ Interview Results	85
4.3 Instructional Materials and Marriage-related Forums.....	96
4.4 Wives and Husbands’ Interview Results.....	100
4.4.1 Experiences of Older Women in the Focus Group	101
4.4.2 Experiences of More Empowered Wives and their Husbands.....	106
4.5 Conclusion.....	117
CHAPTER 5	121
A THEOLOGICAL-CONTEXTUAL PROBLEM	121
5.0. Introduction.....	121
5.1 The Development of African (and Akamba) Contextualized Theology ...	121
5.2 Theological Pitfalls in the Contextualization Process	125
5.3 Women-Disadvantaging Aspects in Contextualized Theology.....	131
5.4.Conclusion.....	140
CHAPTER 6	142
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	142
6.1 God’s Mission in the World	143
6.2 The Spirit’s Mission in Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality...	146
6.3 Recommendations	158
BIBLIOGRAPHY:.....	164
Appendix 1: Interview Questions	175
Pastors’ Interview Questions.....	175
Interview Questions for Women	177
Interview Questions for Husbands	180
Appendix 2: Focus Group Questions for Wives.....	182
Appendix 3: Pastors’ Details in Categories	183
Appendix 4: Details of Wives and Husbands in their Categories.....	184
Appendix 5: Women Focus Group Details	185
Appendix 6: Participant Observation Notes	186

List of Abbreviations

AIC	<i>Africa Inland Church</i>
AIU	<i>Africa International University</i>
CITAM	<i>Christ is the Answer Ministries</i>
FIDA	<i>(French abbreviation) The Federation of Women Lawyers.</i>
GLBIT	<i>The Gay, Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgendered persons.</i>
Ksh.	<i>Kenyan currency. About Ksh. 100 is equivalent to US \$1 at current rates.</i>
KWFT	<i>Kenya Women Finance Trust</i>
PASCH	<i>Peace and Safety in the Christian Home - an American evangelical Christian organization that advocates to violence-free families in the church and society</i>
SIDA	<i>Swedish International Development Aid</i>
TAG	<i>Theological Advisory Group</i>

Definitions of Key Terms and Glossary

African Theology. The formal and informal thinking, acting, expressing of beliefs and devotion to God through the appropriation of the African worldview whose development experienced special impetus in the political and theological environments of the 1960s and 70s.

Chapatti. Flat round pan-cooked bread without yeast made from wheat, usually a special treat for visitors in Kenya.

Church. This term is used generally to refer to the universal body of evangelical believers or to the local church in a specific place such as Mikuyuni. The context will determine its application but where distinction is made, it needs to be understood in that sense.

Contextualization. The process of making meaning of the gospel and theology to new cultural situations so that it is lived out in the categories of the people's culture in that context.

Gender equality. The extension of the same opportunities to persons regardless of whether they are men or women by the principles of equity, fairness and justice.

Kiosk. A small local retail shop usually located in the village.

Marital Disharmony. Any situation that precipitates strain in the relationship of wives and husbands that if unaddressed develops into irreparable breakdown of the relationship.

Marriage. A socially accepted hetero-sexual relationship between adults whether monogamous or polygamous. The monogamous relationship is approved by the evangelical church.

Matatu. This is a Kiswahili word that refers to public service passenger vehicles such as Nissan or minibus.

Mpango wa Kando. Literary "an aside arrangement" where men or even women keep secret lovers running parallel relationships with their marriages without intentions of getting married, at least officially.

Vernacular theology. Faith and doctrine as understood and lived out by the lay people and expressed in songs, fellowships, testimonies, and other informal explanation of the faith, as opposed to the official teachings of the church preached by the clergy.

Women's empowerment. The various ways of expanding women's ability to enable them to live and function independently resulting in their taking control of their own lives and in participating fully in the society. Usually it takes socio-economic, political and educational dimensions.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Background and Problem Statement

That the family is going through a serious crisis is evident in Kenya. Various studies show domestic violence, infidelity, divorce and separation, come-we-stay unions as well as homosexuality as rising trends today more than ever before.¹ People are also increasingly getting into alternative informal marriages such as come-we-stay unions or the new form of marital unfaithfulness popularly referred to as *mpango wa kando*². As a lecturer in a Christian university and leader in the church and society, I have been troubled by the devastating consequences of family breakdown in the lives of affected people and, especially, on children. This development has pressed me to seek to understand this crisis and the reason behind its persistence, now that marriage is widely known to have been generally

¹ Rising domestic physical, sexual and emotional violence are reported in the Kenya *Demographic and Health Survey 2008-2009* (Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Divorce and separation are reported in Rebecca Oladipo et al, *A Synopsis of the Status of the Christian Family in Kenya* (Nairobi: Daystar University, 2003) and in the *Kenya Population Situation Analysis*, July 2013, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/Kenya/drive/FINALPSAREPORT.pdf>. See details of rising homosexuality in Kenyan in Scott Geibel's "Same-Sex Sexual Behavior of Men in Kenya: Implications for HIV Prevention, Programs, and Policy 2004-2008", Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ghent University, accessed July 31, 2015, <http://icrhk.org/sites/default/files/Thesis%20Scott%20Geibel%20Final%20text.pdf>.

² This is the arrangement where a married man or woman keeps secret lovers for the purposes of emotional and sexual connection usually leading to parallel families. It has almost been normalized that most men should have this but women are also known to get into these.

stable in the traditional setting.³ One of the major developments that shape life today differently from the traditional setting is the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment. The response of the church towards this factor has been polarized. Feminist thinking, in full support of women empowerment generally claims that the Bible is grossly flawed by patriarchal cultures instrumental in its writing and reading. The mainstream evangelical church on the other hand, generally blames marital breakdown on what they see as the secularizing and modernizing agenda of women's empowerment and the push for gender equality.⁴ This proposition is not only subject to contention but also insufficient in explanation because, even if women's empowerment were found to have adverse effects on marriage, the church is expected to foster harmonious marriages in the 21st century situations.

Given that the foundation of the family is theological, family challenges cannot be wholly addressed without a theological perspective that places God at its center with the church and her theology as its instruments. While the church is this privileged, it is unable to give proper leadership in this area.⁵ The key to

³ Stability of marriage in Africa and particularly the rare occurrence of divorce are widely known elements in African studies. For instance, see; John Mbiti, *Akamba Stories* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1983) and Paul M. Kyalo, "Family Values and Rituals in Changing Cultural Context: Analysis on Traditional Akamba Marriage and its Implications for Christian Marriage," *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities* Vol. 1, No. 2 (2011), accessed July 9, 2014, www.irssh.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/8_IRSSHVol_1_No_22.254141855.pdf. However dissenting voices argue on the contrary. For instance, D. N. Kimilu, *Mukamba Wa W'o* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 2013) argues that separation and divorce were fairly normal and even expected occurrences. This project holds that real 'stability' should not be measured by the presence or absence of divorce because it is a last resort of addressing marital conflict when marriage has experienced long and incurable instability.

⁴ See for instance, Anne Graham, *Womanhood Revisited: A Fresh look at the Role of Women in Society* (Geanies House: Christian Focus Publication, 2002). She dismisses the whole empowerment and equality enterprise wholesale arguing that empowered women leaders do not have balanced or functioning marriages. See also a collection of evangelical contributions in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crosswa Books, 1991). Mbiti corroborates the same argument on family breakdown in *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969).

⁵ Apart from Oladipo et al.'s *Synopsis of the Christian Family* and Kyalo's "Family Values" that report the marriage situation in the Kenyan context, the formation of Peace and Safety in the

understanding the church's inability in meeting the marital challenge of the 21st century through its marital instruction lies in its understanding of the underlying cause of the marital crisis first. Unless this happens, the church's efforts to implement various study recommendation or its intensifying its counseling, teaching and training will continue to be unfruitful.⁶

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to find out whether the marital disharmony among Akamba Christians is caused by women's empowerment or by an improper contextualized theology of marriage. The overall objective of the study is to evaluate the current position widely held by the church that women's empowerment is the cause of marital problems in the African context and explore whether an inherent theological problem in the marital instruction could be the actual cause of failing marital teachings.

1.3 Research Question

Is marital disharmony among Akamba Christians caused by women's empowerment as already proposed, or by improper contextualized theology in the marital teachings?

Christian Home (PASCH) by the Evangelical church to address the violence and injustice that characterized the American Christian family is one of the strongest indications of the church's inability to foster violence-free marriage relationships in the Western world. For the details, see Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, Introduction to *Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change*, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger, Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008). See also Matthews Mangaliso Tembe, "An Investigation into the Causes of Divorce amongst the Evangelical Church Members in Namakgale Township" (Master of Theology Thesis, South African Theological Seminary, December 10, 2010). This project found out that the cause of divorce was marital unfaithfulness.

⁶ See for instance, the strong recommendations of the two studies raised above i.e. Daystar University's and Kyalo's. See also recommendations in John Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1973) and those of the Theological Advisory Group (TAG) of the Africa Inland Church, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa* (Machakos? Kenya: Scott Theological College, 1994). These show that the church has been applying recommendations for a while now without much success.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How has women's empowerment redefined women in terms of their roles, responsibilities and needs as individuals and as wives?
2. What are the marital challenges faced today by empowered women and their husbands?
3. What are the key elements of the evangelical church's contextualized theology of marriage that shape manhood and womanhood among the Akamba?
4. What are the strengths and limitations of the current contextualized theology of marriage in addressing the needs and challenges of empowered women and their husbands?
5. In what ways might women's empowerment and gender equality be part of God's mission in the world?

1.5 Research Objectives

This study will

1. Describe how women's empowerment has redefined women in terms of their roles, responsibilities and needs as individuals and as wives.
2. Establish the marital challenges faced today by empowered women and their husbands.
3. Identify the key elements of the evangelical church's contextualized theology of marriage that shape manhood and womanhood among the Akamba.
4. Evaluate the current contextualized theology of marriage in terms of strengths and limitations of in addressing the needs and challenges of empowered women and their husbands today.

5. Propose ways in which women's empowerment and gender equality might be part of God's mission in the world.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study falls under marriage or family theology not on women's or gender theology. Insights from these two areas bearing on marriage are nevertheless appreciated and noted to inform the discussion since they touch on women who are key participants in marriage relationships and women's empowerment. Leading voices in women studies such as Mercy Oduyoye, Nyambura Njoroge, John Raines, Musa Dube, Musimbi Kanyoro, Shawn Burn and Paulines Editorial Team's *Gender Concerns* among many others. All wives and husband respondents were currently officially married whether on customary, civil or church weddings. Divorced, separated or single ladies were not interviewed. This is because the goal of the study was to look at marital experiences in the light of pastoral teachings but not on marital problems. The research is based in Ukambani and specifically Mikuyuni in Kibwezi as an example of an African setting, and only among Christians because they are the consumers of the church's theology. The results may not be generalizable to other contexts but as far a context is similar to the Mikuyuni situation, the conclusions can be transferable.

The challenge of marriage is studied around the situation of women's empowerment appreciating the approach to theology that rises, not from revelation but from reflection on the situation as the beginning point. This is not by any means the only source where marital challenges can rise from. Secondly, marriage is so private an affair and respondents might be hesitant to disclose their experiences. They however were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in the reporting of the results

for their protection, and were given the freedom to choose or refrain from responding to the questions. The researcher also chose to interview the respondents personally without a third party – whether the spouse or research assistant. Thirdly, this study is done in the field of theology with a dominant theological worldview with basic theological assumptions. The researcher is a married Christian born and brought up in a Christian family and a mother of two adult Christian children; trained in biblical studies and working as a lecturer in a Christian university; and holding a high regard for the Bible as supreme authority and a positive attitude towards women's empowerment and gender equality in the spirit of justice and fairness for all irrespective of gender as biblical. Conclusions arrived at, therefore, are likely to differ in their nitty-gritty details from, for instance, those of radical secular feminists. Nevertheless, agreement is sought on issues of fairness, justice and righteousness – the basic principle behind women's empowerment and gender equality.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will offer insight to the church to understand why marital challenges are on the increase in the wake of women's empowerment, and immune to its teaching efforts. It will also help the church appreciate women's empowerment for what it is, and play its role in mitigating its counter-effects development agencies may not be aware of towards a holistic development of humanity. Further still, this study will pose an internal critique of the church position and her contextualized theology. African theology has already been accused of being over-engaged in culture apologetics and incapable of responding effectively to the social cultural and political

realities and situations of its people.⁷ The study hopes to make contribution, albeit small, in helping the church understand the limitation of contextualization of theology, and propose more openness to God's active and continuous involvement in the world and in the cultural junctions of His people. Finally, the study will act as a foundation for marriage ministers and counselors for the construction of a biblical marriage theology of mutual complementarity of male and female that might work better for the 21st century and beyond based on God's active involvement in the lives and situations of His people.

1.8 Main Conversation Partners

Theology for any people is developed through the interaction between God's revelation and the prevailing circumstances of the people in their context. This imperative for theology did not originate with African theologians but was raised by Robertson Smith in the late 1880s.⁸ The African context suffered cultural marginalization in the hands of missionaries as their culture was deemed evil and incompatible with Christianity.⁹ Mbiti, Idowu, Achebe, and Ngugi wa Thiongo are among early African theologians and writers who contended against colonialism and missionary Christianity in favor of the development of Christianity lived out in African worldview around the time of political independence questioning the cultural

⁷ See for instance fierce criticism of African theology and theologian's preoccupation from Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (London: Hurst & company, 2009). See also a more sympathetic concern on the same from William Dyrness, *Learning about Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).

⁸ Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: First Series – The Fundamental Institutions*, New Edition (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1889).

⁹ See a detailed explanation from Mushete A. Ngindu, "An Overview of African Theology," in *Paths of African Theology*, ed., Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994).

hegemony of western Christianity.¹⁰ Indeed, the themes of culture and contextualization of theology to new cultural situations have occupied a central place in theological discussion in Africa since the 1970s creating different theological groups and positions of African theologians easily identifiable by the way they handle the question of the practice of polygyny. The first group represented by John Mbiti, a leading African theologian driven by the motivation to restore the glory of African culture depicts African practices and beliefs as good and worthy of preservation. He sees western influence and modernity as the causes of marital problems insisting that marriage needs to be worked out in keeping with African culture. His position perhaps stands strongest perhaps when he acknowledges in the 1970s that polygamy on the one hand is “becoming increasingly unworkable, outdated and a social deficit” while on the other hand, he justifies it on account of there being numerous polygamous persons in the Bible hence its acceptability before God.¹¹ What is difficult is to reconcile the fact that he urges wives and the church in Africa to uphold polygyny even after conceding that people are finding the practice rather unpractical.

Similarities of African and biblical cultures were celebrated and played a big role in the formation of theological understanding of manhood and womanhood, whether through the literal application of scripture or through the more refined historical-critical hermeneutics proposed by Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard as well as by Fee and Stuart.¹² Because of the similarities of cultures, the Bible has been

¹⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Greenwich, Fawcett Publications, 1959) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (London: Heinmann, 1967) and *Weep Not Child* (New York: Collier Books, 1964).

¹¹ Mbiti, *Love and Marriage*, 82.

¹² William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Revised and expanded Ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004). See also Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*, second edition (Grand Rapids:

understood to be at home among Africans as Mbiti points out and God's vindication of that which had been greatly endangered in missionary Christianity. An injustice had been supposedly committed by the missionaries and its correction was necessary, hence his advice to take people back to what life was moving away from. For Mbiti and the rest of theologians in this category, culture is viewed more as what used to be the African way of life before the disruption of Africa's encounter with Europeans which was good and foundational in theological development. As Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator captures it, theology for Africa had to be brewed in an African, not foreign, pot.¹³

However, not all theologians see this goodness of culture, at least not in its entirety. Mercy Oduyoye, for instance, although her theology emphasizes the importance of connecting the gospel in Africa to the "people's 'primal religion'", she finds women's oppression in culture through social and cultural structures, as well as gender roles being carefully calculated to serve the interests of men in keeping men off the kitchen, "in a society that does not have restaurants and yet by tradition excludes menstruating wives from touching food, the man solves his problem by resorting to polygyny."¹⁴ Indeed, the quarrel with cultural oppression of women in Africa is not just held by women authors and theologians. The Human Rights Watch report on Kenya blames the marginalization and violence against women on unchanging patriarchal cultural practices, structures and beliefs under which

Zondervan Publishing House, 1993). These are authorities usually used as sources for Hermeneutics in the theological institutions.

¹³ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from an African Perspective* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2008).

¹⁴ Mercy Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Accra: Sam-Woode Ltd, 1986), 128.

government leaders are also unfortunately baptized into greatly impairing their effectiveness in alleviation of the abuse of women rights. Further, it reports women remain trapped in abusive relations because the customary norms and practices cannot be overruled by any power.¹⁵ Women critics of culture differ in their way of looking at the Bible as they see heavy investment of patriarchy in Scripture as well. On one extreme, Mary Daly for instance sees the bible as merely a sexist tool for the service of men to the disadvantage of women undermining its very authority.¹⁶ Likewise, John Raines sees scripture as a product of insecure masculinity in the face of powerful womanhood to keep women in a subjected and controlled position posed as the voice of God.¹⁷ Apart from the reduction of the Bible to a human book, most western feminism has not been unfairly accused of derailing the original justified course of the true feminism that sought equity and justice for women to now acquire a militant and divisive punch that steeps women against men.¹⁸ On the other hand, concerned African women authors at least insist on a women-sensitive approach to Scripture without patriarchal marginalization of women with the credit of seeking the unity of male and female without the divisive tone of western feminists. Oduyoye for instance, acknowledging that women disadvantage is a real issue in the African context works with the vision of having the co-operation of male and female without

¹⁵ See “Double Standards: Women’s Property Rights Violations in Kenya” in *Human Right Watch*. Vol. 15 No. 5(a). March 2003. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/kenya0303/kenya0303.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2011).

¹⁶ Mary Daly, “Theology after the Demise of God the Father: A Call for the Castration of Sexist Religion” in *Sexist Religion and Women in the Church: No more Silence*, ed., Alice L. Hageman (New York: Association Press, 1974).

¹⁷ John Raines, “The Mother of Life and the God of Death: Religious Roots of Violence against Women in Christianity” in *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religions: Roots and Cures*, ed., Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007).

¹⁸ See Christina Hoff’s *Who stole Feminism: How women have betrayed Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

discriminatory social imagination towards a more righteous and just society.¹⁹ While most women agree with this basic position in their approaches to culture and scripture²⁰, some seem to carry the hardline and non-compromising tone associated with western voices. For instance, Abbey, reconstruction of the experience women in the Bible is a poetic masterpiece of imagination of the way Jesus accepts women honorably. But towards the end she declares “No, I don’t look back” and adds, “Even male-chauvinist church leaders can’t make me look back.”²¹ Generally though, the pro-culture and culture-critical positions deal with a static sense of culture with the first seeing a way of life that should be reclaimed and the second seeing a way of life that should be done away with.

Representing a fairly middle view is Kwame Bediako. He basically agrees with Mbiti on the legitimate place of African religious and cultural experience before Christianity as essentially to be carried over to the present in the construction of practical Christian life. He insists that African cultural aspects cannot be discontinued in Christianity the way early missionaries suggested as these aspects bear people’s identity, and that just the way the gospel had to acquire a gentile character crossing over from the Jewish orientation, the gospel had to acquire an African character.²²

On the other hand, he advances the argument that there are serious complexities in the

¹⁹ Mercy A. Oduyoye, “Reflections from a Third World Woman’s Perspective: Women’s Experience and Liberation Theologies” in *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, ed. Ursula King (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994).

²⁰ For the various ways of reading scripture including story-telling, cultural, womanist, and divination methods, see the contributions of Musa W. Dube, “Fifty Years of Bleeding: A Storytelling Feminist Reading of Mark 5:24-43” and “Divining Ruth for International Relations”; Musimbi Kanyoro’s “Cultural Hermeneutics: an African Contribution”; Rose Teteki Abbey’s “I am the Woman” and Nyambura J. Njoroge’s “The Bible and African Christianity: A Curse or a Blessing” in *Other Ways of Reading :African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).

²¹ Abbey, 25.

²² See Kwame Bediako, *Theology of Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford: Oxford Regnum Books, 1992).

continuity or discontinuity aspects of culture – a process he feels has been inadequately handled in most approaches to African Christianity. He isolates the same practice of polygamy defended strongly by Mbiti, seeing it as one of the issues in African culture that needs to be discontinued in the light of the Word of God for biblical African Christian life. For him, culture, whether African or otherwise has many aspects that need to be upheld; but it also has flaws in other aspects which have to be addressed in the light of the gospel. One of the greatest contributions of Bediako's contribution is his insistence that there are change-continuity imperatives in contextualizing the gospel into new contexts, and the need to know how to differentiate between the two in this process.²³

One of the major shortcomings of contextualization of theology in Africa as Laurenti Magesa points out is the absence of thoughtful interrogation of apparent contextual equivalents between African and biblical cultural worlds.²⁴ While contextualization purports to pay due respect to the contexts of scripture and that of the reader, even in the most developed hermeneutical engagements, it still ends up reading biblical contexts into contemporary situations and forcing the latter to comply with the former whose effects could be manifested in later days of the people for whom contextualization was initially done. For instance, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart – renowned Bible interpreters state one of their hermeneutical rules thus:

²³ See Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995).

²⁴ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004).

“Wherever we share comparable particulars (i.e. similar life situations) with the first-century setting, God’s Word to us is the same as his Word to them.”²⁵

Now that there was undeniable similarity between the African traditional and biblical cultures the creation of theological meaning with this similarity was almost natural. However, the problem today is the fact that the receiving context has shifted drastically with far-reaching and irreversible effects occasioned by women’s empowerment and gender equality enterprise of the 21st century. As a result, the context is facing a hermeneutical problem that calls for urgent attention.

This is because, although theology usually prescribes re-contextualization of theology as a continuous process²⁶, re-contextualization as a theological method fails in that it does not tell us when new contextualization is necessary, what signals it or what happens if it is not done. This is especially given that change takes a long process and happens rather subtly without “one precise point in time at which the change occurs and becomes noticeable”²⁷. By the time people start to sense change, a lot of it has already taken place with lots of destruction on its way. The society is

²⁵ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 65. Italics retained.

²⁶ Fresh contextualization as a continuous process is advocated for by among others Dube, Oduyoye and Magesa in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*; in *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* and "The Challenge of African Woman Defined Theology for the 21st Century," in *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century* respectively. It is worth noting that although the trio calls for continuous contextualization as an on-going process as a matter of principle they differ in the manner and approach of this interpretation with some raising questions on the authority of Scripture. Magesa and Oduyoye advocate for historical-critical hermeneutics although Magesa takes a different direction to distance Paul’s authorship from epistles that seem to subject women to men. Dube deviates from evangelical track by calling for a reading of the Bible open-endedly like African trickster stories whose message and meaning the narrator shapes a new according to his or her intended purposes.

²⁷ Laurenti Magesa, “Reconstructing the African Family,” in *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, eds., Andrew Kyomo and Sahaya G. Selvan (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004), 5.

endangered when it is not prepared to embrace change and especially when that change is irreversible.

William Dyrness introduces two aspects of culture helpful in this discussion, namely, the changing aspect of culture and God's active and continuous involvement in culture in doing theology.²⁸ He maintains that authority of the word of God speaks in people's culture, history and theology as temporal and changing elements in the larger framework of what God is doing through His Spirit. This view encourages theologians to not only expect change, but also to welcome it because it is as a result of the people's interaction with what God is putting in place in their created and historical environments. It is indeed possible that the family breakdown today among the Akamba could be a protestation of women empowerment in a culture described from within as "extremely patrilineal and patrilocal"²⁹. The church needs to ask if it has really first come to terms with the cultural context of the people of Kenya in the 21st century as a critical beginning point of her marriage theology since its marriage theology needs to be borne out of local situations and contexts.³⁰ There is need for a perspective that engages the people's situation today as the beginning point of theology in the point where God encounters His people as He works out His will and purposes in their lives and relationships.

²⁸ See William Dyrness' *The Earth is God's*. See also Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

²⁹ Ndeti Kivuto. *Elements of Akamba Life* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1972), 68.

³⁰ For this imperative of theology see Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002); William Dyrness, *The Earth is God's: A Theology of American Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1997) and Willie Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origin of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

1.9 Methodology

The study employs mixed methods, that is library research and social science method. An overview of historical turnings and their social implications on the Akamba women and marriage will be examined from the pre-colonial Akamba traditional life to the 21st century situation. This will be facilitated by library research examining books, international and national instruments and policy documents. As social inquiry, the study will be carried out among the Akamba in Mikuyuni village of Kibwezi sub-county in Makueni County. Data will be collected through participant observation, focus groups, interviews and examination of instructional materials. Pastors will be interviewed because of their role in the generation of the official marital instruction to establish their experience, approach and theological content in marriage ministry. The Africa Inland Church is the main focus as a representative of evangelical churches. This choice is considered appropriate because it is not only the oldest and largest church in Ukambani; it is also the primary socializing church for majority of Akamba women both in rural Ukambani and in the urban centers. It is also a church with perhaps one of the best well-developed programs and materials for preparation of its women to function fully in their families, church and society.

All the interviews with the pastors will be recorded on voice recorder after soliciting permission from the interviewees and then transcribed by the researcher word by word for each one of the pastors. From the information collected the relevant data on the situation of marriage will be highlighted. Coding process will be done and repeating ideas will be highlighted and grouped together under the themes they represent indicating the source of each idea. Then the themes will be analyzed in their relationship and in turn grouped together to form theoretical constructs that the researcher will use to make the conclusions in chapter four of this dissertation. The

recurring ideas, themes and constructs will be presented separately to provide the bases for the conclusions, and to prevent interruption of the flow of this report. The study is qualitative and the data is collected and analyzed through interaction with thick narrative though at times percentages are given where the picture they present is deemed critical for meaningful impressions for the study. Participant observation will be done in weddings, bridal showers and the AIC ladies' annual conference to find out the marital instruction disseminated in these forums. The notes for these will also be presented separately.

Data will also be collected from couples to find out the actual state of marriage as experienced by wives and husbands from Mikuyuni basically, including those who will have moved to cities like Machakos or Nairobi for work, so as to cut across different categories of spouses. The data will be collected in three sets of interviews. The researcher will first make personal contact with wives and interview them individually to have the experiences of today's empowered woman in her marriage. Then follow-up will be made with the husbands to these women also individually to have the men's perspective of their experiences in marriage as well. Permission will also be sought from the interviewees for recording the interviews. The researcher also conducted a five-woman focus group centering on a set of seven questions presented in appendix 2.

For the theological framework, the study will engage various theological theorizations of culture and the implying attitudes that rise from them ranging from the more culture positive perspectives to the more critical feminist stances. The study will make particular use of a dynamic view of culture as well as its being the place where God is actively involved to reveal Himself, His purposes and will to His people as the architect of their history. Evangelical marriage and women theologies

will also be engaged in depth as well as the process of contextualization and theological methods of reading the Bible that remains open to the Spirit's involvement in the world.

1.10 Chapter Outline

This study is organized in chapters. Chapter one entails the introduction to the study giving the background, problem and thesis statements, the study's research main question, research questions and objectives; purpose and significance, main conversation partners and research methods. Chapter two explores the situation of marriage in Kenya in the 21st century highlighting its major challenges and the role of the church in addressing them. The chapter, in conclusion, raises the question whether or not disturbing the equilibrium through women's empowerment would not naturally result to marriage instability.

Chapter three answers this question by examining specific ways in which the role and place of women in general have changed since the 1990s when the crusades for women's empowerment and gender equality dawned in the African context evaluating its implication on marriage. Chapter four provides the answers from the field by presenting the results of the teachings of pastors and other lay leaders and the results on the needs and challenges of empowered wives and their husbands, and finding the relationship between the two.

Chapter five will evaluate the contextualized African theology on marriage developed in the 1960s and 70s in terms of strengths and weaknesses in the light of the marital challenge in the society and in the light of what God is doing in the world. Chapter six is the conclusion to the whole study. It will challenge the church towards reading the Bible with openness to what God is doing in the beginning as reflected in

Genesis chapter 1 and 2; what He did in Jesus Christ; and what He does today in His Spirit as He drives history to its close in His restoration program. Recommendations will also be proposed for the church as a way forward towards a more appropriate theology for marriage.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHANGING SITUATION OF MARRIAGE IN KENYA

2.0. Introduction

The family institution is facing serious challenges in Kenya today. Hardly does one watch or read news without encountering one or several forms of marital challenges, particularly of great concern in a context which has been associated with stable families in its traditional setting. This chapter seeks to survey the situation of marriage in Kenya and in the church today and evaluate the various efforts made to address the marital crisis. We will begin by highlighting the situation of marriage today against what it used to be in the traditional setting, then move on to assess the limited efforts of government and non-governmental organizations in dealing with the marital challenges. This will be followed by an examination of the state of marriage in the church proposing that there is the need to find out what the root problem of marriage is; and to come to terms with the situational realities of the 21st century, particularly the women's empowerment factor and its implications before addressing the marital problem. The chapter argues that marriage today is characterized by disturbing and growing disharmony and that the church, even though it is best suited in addressing these challenges, its teachings do not seem to bring about the desired change.

2.1 The Situation of Marriage in Kenya Today

The media has been the whistle-blower on the lamentable state of the family in Kenya. In June 19, 2010, the *Daily Nation* newspaper summarized survey findings in

bold front-page headlines with the phrase: “A Family Crisis” and proceeded to give statistical explanation why marriages in Kenya were being shaken by modern life in five detailed pages. It reported that 30 percent of people interviewed would not marry the same person again given a second chance; that only 40 percent of Kenyans were happy in marriage; that 29 percent had dim prospects for their marriages and that over 50 percent reported a major marital conflict at least once a month. It added that those who were in come-we-stay unions were the happiest compared to those who got married under customary, civil or religious laws.³¹ Five years later, the same paper reported a follow-up study on the family with an announcement on its front page “‘Come-we-stay’ is the formula for marital bliss” and went on to report that women who got married in churches were becoming less and less happy. The paper proceeded to present the ideal life for women as the pursuit for financial, professional, and educational excellence first, and then “good family” joining the list as the last in order of priority.³²

From 2010 to date, both *the Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers run weekly articles every Saturday featuring family challenges. For instance in August 17, 2013, the *Daily Nation* ran the following articles in quick procession: “If Pope doesn’t judge gays, how can we?” followed “Better the devil you know: Almost every married man you know will consistently choose his wife over all others, and here is the reason why”. After this comes “My man is flirting with another woman”, followed by “Is my fiancé cheating on me” then “When to keep father away from child” quickly followed by “CPR for dying marriages”. It is important to note that all these

³¹ Muchiri Karanja, “A Family Crisis,” *Daily Nation*, June 19, 2010.

³² Joan Thatiah, “‘Come-we-stay’ is the formula for marital bliss,” *Daily Nation*, July 11, 2015.

are featured in just one Saturday. Hardly does one find articles that promote chastity, fidelity, and real sacrificial love as taught by scripture in these daily news reports.

The same applies to Classic FM's weekday radio morning show "Maina and King'ang'i" that encourages callers to share their troubles in marriage relationships. The conversations show that marriage is in great trouble in terms of violence, infidelity and general lack of marital responsibility by one spouse or the other. Constantly, Maina encourages callers to take the option of divorce from cheating, abusive, and loveless wives or husbands and offers to follow up their situations off air. It is important to note that this show is a favorite for many people as Maina and King'ang'i are both widely celebrated and influential media personalities and artists.

Although media reports are often dismissed on grounds of objectivity and accuracy of facts, they are usually the windows through which one sees the society. More importantly, media not only informs the public of what is going on but also subtly forms the public's social imagination on how things are, have become, or are supposed to be.³³ Moreover, constant and widespread consumption of these reports is likely to inadvertently or purposely pass the message in the long run that *marriage does not really work and that people are happier if they do not get married* if the headlines five years apart cited above are anything to go by. It would be a big mistake for the church in Kenya to fail to recognize that the media is a powerful public tool whose influence cannot be underestimated.

Without realizing it, the church may actually be consigning its people to the hands of the media to foster their attitudes and practices in marriage relationships. It

³³ Detweiler Craig and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003).

is important also to note that the media reaches a wide readership. For instance, the Daily Nation is hailed as “the most influential newspaper in Kenya with a daily circulation of about 205,000 copies.”³⁴ Besides, one paper is usually read by several people and can now be accessed on line both in Kenya and in diaspora. Coupled with the *Standard Newspaper* and other dailies, this readership forms a large clientele indeed. If the average reader is torn between believing the newspaper or the preacher on marriage matters, media reports may appear to present a truer picture. In any case, whereas the pastor preaches fidelity and sanctity of marriage, his or her message is contradicted as many preachers in Kenya are themselves caught severally in embarrassing cases of immorality and infidelity by the very media. It is granted that media reports may not indeed rise to academically acceptable research threshold but in this aspect, they seem to have made their point: it is not well with the family today.

Other more research oriented studies concur with the above reports.

Demographic and health surveys in Kenya began to focus on the family since 2003 and have constantly reported a persistent challenge of domestic violence between married couples. The reports of 2003 and 2008 – 09 pointed out that domestic violence against women was rampant and even justifiable.³⁵ The grounds for wife beating were such as “if she burns the food, if she argues with him (the husband), if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children, and if she refuses to have sexual relations with him.”³⁶ Besides, the *Kenya Demographic and Health*

³⁴ Quoted from *Daily Nation Epaper*, accessed October 10, 2015, www.epapersland.com/kenya/daily-nation.html.

³⁵ See Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics’ *Kenya Demographic and Health Surveys* for 2003, 2008 – 09, 2013, and 2014.

³⁶ Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey* 2003, 44, accessed July 21, 2015, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnacy934.pdf.

Survey: Key Indicators 2014 sheds light on the emerging form of emerging physical marital violence against men. 11 percent of men indicated that they experienced both physical and sexual violence in the previous one year, and infidelity was reportedly a rising trend as the report gave statistics of use of condoms for people with more than two sexual partners. It reported,

Among those reporting two or more sexual partners in the past 12 months, condom use at last sex was 40 percent for women and 43 percent for men. Men aged 20-24 were more likely to report condom use (70 percent) than men in other age groups. Condom use during last sex among those with two or more partners in the last months was lowest among married women and men (13 percent and 20 percent, respectively) and highest among urban women and men (both 47 percent).³⁷

As this report signals a problem to the government – that unprotected sexual encounter is very high and that people are at high risk of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases – it also needs to signal a greater challenge for the church, that there is a problem in marriage. This practice leads to other challenges such as single-parented families. Indeed, focusing on the situation of women and children among the Akamba people who are the object of our study, the *Makueni District Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2008* reported “a high incidence of births out of marriage” besides prevalent domestic violence in the district.³⁸

When marriages cannot withstand pressures of violence and infidelity among others, they end up in divorce or separation. One of the most detailed reports on the divorce-separation situations in Kenya is the *Kenya Population Situation Analysis* of

³⁷ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey: Key Indicators 2014*, 52, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://www.knbs.or.ke>.

³⁸ The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *Makueni District Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2008*, 10, accessed July 21, 2015, www.knbs.or.ke.

2013. It reports that “marriages are fairly stable in the country” basing the claim on low levels of divorce and separation as percentages of various age-groups for men and women.³⁹ However, a critical analysis and interrogation of the statistics demonstrates that marriage is far from being stable. Although these percentages appear extremely low, when translated to actual numbers, the figures ought to be worrying for the government and more so for the church. The percentages presented for three age-groups illustrate this in a tabular presentation with the actual numbers of persons in brackets⁴⁰:

Age bracket	Divorced Men	Divorced Women	Separated Men	Separated Women
20-24	0.2% (3468)	0.8% (16,109)	0.4% (6,936)	1.6% (32,219)
25-29	0.5% (7,533)	1.3% (21,661)	1.2% (18,079)	2.6% (43,322)
30-34	0.8% (9,910)	1.8% (22,658)	1.8% (22,296)	3.2% (40,281)

For these three age groups only, the total number of men divorced or separated stands at 68,222 and that of women 176,250. By the time these percentages are translated to actual numbers of people for all age groups, the total numbers of divorced and separated women stands at 147,679 and 229,448 respectively while the total number of men divorced and separated stands at 65,035 and 128,624 respectively. It is evident that ‘statistics’ translate to actual persons that bring with them personal and social implications. An examination of divorce and separation figures also shows that there is a big discrepancy between men and women indicating that the challenge of marital instability is much deeper. While these persons may

³⁹ The Government of the Republic of Kenya, *Kenya Population Situation Analysis July 2013*, 157, accessed August 4, 2015, www.countryoffice.unfpa.org/Kenya/drive/FINALPSAREPORT.pdf.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 158. These calculations are worked out from the information presented in figure 9.2.

remarry, the higher rates of divorced and separated women than men could be explained by the fact that more men than women end up remarrying. The survey actually acknowledges that Kenya lacks critical information details and statistics for marriage from the Civil Registration Department and the national census reports such as previous marriage details.⁴¹

Effects of divorce or separation in the family reach far and wide. When it comes to spousal violence against each other, the effects do not just stop with the two. Studies show that violence and abuse are culturally socialized, and they not only affect children negatively: they are also likely to be repeated by the children in their own turn as parents.⁴² Given that marriage in Africa is not just a union of individuals but of entire families and communities⁴³ there will be multiple ripple effects reaching down to community and society in the long run. Mooney et al correctly observe, “Family breakdown is not a single event, but a process that involves a number of risks and protective factors that interact in complex ways both before and after parental separation or divorce to increase or limit the risk of the adverse outcomes associated with family breakdown.”⁴⁴ If the government’s figure of 377,129 women and 193,659 men moved on to remarriage, they and their children would carry with them pains and consequences of broken unions into other relationships with numerous ramifications. By the time we have rounded up all the persons affected by what does

⁴¹ Ibid., xiv.

⁴² See for instance, Chimaraoke Izugbara, Ronny Tikkanen and Karn Barron, “Men, Masculinity and Community Development in Kenyan Slums,” in *Community Development*, (2014), accessed October 6, 2015, www.afrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Izugbara_et-al.pdf.

⁴³ See Mbiti, *African Religions*

⁴⁴ Ann Mooney, Chris Oliver, and Marjorie Smith’s “Impact of family Breakdown on Children’s Well-Being: Evidence Review” (Institute of Education, University of London, 2009), 2, accessed October 6, 2015, <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11165/1/DCSF-RR113.pdf>.

not seem to be a big problem for the government, we will realize that the society is in a serious problem that calls for urgent attention.

The shattered lives I am constantly involved with in my work and ministry are clearly a product of this scenario. If something is not done to break this trend, it follows that family and marriage will be in even greater danger for future generations. There is a sense in which various challenges facing the family are connected in a kind of vicious circle. Couples with unmet expectations may easily result to domestic violence which leads to physical, emotional and psychological stress. Stressed marriages will not cultivate a right environment for husband, wife and children to live and function harmoniously fulfilling each other's expectations. For husbands and wives, this results to infidelity or come-we-stay unions which in turn lead to children born out of wedlock producing more stress and disharmony and failed expectations. When these become unbearable, divorce and separation become unavoidable. Then the process is replayed in the lives of children in these marriages and the process begins all over again. To come to terms with the magnitude of the challenge, there is need to underscore how far the present marital situation has deviated from its stable foundation in the traditional setting.

2.2 Marriage Situation in the African Traditional Setting

The foundation of the society is widely known to be the family. The foundation of the family itself, especially in the African traditional context, is marriage.⁴⁵ As noted above, marriage in the African traditional setting was widely known to be rather stable compared to today's situation. It is beyond the scope of this

⁴⁵ See Bibiana M. Ngundo, "The African Family: Its State and Role in Contemporary Church and Society," in *African Family Today*, eds., Giuseppe Caramazza and Beatrice Churu (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015).

chapter to give a detailed situation of the African family in this brief section. Our task is however to highlight how family and marriage were protected against destabilizing forces of divorce and separation, infidelity, and domestic violence wrecking the institution today.

First and foremost, marriage was specifically and deliberately stabilized against divorce and separation. While some hold that divorce was rare and rather accidental in African cultures,⁴⁶ others acknowledge that it had more presence than that, and that either wife or husband could divorce the other.⁴⁷ Either way, divorce was rare and family unity was highly treasured. The specific structures and mechanisms that minimized divorce and separation specifically were the practices of dowry payment, polygyny, levirate marriage and customary inheritance laws. For instance, men were required to raise dowry payment for all their wives while women, who did not control or own property customarily could not continue to enjoy the provision and protection of the husband after divorce.⁴⁸ Moreover, when divorce finally took place, it came as the last resort, only after all negotiations for reconciliation had failed. It finally happened after a long and cumbersome process culminating in the woman's family returning the dowry to the husband's family as a final ratification that the marriage has been terminated⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ See John Mbiti, *Akamba Stories*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press), 5 and Kyalo's argument in "Family Values and Rituals. This can be compared with Kimilu's *Mukamba wa W'o*, 97.

⁴⁷ See Kimilu, *Mukamba Wa W'o*.

⁴⁸ Theological Advisory Group (TAG), *A Biblical Approach to Marriage*, 35. This book was a report of a landmark study on Christian marriage and family, a research featuring various ethnic groups in Kenya conducted by the Africa Inland Church. This book was intended to be a recommended textbook in pastoral family ministry.

⁴⁹ Paul Kyalo, "Quran and Cultural and Legal Challenges Analysis of the Practice of Islamic Law of Marriage and Divorce among the Akamba Muslims in Kitui, Kenya," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 1, No. 8, (July 2011), accessed November 10, 2015 <http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol.1.No.8;July.2011/22.pdf>.

Specifically, dowry payment and wife inheritance secured marriages even beyond the death of the husband. The Theological Advisory Group (TAG) study captured correctly how these worked among most African communities:

The wife and her children became part of her husband's family irrevocably. Since the marriage was agreed upon by the two families, and since dowry was paid for the woman to become part of the husband's clan, she and her children always remained part of that family. Therefore, if her husband dies, a brother or near relative of her husband would co-habit with her, caring for her and rearing children for her in the name of her late husband.⁵⁰

Thus, African traditional structures not only protected the family and marriage from disintegration, they also protected women and children from the negative effects of this disintegration. One of the practices after the death of a father and husband is that his estate was divided among the sons to ensure that the children and their mothers were catered for.⁵¹ Although girls did not inherit property, the expectation is that they would be catered for adequately through their fathers or they would be married and be protected in their husband's homes.

Marriage was also protected from infidelity. Mbiti argues that polygamy reduced immorality through strict laws for both men and women in the African traditional context.⁵² It is clear however that laws governing immorality were stricter for women than for men. For instance, TAG correctly observes, "Even a single act of adultery by the wife was ground for divorce by the husband. But adultery by the husband was never a ground for divorce by a wife. It was not unlawful for a man to

⁵⁰ TAG, 24.

⁵¹ See D. J. Penwill, *Kamba Customary Law* (Nairobi: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1951). See also Kyalo, "Quran and Cultural and Legal Challenges."

⁵² See Mbiti, *Love and Marriage*.

go with another woman.”⁵³ This could be another point on which discriminative cultural laws would be faulted. Indeed, a direct reading of the biblical story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11 would be well understood in traditional setting that does not ask questions of why the man was not being condemned.

Infidelity and immorality may be viewed differently comparing the traditional and contemporary positions. Usually, sexual relations among unmarried person could be socially approved for instance where one engages in sexual relations with another man’s wife after the death of her husband as noted above; or as an act of the husband’s hospitality or as a kin-brother’s duty in the husband’s long absence to meet her sexual needs. These were part of the cultural norms and were not deemed wrong in any way. In most African communities, bearing children outside these cases or outside of marriage was not only very rare but also a heavily punishable “abomination”.⁵⁴ This is because children and birth carried very important significance of the kinship to the community and society in general. Mbiti observes correctly,

In African societies, the birth of a child is a process which begins long before the child’s arrival in this world and continues long thereafter ... Nature brings the child into the world, but society creates the child into a social being, a corporate person. For it is the community which must protect the child, feed it, bring it up, educate it and in many other ways incorporate it into the wider community ... The birth of a child is, therefore, the concern not only of parents but of man relatives

⁵³ TAG, 35-36.

⁵⁴ Ngundo, *The African Family*, 22.

including the living and the departed. Kinship plays an important role here, so that a child cannot be exclusively 'my child' but only 'our child'.⁵⁵

The reality of women getting children with men outside the marriage bond raising them single-handedly or that of come-we-stay unions today would be a social anomaly in the traditional set-up. Today, if the public media discussions are anything to go by, it is even fashionable for single mothers to remain accomplished and unmarried and almost normal for men to keep mistresses without ever marrying them. There is indeed a remarkable shift from the traditional setting to today.

That marriage, women and children were protected in one way or the other in African traditional structures does not mean that these structures and practices were not oppressive, discriminatory or exploitative particularly on women, a matter that has been discussed extensively. Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha, for instance, has accorded polygyny, excision, dowry payment and wife beating high priority in what he refers as the "'ten patriarchal plagues' of sexism in African cultures and religion"⁵⁶. Indeed, there can be no defense for initiation ceremonies that promote female genital mutilation or early and forced marriages for young girls, practices that forbid women from owning property, as well as bequeathing priests with young virgins in West Africa for sexual service⁵⁷ just to raise a few practices. It needs however to be appreciated that discrimination and exploitation of women inherent in these practices

⁵⁵ Mbiti, *African religions*, 110.

⁵⁶ Mutombo Nkulu-N'sengha, "Muntu, Kintu, and the Pursuit of Bumuntu: Reflection on the Roots of Violence against Women in African Traditional Religions," in *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religion: Roots and Cures*, eds., Daniel Maguire and Sa'diyya Shaikh (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007), 133. Other voices include Shawn Burn, *Women across Cultures: A Global Perspective* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2005). See also Maguire and Shaikh, eds., *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religion*.

⁵⁷ See Dorothy Brandon and Apollo Rwomire, Introduction to *African Women and Children: Crisis and Response*, ed., Apollo Rwomire (London: Praeger Publishers, 2001).

is especially more visible when viewed in retrospect from where society stands today. The vice in them becomes so magnified that it overshadows any iota of positive function intended by the structures in their time and objectivity must do its best to reveal their positive elements. Much as they were discriminative and exploitative, they nevertheless formed part of the cultural wisdom of the communities as they struggled in human imperfection to figure out God's will and purposes for the people in their time, circumstances and environment.⁵⁸ So while it is true that women and girls were discriminated against in African cultures, this does not rule out that there were instances where they were deliberately protected by the same flawed structures.

An interesting observation pertained to the situation with marital violence. Even though the family was highly stable and treasured in African communities, there was rampant domestic violence in form of wife-beating. For instance, in the Akamba cultural situation, Kimilu correctly observes, "Mūkamba asilaa mūsyĩ wake na kaũ ... Kĩveti kya Mūkamba wa wo kyalea kwĩwa watho wa mūũme nĩkĩkũnawa mũno nĩwe. Kyalea kũmwĩwa mbaĩ nĩyĩtawo kĩkakanwa."⁵⁹ (A Kamba man rules his home through violence ... A wife of a true Kamba man is thoroughly beaten by the husband if she disobeys him. If she persists the clan is brought in to discipline her). Despite the presence of rampant domestic violence against wives in the African context, marriage was stable.

It is suggested that women found it hard to leave their abusive homes because they depended on their husbands entirely.⁶⁰ This is partially true. The other side of

⁵⁸ See William Dyrness, *The Earth is God's on discussion of what culture is as an interaction of humanity, creation and God.*

⁵⁹ Kimilu, *Mukamba wa W'o*, 157.

⁶⁰ See for instance, Shawn Burn, *Women across Cultures*, 27.

the truth is that the prevailing worldview and its dynamics warranted their staying. According to Turaki, life in the African traditional setting was governed by laws that led people to willingly comply with their conditions for the sake of harmony because their lives were believed to be planned by God and the ancestors long before their birth. He underscores that in this life, “one does not claim personal rights and freedoms but rather fulfills one’s communal obligations and duties.”⁶¹

Generally speaking therefore, infidelity, divorce, separation, and domestic violence were present in the African traditional setting but not to the levels witnessed today. This is apart from the new and rising forms of violence against men today. But it is an undeniable fact that the strong cultural structures that held the family together in the traditional setting have been weakened or removed altogether in today’s life. In the first place, marriage was rather permanent and not even death could end it as it is the case with marriage under Christian or civil laws today. It fitted in the framework of the extended family and not on nuclear family as is the case in contemporary society. Indeed, the focus today is more on individuals rather than even the nuclear family. The role of rites of passage and their instructional value have disappeared in the light of modern education. This is where Mbiti would be right in faulting modern education system that would “spend more time teaching young people about dissecting frogs and about colonial history than they ever spend teaching them how to establish happy homes and family lives.”⁶² While there is nothing wrong with the teaching of science in schools, the core function of education that prepared

⁶¹ Yusufu Turaki, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview* (Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 36.

⁶² Mbiti, *African Religions*, 227.

children to fit and function effectively in their environment disappeared with modern education that emphasizes economic aspects at the expense of other valuable social dimensions.⁶³

It is therefore an undeniable fact that African traditional life operated under structures of inequality between men and women to the disadvantage of women. More of this will be discussed in the next chapter. It is important to note here that domestic violence was perhaps the most basic and visible indicator of the power inequalities between men and women since the former exercised their power and authority over the latter. It is evident that African traditional family structures were strong; but they also worked in the backdrop of gender inequalities.

Any study that seeks to understand the destabilization of the African family cannot just dwell solely on the challenges facing the family today. It must bring together the traditional and the 21st century situations, to seek to understand how the process of women's empowerment that seeks to remove inequality between men and women has also served to disrupt the traditional structures that existed during their disempowerment. This is not again in a bid to redeem life and take it back to function in the traditional cultural patterns. It is instead in a bid to chart out new directions for the family and society where individuals encounter their lives today. But before we move to this next step it is useful to take a look at the structures that the Kenyan government and non-governmental organizations have put in place and the extent to which they have been successful in stabilizing family life for the people of Kenya.

⁶³ See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1989).

2.3 Government and Non-Government Organizations' Intervention Efforts

The Kenyan government pledges not only to protect its people, its communities and the nation as a whole, but also the family. Recognizes the critical role played by the family, the government commits itself to protect it in the preamble of its current constitution.⁶⁴ Perhaps it is in this commitment that in Kenya's Penal Code 2009, prostitution and homosexuality are among outlawed practices in Kenya and homosexuality is included among "unnatural offences" where a person can be sentenced to 14 years in prison for practicing it, or 7 years' imprisonment for even attempting it.⁶⁵ Moreover, in the Marriage Act, 2014, marriage is clearly defined as a relationship between heterosexual persons effectively ruling out homosexuality.⁶⁶ However, even though the practice is outlawed, it is still present, sometimes openly but most of the times in secret. A recent study of the trend between 2004 and 2008 shows that it is on the rise in Kenya in spite of the government's efforts to defeat it.⁶⁷

As for protection of the family from domestic violence, the government has taken several measures such as the criminalization of gender violence and setting up of gender desks in every police station to attend to gender violence cases specifically.⁶⁸ The government also resolves as a matter of policy to open recovery

⁶⁴ The Government of the Republic of Kenya, *The Constitution of Kenya*, 2010, 12, accessed November 6, 2015, <http://www.kenyaembassy.com/pdfs/the%20constitution%20of%20kenya.pdf>.

⁶⁵ See National Council for Law Reporting, "Penal Code CAP. 63" Sections 162-165, accessed November 6, 2015, <http://www.kenyalaw.org/8181/exist/kenyalex/actview.xql?actid=CAP.%2063>.

⁶⁶ See Government of the Republic of Kenya, Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 62 (ACTS NO. 4) The Marriage Act, 2014, accessed November 6, 2015, http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/TheMarriage_Act2014.pdf.

⁶⁷ See Scott Geibel, "Same-Sex Sexual Behavior of Men in Kenya"

⁶⁸ See Institute of Economic Affairs-Kenya, "Status of Gender Desks at Police Stations in Kenya: A Case of Nairobi Province, September 2009, accessed October 16, 2015, www.ieakenya.ar.ke.

centers in every county as well as revamp all hospitals to offer treatment and post-recovery services to victims of violence.⁶⁹ This shows that the problem is a national challenge and the need is great. This is illustrated by the announcement of Kenya Television Network channel at 7.00 a.m. in the morning of July 12, 2013 as news repeat that the Nyeri Provincial Hospital opens a Gender Violence Recovery Center and in three months attends to over 300 cases of gender violence victims, all of them men.⁷⁰ Since domestic violence has been generally known to be cultural where men engage in violent acts and attitudes against women, it has generally taken the slant of women protection from men.

The government has however not been as effective in enacting laws against domestic violence over the years. As early as the 1960s, Kenya sought to deal with wife-beating legally through parliament. However, in what Ongicho refers to as “a legal gap”, the Kenya Parliament in 1968 unanimously defeated the bill that sought to outlaw the practice. It was voted against by the men parliamentarians, because as he puts it, “such a law could amount to undue state interference in the domestic affairs of husband and wife”.⁷¹ Little has changed from the sixties concerning the dynamics of parliament in Kenya.

With an insider’s perspective, Khamisi describes the hostility with which the Sexual Offences Bill, 2005 that sought to protect women from rape, defilement, female genital mutilation, wife inheritance and sexual harassment among other

⁶⁹ See *Policy Brief on Gender Based Violence: Health Policy Paper Sept. 2012*, accessed September 24, 2015, www.vsojitolee.org.

⁷⁰ This report was aired through Kenya Television Network channel at 7.00 a.m. in the morning of July 12, 2013 as news repeat from the previous night.

⁷¹ See Tom Ongicho, “Battered women: A Socio-Legal Perspective of their Experiences in Nairobi,” *African Study Monographs* 21(1), 36 (January 2000), accessed September 24, 2015.

http://jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kivoku/asm_normal/abstracts/pdf/21-1/35-44pdf.

offences was criticized and re-enacted to accommodate the will of the men before it was passed. He observes, “From the very beginning, it was clear that male legislators were uncomfortable with, and suspicious of the good intentions of the bill. They complained that the legislation was intended to punish men for practices that were generally condoned by traditions, and appeared uninterested in the broad objective of the legislation.”⁷² The government is evidently hampered in its fight against violence by cultural reasons. To the degree that these matters are cultural, legislation can hardly be effective. There are also implementation and enforcement challenges. Much as this crime is a major national challenge, domestic violence is not highlighted as an offence in annual record of crimes reported to and by the police between 2010 and 2014. Perhaps it is included in the category of “other offences against persons”⁷³ which obscures its presence and magnitude.

It is not only the government that is involved in efforts to alleviate violence against women. Non-government organizations are equally concerned. A representative example for this could be Federation of Women Lawyers of Kenya (FIDA-Kenya).⁷⁴ FIDA’s primary mission is fighting for women justice which in turn is aimed at achieving overall strengthening of families. The organization notes that they have helped over three hundred thousand women since its birth in 1985 through

⁷² Joe Khamisi, *The Politics of Betrayal: Diary of a Kenyan Legislator* (USA: Trafford Publishing, 2011), 285. The author was the Member of Parliament for Bahari Constituency from 2003 to 2007 and described a trustworthy observation as to how Parliament business was carried out on women welfare related bills.

⁷³ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *Economic Survey 2015*, 247, accessed September 24, 2015. <http://www.knbs.or.ke>.

⁷⁴ Others are Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW-Kenya); Center for Rehabilitation and Education of Abused Women (CREAW); and Women’s Resource Access Programme (WRAP).

several programs, among them “legal advice and litigation.”⁷⁵ Their perspective is focused on the woman as their names indicate and the need to protect her from exploitation, abuse and discrimination. Since injustice and violence against women are largely cultural, these organizations are not popular with the status quo as they engage a social war with the male fraternity in the country, because they take a feminist stance and seek the liberation of women not primarily concerned about strengthening of the family.⁷⁶ Another handicap of non-government organizations dealing with domestic violence is that they only concentrate on cities and the majority of women especially in the rural areas cannot access them. This is assuming these women knew the organizations existed in the first place.

What stands clearly is that working relationships of the government and non-government organizations are not mutually supportive. For instance, these organizations complain of frustration due to “insufficient government assistance” in their efforts to reach out and serve women as well as the slow process of parliamentary bills on violence against women.⁷⁷ At the same time, government police stations complain that non-government partners “have insignificantly supported gender violence desks in the country.”⁷⁸ This blame game demonstrates that there is lack of teamwork and goodwill between the two arms.

⁷⁵ See details in Federation of Women Lawyers, 30th Anniversary, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.fidakenya.org/dr7/?q=Access-to-Justice-Programmes>.

⁷⁶ Eunice K. Kamaara, “Gender Empowerment in Africa,” *Theologies of Liberation and Reconstruction*, eds., Isaac M. T. Mwase and Eunice K. Kamaara (Nairobi: Acton, 2012).

⁷⁷ See The Government of Canada, “Response to Information Requests” (RIRs), accessed October 16, 2015, www.justice.gov/sits/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/11/07/KEN100271.FE.pdf.

⁷⁸ See Institute of Economic Affairs-Kenya, iii.

As the government and non-government organization trade accusations back and forth on who is not supporting the other, the problem of marital disharmony grows deeper roots. The nature of the marital challenge calls for more than the government or non-government organizations for addressing it. But if we are looking for a lasting solution to this problem, we need a different agency and approach. It is indeed prudent to enact laws and empower state organs to deal with cases of domestic violence. It is responsible of the government to open recovery centers to attend to victims of violence in the family. Non-government organizations play an important advocacy and mediation roles to protect women's human rights. Obviously the government and non-government organizations are overwhelmed given the picture of domestic violence and the general state of marriage discussed earlier.

Marriage is not just a social unit. Neither is the problem of marital instability just a socio-cultural matter. Since the family is spiritual in nature and theologically founded, its challenges require theological and spiritual perspectives. The best placed agent to address the issue is the church. Its basic teachings are helpful in guiding the family to work out healthy and biblical relationships. It acknowledges that the author of the family and marriage is God as outlined in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. It affirms that domestic violence destroys the harmony and peace of marriage and that all children need to be born into families with a father and a mother as the God-intended family setting. Only the church holds promise in dealing with marital challenges effectively to save the society from social destabilization. For the church to do this however, it has first to demonstrate that it has been able to deal with these challenges through its teachings evidenced by healthy, harmonious and stable marriages within it. To find out if the church so qualifies to play this role, we need to look into the situation of marriage in the church.

2.4 The State of Marriage in the Church

The church is part and parcel of society. Numerous studies demonstrate that the church also grapples with the challenges in the wider society, as disharmony in marriage has been a major characteristic of marriage in the Kenyan church for a long while now. Domestic violence in the church, for instance, is rampant as reported in several Kenyan communities in form of wife-beating to such levels that concerned much concern to the church leaders. The TAG study reported,

The physical effects range from bruises to broken jaws, broken ribs and teeth knocked out. One husband extracted a tooth every time he fought with his wife. Arms, legs and spines have been broken. One woman is in a wheel chair because of her broken spine. Internal injuries and injuries on the head have led to death. When the spleen of one woman was injured through kicking, she died later. Some have lost an eye or have become deaf through domestic warfare. Reports of these deadly effects of domestic warfare were discovered within a small geographical area. Such domestic violence must be widespread with serious physical effects on women.⁷⁹

Although TAG did not indicate whether the man who did this was a church member or not, these levels of violence to the extent of fatalities rise even beyond what was imaginable in the traditional setting discussed above. A more recent study in 2011 in Ukambani established that the two main causes of marital instability were “lack of proper preparation” and the occurrence of “frequent of quarrels, fights and misunderstanding”, followed by substance abuse, financial challenges, immorality, pressure from in-laws and lastly loveless relationships, in that order.⁸⁰

The church is also facing the challenges of divorce, separation and infidelity. Daystar University study in 2003 on the status of the Christian family in Kenya

⁷⁹ TAG, 205.

⁸⁰ Kyalo, “Family Values, 82.

revealed that divorce and separation are real among Christians and urged the church to refrain from denying the fact. The major causes of this crisis “were marital unfaithfulness, family interference, lack of pre-marital counseling, poverty and emotional incompatibility.”⁸¹ Another research in South Africa also seeking to study the causes of divorce specifically among evangelical Christians concurs with the Daystar study on the main cause – adultery among Christians.⁸²

Indeed, the very foundation of marriage as male-female union has been greatly challenged. Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries is an organization based in Kenya led by theologically trained clergy breaking away from mainline churches to give particular attention to sexual minorities namely the gay and lesbians; bisexual and transgendered people (GLBIT). The Kenyan, East African and African coordinators are all Kenyans. Part of the organization’s mission statements is “to network with and equip those who seek to challenge existing prejudices and discriminatory practices, especially in the areas of theological and pastoral training, human and civil rights, and HIV/AIDS prevention and care.”⁸³ This might be a ministry meeting some need in the society for pastoral and health care to homosexuals perhaps not practically possible in mainline evangelical churches. There is need however for the church to find out why the trend as an alternative to heterosexual relationships is on the rise.

The studies above have achieved two important goals. First, they have brought the church to the awareness that marriage is not healthy whether inside or outside the church. Secondly, they have recognized that the church is the hope of

⁸¹ See Oladipo et. al., *Status of the Christian Family*, 21.

⁸² Matthews Mangaliso Tembe, “An Investigation into the Causes of Divorce.

⁸³ See details from Thomas Hanks, “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities”, accessed November 6, 2015, <http://www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar/ingles/brochure.pdf>.

society and challenged it to action. This action has mainly been understood by the church to mean the intensification of its teaching and training and to work closely with the African culture.⁸⁴

The efforts of the church are however not being rewarded as marriages continue to deteriorate. Apparently, majority of these recommendations start from questionable premises pertaining to the cause of the crisis in marriage.

First, some recommendations propose that marital challenges are caused by western influence in the form of modernization or globalization.⁸⁵ The fact that marital instability was rare in the traditional setting but now a reality makes sense that marriage in Africa is troubled by the abandonment of traditional values and adoption of western ones. As family life declines in the West, this situation is perceived to spread to African life as well. Family decline in the United States in 2015, for instance, representing a decrease in numbers of men and women married only once since 1996 and an increase in the number of persons in multiple marriages⁸⁶ can be referenced to support this thinking. However, the assertion that westernization is the cause of the crisis in the African family can only be half-true at best. For if this proposition was entirely true, the abandonment of western values and a reverting back to African ones could be proposed as the best solution. But then some situation such as the violence noted above cannot be a practice to go back to. In any case, Africa

⁸⁴ These are part of the major recommendations of the Daystar University study, by Kyalo, and by Mbiti's in *Love and Marriage* and also in *African religion and philosophy*.

⁸⁵ Apart from Mbiti and Kyalo, see also Evarist Magoti, "Globalization in Africa: Its Impact on Families and Christian Responses," in *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, eds., Andrew Kyomo and Sahaya G. Selvan (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004). See also the argument of Jesse Mugambi's argument against globalization of theology and theological methods in Africa in *Christian theology and social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton, 2003), 2-3.

⁸⁶ United States Census Bureau, "Remarriage in the United States: American Community Survey Reports," March 2015, accessed October 13, 2015. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/acs/acs-30.pdf>.

does not just copy the west but chooses western elements in her own way for her best interest.

It may be more correct to see it as Ndung'u and Mwaura's do: that the family in Africa "is in crisis *as* it undergoes a turbulent transition from traditional to western norms" since "the rapid social change taking place in Africa has both positive and negative implications"⁸⁷. This is helpful thinking because it focuses on the process of adopting western norms itself without assigning them a causal role to the crisis. Again, it brings up the possibility that the African family is perhaps facing challenges for which "western" solutions are more practical as interventions because those of the local setting are not workable. This thinking, nevertheless, is helpful as it calls upon family studies in the African context to study the two elements critically and separately – the African family as from its traditional roots and the social-economic and political and cultural realities of the 21st century where this marriage works – in order to understand the crisis better.

Secondly, the proposition that African family crisis is a function of western modernization works with a mindset that change is undesirable and resistible. It suggests that the encounter itself was a cultural mistake in the first place and that the reverting back to original positions would be the way forward, rendering cultural change unwelcome. If Mbiti is correct in his observation that in 1973, for instance, polygyny was "becoming increasingly unworkable, outdated and a social deficit"⁸⁸, then patterning social life along this practice is not only a nostalgic cultural

⁸⁷ Nahashon Ndung'u and Philomena Mwaura, Introduction of *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), 14. (Emphasis added).

⁸⁸ Mbiti, *Love and Marriage*, 82.

romanticization⁸⁹ but also a solution that cannot work for the new challenges of marriage today.

On the other hand, the alternative recommendations that do not see westernization as the cause of the problem are not necessarily helpful beyond this fact. They generally treat what appears to be more of *manifestations* of the marital crisis as though they were the actual *causes* themselves. Immorality, divorce and separation, fights and quarrels, even lack of preparation are among proposed causes raised by previous studies. They are however more of expressions of that disharmony and indicators that there is a deeply rooted problem with which the church has yet to come to terms. When these are mistaken to be the causes, recommendations will center on intensifying teaching that address only part of the problem. It is no wonder that solutions emphasize that God hates divorce and separation and insist that good Christians should remain together until death does them part. They also underscore that a Christian home should be devoid of fights and quarrels but still have them in Christian homes. This preoccupation consoles the church to think that it is responding to today's challenges of marriage only to be surprised by the recurrence of the very trends they are working hard to alleviate. What this means is that doubling its preaching, teaching and counseling efforts both marital and pre-marital without addressing the root cause of the problem, the church still fails to touch today's generation where marriage really hurts.

A different approach is needed. The stability that marriage enjoyed in the traditional setting, thanks to the religious worldview, is fast getting lost in the society as well as in the church. Women's empowerment has perhaps radically transformed

⁸⁹ Stephen Bevans, 25.

women and redefined marriage to the degree that family life becomes difficult to function. The next chapter will focus on women empowerment and assess the degree to which women have changed and the extent to which marriage faces challenges as a result.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has established that marriage in Kenya is facing serious disharmony contrary to the harmonious relationship taught by scripture. It has also established that these challenges are beyond the jurisdiction of the government and other organizations to bring about lasting harmony due to the theological nature of marriage, its challenges and solutions. The church alone stands as the savior of society but unfortunately it is also not effective in making the much needed difference. This ineffectiveness requires that the church steps back from implementing recommendations prescribed over the years to check whether it is theologically sensitive to the 21st century context and social situation in its teachings.

The likelihood has been raised that the situation of women's empowerment and its implications is probably not being addressed adequately by the church's theology and its many efforts to build strong marriage relationships among its members. This leads to the need for the church to come to terms with the realities of women's empowerment and its implications on marriage as a first theological step towards addressing those challenges. Once this has been established, we will perhaps be in a position to locate the root cause of today's marital crisis and then move on to find out how theology addresses or fails to address it in its teachings on marriage. Then we will find out why the church is ineffective in its mission and chart out a way forward to address the crisis. Having now established the general situation with

marriage in Kenya and the diverse attempts to secure the family and marriage, we will in the next chapter seek to explore the changing place of women and its implications for the family in Kenya.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ITS EFFECTS

3.0. Introduction

Having established in the previous chapter that marriage in Kenya is experiencing serious challenges today more than ever before, and that the church is unsuccessful in addressing these challenges, this study recognizes that this is not the only change that has taken place within the family. Women, who are key players in marriage, have also changed radically in the last 50 years or so, a change expected to have effect on the family. This chapter seeks to explore the women's empowerment project in Kenya and its relationship to the decline of marriage. It argues that a major socio-cultural shift has taken place resulting from women's empowerment that has negative effects on marriage, and raises the question whether or not theological instruction engages this shift adequately to prepare men and women to work out strong and fulfilling marriages. The chapter will start by concretizing the meaning and scope of women's empowerment followed by a survey of the historical-cultural background upon which this empowerment is being constructed in Kenya and Africa. Then the effects of this empowerment will be discussed and the church's stance on the relationship between women's empowerment and marital disharmony. Finally, the importance of the social background upon which the church constructed its marriage theology that stabilized marriage previously will be underscored.

3.1 Women's Empowerment – Meaning and Scope

Women's empowerment rises from the general realization that women have been universally disadvantaged on account of socio-economic and political structures, said to have favored men in all cultures.⁹⁰ It has been defined as “a multi-dimensional concept” that involves “women's expansion of opportunities to participate in all aspects of life, including (but not limited to) education, wage employment, decision-making, and access to information and services that could improve their lives.”⁹¹ This definition implies that women have had limitations in terms of opportunities whether by design or default rising from, and resulting to a general state of powerlessness that is being corrected by giving them ‘power’. Key aspects of this empowerment take socio-economic, educational and interpersonal dimensions⁹². While efforts have been directed to every area of women's lives, educational, socio-economic and political aspects have received particular attention in their own right as intertwined gateway to all other aspects. For instance, empowerment in education determines their economic wellbeing that in turn determines their level of independence and participation in decision-making processes.

The women empowering enterprise in developing countries was triggered by the realization that marginalization of women was a major contributing factor to underdevelopment in those countries. For instance, research studies in East, Central and Southern African countries by the Swedish International Development Aid (SIDA) established that the problem is serious. In all African countries as late as

⁹⁰ Many have made this argument. See for instance Burn, *Women across Cultures* and Maguire and Sa'diyya, eds., *Violence against Women*.

⁹¹ National Council for Population and Development *Insights on Family Health in Kenya: Further Analysis of Two Decades of Demographic and Health Surveys 1998-2009*, (Nairobi, Kenya: NCPD), 31.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 31.

1990, women were less literate compared to men, with some countries like Malawi and Ethiopia having very big margins. The study also revealed that boys and girls were almost at par in primary education; that the number of women reduced drastically through the secondary to university levels; and that when it came to leadership positions, women performed dismally.⁹³

Most women empowerment programs have been initiated by the United Nations through national and regional governments as well as international organizations. Burn highlights four global development landmarks pertaining to women's relationship to development since 1970 to 2000 whereby in the seventies, feministic activism was calling for appreciating women's non-income participation in the family as important for development. The eighties sought to give women more recognition as agents of development by advocating for gender equality and general women empowerment as part and parcel of the process of development. The nineties advocated for inclusion of women concerns and empowerment in United Nations' goals and reports leading to gender mainstreaming in development, so that by the year 2000, gender equality and women participation were required in all areas contributing to development by all member states and nations.⁹⁴

The recently concluded United Nations eight Millennium Development Goals formulated in the year 2000 had the third goal set on promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Individual governments were charged with the responsibility of working out policies and programs aligned to the United Nations' goals. As a result, Kenya, for instance, mainstreams gender issues in her *Kenya*

⁹³ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Men in East, Central and Southern Africa: Facts and Figures* (Nairobi: 1995).

⁹⁴ Burn, *Women Across Cultures*.

Vision 2030, giving women at least 30% representation in all recruitment processes, promotions and appointments.⁹⁵

The 26th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on June 17th 2014 at Geneva observed that the Millennium Development Goals overlooked the area of violence against women and the general abuse of their rights, and committed the Post-2015 period to sustainable development agenda in order to address these areas. Noting the central place of women human rights in development, the council observed, “Sustainable development – comprising social, economic and environmental development – is unachievable without the full realization of human rights and women’s political and economic empowerment underpinned by the full and active participation of women.”⁹⁶ This agenda is expected to move women in the society to a position that has never been experienced before – and particularly in the developing countries in Africa.

The family has not been spared by all these engagements. The United Nations recognized the central place of the family in development, the disadvantaged position of women and its negative impact on development through published papers in preparation for the 1994 International Year of the Family celebrations.⁹⁷ One year later The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing provided global space and articulated several gender issues and action points.

⁹⁵ Government of the Republic of Kenya, *First Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the First Medium Term Plan (2008-2012) of Kenya Vision 2030*, (Nairobi, 2010).

⁹⁶ The United Nations, 26th Session of the Human Rights Council, accessed on September 22, 2015, www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBpdoes/HRC/REgularSessions/Session26/pages/26RegularSession.aspx, 3.

⁹⁷ United Nations, *Family Matters: Occasional Papers Series*, No. 1(Vienna, 1992).

Among these was “to remove the obstacles to women’s full participation in the public life and decision-making, at all levels – including the family.”⁹⁸ The Protocol to the African Charter on the Human Peoples Rights on the Rights of women in Africa 2003 gave women the right to equal marriage partnership with their husbands, the right to change or retain their names after marriage, and the right to own property and handle it as they would wish.”⁹⁹ This is a paradigm shift in the family and in male-female relationships and it perhaps would cause disorientation to both men and women. Kenya praises itself for ratifying and implementing several international instruments apart from those discussed above which include the Universal declaration of Human Rights of 1948 that outlaws discrimination on grounds of sex; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995; the Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979; and commendable commitment to the eight Millennium Development Goals concluded in 2015.¹⁰⁰

It is expected that all these efforts would result in radical changes in understanding women and their role in the African context and would have profound effects on marriage. The picture perhaps would be clearer after an examination of the background upon which this empowerment takes place. We will explore the status of women from the traditional setting to the 1990s when empowering, protecting and promoting women became an irreversible international imperative. This background will look at three major epochs, and the state of women in each of them, namely, the

⁹⁸ United Nations, *Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration*, (New York. 1996), 3.

⁹⁹ See Africa Union’s *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* article 6, accessed January 29, 2016, http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/women-protocol/achpr_instr_proto_women_eng.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ See Government of the Republic of Kenya, *First Annual Progress Report*.

traditional, colonial and post-colonial periods of Kenya up to 1990s and women's general experience in each one of them.

3.2 The Background of Women's Empowerment in Kenya

3.2.1 *The Traditional Setting*

We highlighted in the previous chapter that the African traditional situation of marriage operated under structures of inequality that disadvantaged women in the society. However, there are those who hold that women's social status in African traditional setting was high. Nthamburi, for instance, points out that women played key social, political and religious leadership roles. He argues,

While being housewives and mothers some were queen mothers that wielded a lot of power. Others became priestesses and became as prominent as men in their conduct of religious ritual. There were still others who became practitioners of medicine or healers while there were others who played the role of mediums. As we shall see women played a very significant role in religion, being respected spiritual leaders whose advice was sought.¹⁰¹

Those who hold this view also maintain that Western influence on African life was responsible for subordination of women. Given that Africa is diverse; both views could be right at the same time. Rodney's observation is more correct as he sees two contrasting elements where on one hand women were oppressed and exploited especially through polygamous responsibilities while on the other, their dignity was recognized affording them space to fully function politically, socially and religiously varying from one community to another.¹⁰² In African worldview as pointed out earlier the individual's existence and identity find value and meaning in "communal

¹⁰¹ Nthamburi, 80.

¹⁰² Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 247-248.

self-respect, interdependence, survival of the community, group assurance, cooperation and harmony, affiliation and shared duties.”¹⁰³ The place of women in this setting was especially defined by the laws of harmony, destiny and kinship-community. A woman just fits in her place in the vast ecosystem fulfilling her role in the destiny pre-determined for her by forces bigger than herself ensuring that as long as it depends on her, she plays her role and harmony prevails. To the degree that one does not seek for his/her own comfort, peace or prosperity, the relatively overburdened people, usually women, approach life with a sense of sacrifice. We have noted that the African worldview was the complex factor that ensured that women remained in oppressive situations such as wife beating without complaining or leaving.

In the traditional background, a structured political system maintained the traditional social order under male leadership in which women’s space was limited. Turaki observes that “authority and power resided in the hands of the elders, and particularly the council of elders ... in the hands of the oldest men, who were normally the heads of families, clans, lineages or communities.”¹⁰⁴ Even though Mbiti suggests that elders made decisions and rulings in consultation with women among the Akamba¹⁰⁵, Kimilu concurs with Turaki that this responsibility rested solely on men elders who were the custodians of culture.¹⁰⁶ Women were not only under men in their families, they were also not represented in the council of elders which was the highest political authority – again a structure of inequality. Politically, there was a set

¹⁰³ Yusufu Turaki, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ Turaki, *Foundations*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ John Mbiti, *Akamba Stories*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ D. N. Kimilu, *Mukamba Wa W’o*, 119.

hierarchy starting with ancestors then the aged, then elders, followed by headmen and leaders, then adult men followed by women, then children and the yet to be born. Even though everybody was expected to fulfill their obligation for harmonious living, abuse of power was occasioned by the privileged persons' manipulation of fate and destiny to give themselves advantageous positions over others endorsed by religious and social-cultural structures.¹⁰⁷

In the traditional setting, education was directly geared towards holistic development of the people with emphasis on personal role and contribution to community. In this holism, the learner "was to be a well-integrated personality whose physical, spiritual, moral, and mental development was catered for."¹⁰⁸ It had its climax around puberty as children graduated from childhood to adulthood. Both boys and girls had equal access to education as each was prepared for adult life. Notable of this system of education is that it was gender based "reflecting the principle of the division of labor operative within the community" as the various ethnic communities "specified what women's jobs were and what were men's."¹⁰⁹ Adults were the instructors in this life-long process as these gender-based roles and responsibilities were passed through direct instruction or imitation from adults. In this instruction boys learnt from their fathers and uncles how to hunt and raise families ensuring food supply and protection from enemies, as girls learnt how to cook and take care of young ones as was the case with the Akamba.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ See J. E Otiende, S. P. Wamahiu and A. M. Karugu. *Education and Development in Kenya: A Historical Perspective* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 10.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁰ Kivuvo, *Elements of Akamba Life*, 86.

Community's social norms, taboos, and practices were inculcated through education spelling out the social expectations of persons but also played a restrictive function. Many African communities for instance did not allow women to whistle with no explanation except that it was taboo. Taboos moved quickly from spelling out social expectation to institutionalizing social restriction to the disadvantage of women. It is Tuovinen who established the reason with one community in Tanzania that could be the case with others – that whistling is associated with mental processes such as planning and decision-making which were reserved for men only.¹¹¹ Women's social function was not deemed to involve thinking, for instance, and so major decisions were deferred to men.

In terms of economic life, women were not empowered in the sense of empowerment known today. Generally, income generating activities were a man's domain whereas women took care of the home and the family in non-income responsibilities, for example, among the Akamba of Kenya.¹¹² The basic element seen as the epitome of economic discrimination and exploitation of women by much of women studies centered on traditional land ownership as men only owned land and women could only have "user rights to land."¹¹³ According to the Kamba customary law, land was inherited by sons only, and if a man had no sons, by his brothers, cousins or uncles, such that a wife's security depended on her having male

¹¹¹ Marjo Tuovinen, "Mission and African Women: Women's Traditional Roles and New Identities in Christ," in *African Theological Journal* Vol. 32, No. 1(2009).

¹¹² Mwikali Kieti and Peter Coughlin, *Barking, You will be Eaten: The Wisdom of Kamba Oral Literature* (Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers, 1990).

¹¹³ Paulines Editorial Team, 17-18. See also the observation of Fatuma N. Chege and Daniel N. Sifuna, *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender Perspectives and Trends* (UNESCO, 2006).

children.¹¹⁴ It is also true under such arrangement that sons were the preferred children and not daughters. As means of production, land is very critical especially looking at the traditional arrangement in retrospect from today's context. This can be viewed as discriminatory and exploitative but such judgment needs to be qualified. As long as the benefits of both income and non-income activities were used for the welfare of all members of the family, there would be no disadvantage to any person. But then in cases where the benefits were used selfishly to the advantage of men who had sole decision-making power and disadvantaged women, then the argument is valid.

Two factors are undeniable pertaining to African cultures: the status of women was lower compared to that of men, and roles and responsibilities that drove the socio-economic and political aspects of life were divided along gender lines and favored men not women. Even though Rodney claims that African pre-colonial arrangements of work and responsibilities in terms of gender brought about a fairly equalizing effect between men and women¹¹⁵, there are others who argue that this arrangement was the very basis on which inequality and exploitation were culturally entrenched.¹¹⁶

But these two facts alone cannot be indicators of women oppression. Taiwo dismisses women's oppression in African cultures as a Western misrepresentation that purports that African men did nothing except hunting and fighting leaving all burdens

¹¹⁴ See Penwill, *Kamba Customary Law* (Nairobi: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1951).

¹¹⁵ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

¹¹⁶ Apart from the sources cited above that see a low status of women in African cultures, see also Gertrude Shope, "Liberation of the African Woman," in *Women in Africa*. Pamphlet No. 318 of Institute for Reformational Studies, eds., Gertrud Shope, Denise Ackermann, Tebogo Moja, and H. A. Kamkhwani, (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1984).

to women. Citing the case with the Yoruba of Nigeria, he argues that heavy farm work was done by men and that women only came in to harvest farm produce, comparatively a lighter duty.¹¹⁷ Rodney also notes, “Traditionally, African men did the heavy labor of felling trees, clearing land, building houses, apart from conducting warfare and hunting.”¹¹⁸ The point has already been made that women functioned in high positions in some traditional African societies. However, chapter two underscored the ambiguity that some practices seen as the means by which men oppressed women such as polygyny and gendered division of labor were also the very means through which women were protected in the society.

How did African cultures then start discriminating against women socially? African culture heavily differentiated between men and women, boys and girls and this demarcation could be fertile ground for discrimination. Kimilu observes that women discrimination began even before birth among the Akamba, citing the mandatory killing of the females of twins or triplets; lack of land inheritance even though women were the ones who tilled it; and having no say when their husbands intended to take second or more wives. This discrimination, he argues, followed women to old age as aging men usually married young women to refresh themselves while women had no such recourse. He points out why: “Andũ angĩ matwaa kīveti kya kelĩ nũndu kīla kikũũ nĩ kikũũ ki kũte mo, na nĩmendaa kīveti kya kumathukya. Ũkambanĩ aka nĩmo mathukasya aũme ti aũme mathukasya aka.”¹¹⁹ (Literally, Some men marry second wives because the first one is very old compared to them, and they

¹¹⁷ Olufemi Taiwo, “Feminism and Africa: Reflections on the Poverty of Theory” in *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*, ed., Oyèrónké Oyèwùmi (Trenton: African World Press. 2003).

¹¹⁸ Rodney, 227.

¹¹⁹ Kimilu, 48

prefer a younger wife to rejuvenate them. Among the Akamba, women are the ones who rejuvenate men not the men who rejuvenate women).

Even though women may be the ones who urged their husbands to marry second wives to assist them with overwhelming chores, Kimilu states the underlying reason correctly: “Mũndũ wa Kĩveti kĩmwe nũvũthawa nĩ mũka na nũndũ nde wĩkwatyo ũngĩ. Īndĩ mũndũ wĩ aka aingĩ nũsindaniawa nĩmo. Vala wonaa akĩkwa nesa nĩvo wakaa ũmamo wake.”¹²⁰ (A man of one wife is despised by his wife because he has no other alternative. But a man with many wives has his wives competing for him. Where he is treated well is where he sleeps). This competition is what gave men advantage as wives outdid one another to win the husbands’ favor. With time, society could tolerate many wrongs from men but could not condone any misbehavior from women and wives.

Turaki correctly describes the law that governed justice and morality in the African context: “The law of harmony does not concern itself with the issues of ‘right’ or ‘just’ behavior, attitudes or practices, but only with what will hold things in balance. Thus answers to ethical questions do not focus on the morality of the goal. Any means are justified in the pursuit of balance and harmony.”¹²¹ Of course cultural apologists like Mbiti do not record this disadvantage – probably because they intend to provide the big picture of Akamba life without making moral judgments.¹²²

A fair conclusion is that African cultural structures should not be condemned in totality. In some instances they had a high status for women and treated them with

¹²⁰ Kimilu, 143.

¹²¹ Turaki, *Foundations*, 45.

¹²² Mbiti makes this known in *African Religions*, 143

dignity but in others they oppressed them and assigned them an inferior status. What can be said with certainty is that African socio-economic and political structures were imbued with *potential* for oppression of women and some communities took advantage of the same to exploit their women even if others did not. For those that did, this social injustice was heavily entrenched in, and overshadowed by gender-based communal obligations. When women were discriminated against, exploited or oppressed, this was tolerable – even fairly “accepted” by the virtue of the prevailing worldview that sought harmony and community good. This was the situation of women in Africa before the coming of colonialism.

3.2.2 The Colonial Era

Colonial governments transformed African social life as it was lived in the traditional setting by westernization of the educational system and the introduction of different political and economic policies with far-reaching effects on Africans. The first step of this disruption as Chege and Sifuna observe rose from the creation of white-only and African-only settlements; demand for cheap labor from Africans; the introduction of hut tax that among other charges “forced the men to abandon their traditional roles as farmers and household heads to sell their labor in a way that they had not done before.”¹²³ This absence of men from their homes had not only physical consequences but also emotional and spiritual implications. They were detached from close kinship relationships that had tied family members together and removed from the emotional and spiritual leadership and instructional roles they played creating an instructional vacuum. The colonial government took further the traditional practice that allowed men only to own land by endorsing their holding of title-deeds. This

¹²³ Chege and Sifuna, 20.

effectively endorsed the cultural practice that granted decision-making on land use, its produce, and the income from it exclusively to men as noted above. This restriction, as Chege and Sifuna note sentenced women “to a life of dependency on their fathers, husbands and other male relatives.”¹²⁴ Thus dependency was installed by this element perhaps the most compared to other structures of African life.

Colonial education system for its part gave up the equal access to education for both boys and girls that had existed before, as it was now primarily oriented towards acquiring skills by training African men mostly for assistance in lowest administrative and clerical jobs.¹²⁵ Rodney explains,

Since the men entered the money sector more easily and in greater numbers than women, women’s work became greatly inferior to that of men within the new value system of colonialism: men’s work was ‘modern’ and women’s was ‘traditional’ and ‘backward’. Therefore the deterioration in the status of African women was bound up with the consequent loss of the right to set indigenous standards of what work had merit and what did not.¹²⁶

Eventually this inequality became deeply entrenched between men and women with long-lasting effects on African social life. Colonial education as Mutua correctly observes also lost the “non-economic values in traditional education” and now emphasized materialism and individualism.¹²⁷ The sense of community was lost as well as the worldview that emphasized holism, adult functioning, and the centrality of African relational values including family and marriage -- a factor that would be proven in the rise of immorality, cohabitation and other family challenges later in the

¹²⁴ Chege and Sifuna, 21.

¹²⁵ See Rosalind Mutua, *Development of Education in Kenya: Some Administrative aspects 1846-1963* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975). This is also expressed in Rodney.

¹²⁶ Rodney, 227.

¹²⁷ Mutua, 12.

town centers.¹²⁸ Since colonial education was meant to profit colonial governments, Rodney correctly observes that its effects “destroyed social solidarity and promoted the worst form of alienated individualism without social responsibility.”¹²⁹

If colonial education system disadvantaged Africans generally, it disadvantaged women doubly. Apart from the fact that Africans were given low quality education, the job market did not have any place for women. Onah highlights four key root causes of inequality and women disempowerment in Nigeria which is also true of other African countries, namely unequal access to education, to employment, to income and influence of religion.¹³⁰ The final stamp to institutionalize inequality between men and women in Africa was driven by the split of social life consequent to education and employment. First, the curriculum for women was different from that of men rising from a new understanding of the role of men and women in society. African femininity, as Chege and Sifuna observe, was reconstructed after western patterns of inequality in colonial and missionary educational policies. They argue,

When, occasionally, a few women were offered a relatively superior education, it was geared towards employment only as nurses, lady physicians (not doctors), schoolmistresses and secretaries ... Yet, research shows the feminization of those occupations was in harmony with the gender relations in Victorian England – not traditional Africa – where women’s employment positions were constructed as subordinate to those of men. This institutionalized gendering of occupations continued to negatively affect the

¹²⁸ See Mbiti, *Love and Marriage*.

¹²⁹ Rodney, 280.

¹³⁰ Roseline Onah, “Unequal Opportunities and Gender Access to Power in Nigeria” in *African Women and Children: Crisis and Response*, ed. Apolo Rwomire (London: Praeger Publishers, 2001).

education and employment of women both in government and the private sector to the present times.¹³¹

The implications of being a girl, or a woman and the reality of gender inequality between men and women were deeply entrenched and most consciously experienced during the colonial period. With limited access to formal education, limited job opportunities and increased dependence on masculinity, women were exposed to disadvantaging inequality in every aspect of their lives. It is incorrect however to attribute women disadvantage to colonial transformation alone. African society as established earlier had divided life according to gender and women were more involved in the domestic realm mainly. When formal education came, education was rather set aside for the male child because a girl's education was considered to add no value to the father since her value was in her being married off eventually as in the case of the Akan of Ghana and Yoruba of Nigeria.¹³² In any case, the colonial system in Kenya employed indirect rule that allowed internal cultural and political structures to operate rather freely as long as they did not antagonize the colonial enterprise. Structures of inequality in African cultures were appropriated by colonialists to create the world they needed to have for Africa's exploitation. What was initially potentially disadvantaging now became overtly and actively discriminating. Discrimination against women, subordination and eventual exploitation became inevitable throughout the colonial period. The next step will examine how women fared after political independence.

¹³¹ Chege and Sifuna, 24.

¹³² Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*.

3.2.3 *Post-Colonial Situation*

Most African countries attained political independence in the 1960s as described above, with increasing adoption of capitalistic western values and a weakening of African social structures and values. This era is characterized by various developments growing from the role of formal education as an inroad to all aspects of people's lives – political, economic and socio-cultural. A general observation is that the education sector was geared towards tremendous changes to foster national development and unity, but did not change much as far as gender issues were concerned. The Ominde Commission instituted shortly after independence in Kenya had the social purpose of education outlined as “to promote social equality and remove divisions of race, tribe and religion.”¹³³ Sex and gender inequalities apparently were not critical issues that needed attention in the construction of the new Kenya. It was as late as early 1990s that attention was called to the presence and potential harm of gender inequality, yet consigning it to merely “Future Prospects” advising that “there should be a move towards more egalitarian performance of roles by gender in the not-too-distant future.”¹³⁴ In other words, for about three decades after independence, the Kenyan education system had not attended to the challenge of gender inequality and this was the background upon the political and economic spheres that life functioned.

For those who argue that the African cultures were innocent in terms of inequality and that Europeans imposed it are challenged by the fact that independent Kenya did not correct it as anomaly after colonialism. The Chege and Sifuna's

¹³³ See Otiende et. al. and also D. N. Sifuna, *Short Essays on Education in Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980).

¹³⁴ Otiende et. al., 158.

UNESCO sponsored study surveys the Kenyan educational system and boy-girl educational gaps establishing that the colonial governments only “exploited a ready-made gendered platform” to create unequal curricula and opportunities for boys and girls whose effects exist even in independent Kenyan system.¹³⁵ Without any deliberate effort to correct gender inequalities in education, the economic arena that heavily depended on what happened in the education sector did not improve for women, but rather worsened.

Chege and Sifuna describe the contradicting social implications on women as they generally operated in rural areas. The duo notes, “The new roles for women on the domestic front yielded a new family economy that positioned women, in practical terms, as the *de facto* household heads who ironically were culturally denied the authority or power to make decisions regarding sales, loans or gifts of an economic nature, which were traditionally controlled by the men.”¹³⁶ It is not without cause that Kenya is reputed to be a very patriarchal country where traditional structures suppress women and thwarts gender equality.¹³⁷ For almost 20 years after independence, women employed in any area in Kenya stood at only 20 percent of total number of employees, and factors leading to this low percentage were designated as “lack of equal education and skills training compared with men, cultural attitudes about women working or family obligations.”¹³⁸ International calls compelling governments to alleviate the plight of girls and women in education were met by

¹³⁵ Chege and Sifuna, 19.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁷ Burn.

¹³⁸ Vicky W. Mucai-Kattambo, Janet Kabeberi-Macharia and Patricia Kameri-Mbote, “Law and the Status of Women in Kenya,” in *International Environmental Law Research Centre* (Geneva: International Environment House, 1995), 14, accessed February 15, 2016. www.ku.ac.ke/actil/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LAW-AND-STATUS-OF-WOMEN-IN-KENYA.pdf.

cultural resistance. For instance, when the state of girls and women became a global concern after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, Abagi notes how efforts to pay particular attention to girls' education were resisted in independent Kenya eliciting harsh public comments from the male fraternity such as:

“Not another women talk again! What do they want to say this time; there are more serious issues to focus on.”

“Gender equality. The women lib staff. They want to take over after Beijing.”

“Girl-Child education! What is the problem? No body prevents the girls and women from going to school and excelling.”¹³⁹

The cultural climate that openly discriminated and suppressed women progress quickly dominated the political dynamics. The independence that brought about the self-governance and political sovereignty of African countries had plenty of space for men but limited space for women. For instance the experience of women in Kenya's political field is described vividly by Khamisi from an insider's perspective:

The first woman to enter Parliament was Grace Aketch Onyango in 1974 ... During the first multi-party elections of 1992, only six women were elected to Parliament, but that year, the country got its first woman cabinet minister, MP Winifred Nyiva Mwendwa, who was appointed to the Culture and Social Services docket. In 1997 two women, Charity Ngilu and Wangari Maathai became the first women to contest presidency. Both did poorly, but their entry was a pragmatic demonstration of how far women could rise in Kenya's political system.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ See Okwach Abagi's Foreword to Chege and Sifuna, *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya*, x.

¹⁴⁰ Joe Khamisi, *The Politics of Betrayal: Diary of a Kenyan Legislator* (USA: Trafford Publishing, 2011), 283.

What this means is that Kenya did not have any woman parliamentarian for exactly 10 years since independence as they fared extremely poorly in general political leadership that reserved politics for men. African government policies are known to have good intentions and programs for women development but are hindered by socio-cultural barriers that relegate women to a subordinate position in decision making processes.¹⁴¹ As a result, very few women feature in high government leadership positions. As late as 1990s, Kenya had 6 women parliamentarians against 194 male counterparts; one woman minister out of a total of 23; 14 women Commissioners against 238 men counterparts; 2 permanent Secretaries out of a total number of 27 and 5 judges out of 38.¹⁴²

In a nutshell, it appears it is in the post-colonial period that the cultural oppression and discrimination against women came to full maturity. In a major decision-making institution like the parliament, low women representation reflects the antagonism against women in the society from which they are drawn. When they get to parliament, the mood is carried over as bills that protect women are technically voted out by the male dominated parliament, or are mutilated to take care of men's traditional interests.¹⁴³

The state of women through the three historical periods presents a carry-over effect providing the background upon which women are being empowered in Kenya. The traditional background grounded inequality through its social structures that gave

¹⁴¹ See RoseMarie-Rita Endeley and Rosetta R. B. Thomson,., *Management of Credit Schemes for Women Entrepreneurs in Africa: A Training Manual* (United Kingdom: Commonwealth Secretariat and SFI Publishing, 2005).

¹⁴² Central Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Men in East, Central and Southern Africa*, 36.

¹⁴³ Khamisi.

room for discrimination against women. The colonial period took advantage of this setting to entrench economic inequality through unequal opportunities in education between men and women. The post-colonial government did not correct this error but exploited it using the political resources that men had access to, to suppress women.

So the general environment around which women are receiving empowerment is that of multi-faceted suppression resistant to change, and whose inequality roots span from the traditional times to the last decade of the 20th century. It is an environment that deliberately institutionalizes women exploitation, discrimination and subjugation. Women's empowerment now requires that women receive equal treatment with men in the access to education, employment opportunities, economic resources, as well as equal access to decision-making and leadership positions. Because of this history, women were not offered the opportunities they deserved and this situation was bound to have impact both on responses of international agencies and on teaching and policies in the Christian community. Women's empowerment campaigns have been forcefully advancing for more than 20 years now – a time long enough for initial effects to begin to be felt with effects and implication on society to which we now turn.

3.3 General Effects of Women Empowerment

The gains of women's empowerment are numerous and their full discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter. We will limit ourselves to presenting a brief summary of the change that has taken place in the women fraternity as a result of their political, educational and economic empowerment and its effects. In politics, *The World's Women 2010* notes that even though there is still inadequate representation of women in top decision-making positions both in the public and private sectors

globally, the trend is on the rise as indicated in 1995, 1999 and 2009 situations as more and more women are visibly getting involved outside the domestic realm.¹⁴⁴

On the Kenya's 2012 situation, for instance, there were 22 women members of parliament 6 of which were nominated making about 10 percent of the total number; 12 Cabinet Ministers out of 42 and 52 assistant ministers; 7 Permanent Secretaries out of 44.¹⁴⁵ The general election in March 2013 had more women than ever before involved politically with a women's representative position from each one of the 47 counties sitting in parliament and with 16 directly elected women into the National Assembly. 82 women were elected as Ward Representatives out of 1450 seats. Although no women were elected as Governors or Senators, 6 were elected as Deputy Governors. Women took 6 slots as Cabinet Secretaries out of 18 spaces, at least meeting the minimum requirement of a third rule in government appointments.¹⁴⁶ Generally, there is tremendous improvement in governance and leadership as far as women are concerned.

Greatest gains are perhaps witnessed in the education sector. The World Bank educational statistics had already indicated a closing up of gender gaps in school enrolment for boys and girls in most African countries from 1990 to 2000 with higher growth rates for girls.¹⁴⁷ Currently, there is reported higher and rising enrolment rate

¹⁴⁴ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* (New York: United Nations, 2010, accessed January 4, 2016, http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW_full%report_color.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Development Programme – Kenya, *Report on the Regional Dialogue on Women's Political Leadership 2012*, accessed January 4, 2016, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/kenya/docs/Democratic%20Governance/UNDP%20champion%20womens%20leadership%20booklet3%20%281%29.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ See details in Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya, *Key Gains and Challenges: A Gender Audit of Kenya's 2013 Election Process*, 2013, accessed February 5, 2016. <https://www.ndi.org/files/Kenya-Gender-Audit-2013-Electoral-Process.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ World Bank, *Africa Development Indicators 2007*. (Washington D.C., 2008).

for girls compared to a low and declining rate for boys between 2013 and 2014. Retention rates for girls in primary school stands at 96.7 percent compared to 89.9 percent for boys. For Kenya Certificate of Primary Education, girl candidates between 2013 and 2014 increased by 5.8 percent while boys candidature rose by 4.1 percent.

For the secondary school situation, enrolment rate for girls also increased by 10 percent as boys' rate grew by 6.6 percent between 2013 and 2014. For Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education candidature, female candidates increased by 10 percent as male increased by 6.5 percent from 2013 to 2014. Even though majority of students who scored A- and above were male students, for those who scored C+ and above, female students increased by 25.1 percent as male candidates increased by only 19.0 percent. This great improvement follows deliberate efforts and special programs by the government of Kenya and other organization to ensure expansion of girls' opportunities. Two examples of these programs are the introduction of Free Primary Education launched in 2003. This required opportunities to be provided for every child to acquire primary education.¹⁴⁸ Although this applied to all children of Kenya, its effects on girl's education was profound. After its introduction the same year's enrolment rose to 99 percent with that of boys reaching 97 percent as girls' enrolment stood at 102 percent.¹⁴⁹ The second example pertains to efforts to ensure that girls remain in school throughout. Having realized that girls' education is

¹⁴⁸ See Government of the Republic of Kenya, "Development of Education: National Report" (Ministry of Education, November 2008), accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/kenya_NR08.pdf.

¹⁴⁹ Government of the Republic of Kenya "Sessional Paper No. _ of 2004 - A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research" (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, October 2004), accessed January 28, 2016, <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Kenya/Kenya%20Policy%20Framework%20Education%20Training.pdf>.

greatly hampered during their menstruation cycles, the government and non-government organizations committed themselves to provide sanitary pads to needy girls. To keep them in school and to protect them from child-marriages in the communities that tend to marry them off as soon as they signal their maturity by commencement of menstruation.¹⁵⁰

Gender Disparities in favor of male students are more serious at the university level. It is however clear from available statistics that the growth enrolment rate for females is higher than that of males from 2013/14 to 2014/15 academic years standing at 24.9 against 21.3 respectively. This trend was also similar in the previous academic year. It is important to note that the enrolment gaps are much narrower with no academic year recording differences of more than 10,000 in the public sector which previously recorded tens of thousands. The least gap was in 2012/13 with a difference of 24, 647 and the highest in 2014/15 academic year with 70, 976.¹⁵¹ Even though there are still more enrolments for males than females, growth rates are notably much higher for females than males at all levels of education.

Completion rates have always been low for females in all levels of education. However, the tertiary level in private universities may present a totally different picture. As the case is for Daystar University, there are more women than men graduating from both programs initially associated with women such as Education and Counseling Psychology and also those associated with men. For instance, the

¹⁵⁰ See UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* No. 7, (March 2001), accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf>. See also recommendations of the need for this from Stella Jerop Chebii, "Menstruation and Education: How a lack of sanitary towels reduces school attendance in Kenyan Slums," accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/27-31.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ See Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *Economic Survey 2015*.

school of Business and Economics that houses Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting, in Business Administration, Marketing, Purchasing and Logistics among others, the graduating class 2015 presented 91 males and 129 Female graduating students for the Bachelor's degree. In its various Master's programs, the school presented 52 Females and 23 males. The school of Communication, Languages and Performing Arts presented 170 females and 74 males for graduation.¹⁵²

Education expansion to women is directly related to their economic improvement. First of all, Education in Kenya has for a long time been the gateway to jobs and economic prosperity.¹⁵³ Their acquisition of education enables them to make informed decisions for their lives and families and enables them to access resources to contribute meaningful in national building. The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 gives the general performance of the world in terms of the gender situation. For Kenya, women employed outside the agricultural sector stood at 32 percent of the total number of all non-agricultural sector employees. 52 percent of women held financial accounts positions in banks and other institutions as men stood at 59 percent. 49 percent of firms have women participation in terms of ownership. For females and males aged 25 years and above, those who have attained primary level of education are 47 and 53 percent as secondary level stands at 25 and 31 percent respectively. For tertiary level, women PhD graduates form 30 percent as men form 70 percent.¹⁵⁴ Though the figures show low levels of women's participation in education, they are notably being increasingly empowered to rise to the highest level in education.

¹⁵² Daystar University, 37th Graduation Ceremony Programme, Saturday 27th June, 2015.

¹⁵³ Otiende et. al.

¹⁵⁴ See details in World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2015*, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR2015/cover.pdf>.

Apart from education expansion, various opportunities have been directed towards economic empowerment of women. African women have benefited from the contribution of the African Development Bank and International Labour Organization's promotion of women entrepreneurs specifically through creation of jobs for sustainable development.¹⁵⁵ The government of Kenya extends low interest loans to women and women groups to set up businesses for their economic wellbeing towards the nation's economic development such as the Women Enterprise Fund.¹⁵⁶ Currently also, a presidential directive issued in September 2013 requires 30 percent of tenders to go to women, youth and persons living with disabilities.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, women in Kenya are doing a lot for themselves at the grass-root level through welfare groups and joint small enterprises to pull their resources together and guarantee one another to acquire bank loans and to take care of their personal and family needs. An example of an institution doing very well in this area is the Kenya Women Finance Trust.¹⁵⁸ Even though, KWFT has been faulted in the operationalization of this fund on account of high interests and short periods of loan repayments¹⁵⁹, it remains the main financier for women and a handy partner of development with women groups, especially in rural areas.

¹⁵⁵ See details in Loise Stevenson and Annette St-Onge, *Support for Growth-oriented Women Entrepreneurs in Kenya* (International Labour Organization, 2005), accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/GOWE%20Kenya.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ See The Government of the Republic of Kenya, *Kenya Vision 2030: Second Medium Term Plan (2013-2017)*.

¹⁵⁷ The National Treasury, "Treasury Circular No. 14/2013", accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.ppoa.go.ke/images/downloads/circular/Treasury%20Circular.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ See details on genesis of KWFT trust and its operations in Kenya from RoseMarie-Rita Endeley and Rosetta Thomson, *Management of Credit Schemes*.

¹⁵⁹ See details of KWFT operations in Endeley and Thomson.

While there is still much to be done, it is fair to acknowledge that a lot has been done already and that women are not what they have been in terms of role and status at any time of their history in Kenya. To the degree that national development depended on the state of its women, Kenya's productivity boosted by women's participation as discussed above has also contributed the country's Gross Domestic Product. At the family level, educated and working women are now able to supplement their husband's income and make a contribution in meeting financial, emotional, psychological and physical needs in the family. Perhaps the African dictum associated with James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey of Ghana: *If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)* shows the immense benefits of exposing girls to education.¹⁶⁰ They are able to enjoy peace and pursue their own development as a result of the criminalization of much of the violence against them such as domestic violence, Female Genital Mutilation, and early marriages in Kenya.

Shope captures the general effects of benefits of women's empowerment to women and observes,

Education does much for a woman's status – in society, in the workplace, in the family. It enables women to take control of their lives and respond more effectively to opportunities. Not least, it puts wives on a more equal footing with their husbands, in making decisions about matters affecting their families. Education can also do much to eliminate the cultural and social barriers that prevent women from using opportunities.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ See John Kwami Esseboe Nyamidie, "African Proverb of the Month – September 1999," accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.afriprov.org/african-proverb-of-the-month/25-1999proverbs/146-sep1999.html>.

¹⁶¹ Gertrude Shope, "Liberation of the African Woman", 3.

Generally speaking, much as the political realm is not showing many gains, the educational and economic spheres have achieved a lot already for women. The long-term goal is intended to equip women to “overcome social prejudice, take control over their lives and assume a status and identity beyond child-bearing, thereby allowing them to participate more fully in the public life of their community.”¹⁶² Even though this has not been fully achieved, much transformation has already taken place. This empowerment is inevitably projected to every aspect of women’s lives including the family given the stakes that women hold as empowered wives, mothers, sisters and significant others.

In spite of the gains in the improvement of women welfare, the situation in the family, and particularly in marriage has deteriorated as discussed in chapter one. It is the position of this project that women’s empowerment has come with its own package of challenges to the family and that the church has not engaged this adequately. If the woman is “perhaps the most important person in society” and the pivot to all relationships,¹⁶³ changing her role, position and place in society to make her equal to her husband must impact the family and especially her relationship with her husband significantly. After this empowerment, are women still able to retain traditional character traits such as “modesty, compliance, pliability, and willingness to compromise” as Turaki has captured about the desired women traits?¹⁶⁴ Since theology must have a direct bearing to the contextual situations in which people live, we need to be sure first and foremost that, our marriage theology today, like any other

¹⁶² United Nations, *Women: Challenges to the Year 2000*, (New York. 1991), 28.

¹⁶³ John Mbiti, *Akamba Stories*, 32.

¹⁶⁴ Turaki, 115.

theology, is “reflective of our times, our culture, and our current concerns.”¹⁶⁵ The fact that there is a situation in marriage that was not experienced 50 years ago as established in the previous chapter, and that women’s empowerment has changed women in new ways that did not exist about the same period as established in this chapter has led to suggestions that it is the empowerment that causes the marital crisis.

3.4 Women’s Empowerment, Marital Disharmony and The Church’s Challenge

The church in the West and also in Africa has realized the obvious challenges that women’s empowerment causes to married couples and has associated the cause of marital problems to this empowerment posing the first challenge in the church’s approach. For instance, associating women’s empowerment with western feminism, Graham laments that the move in Britain “has succeeded in its aim to break up families and set women free from the bondage of marriage”. She also adds, “Many of our Members of Parliament, and indeed Cabinet Ministers, do not model marriage and traditional (no longer called Christian) family life themselves.”¹⁶⁶ Likewise, western evangelical voices propose that the deterioration of marriage and family are a direct consequence of women’s empowerment and the quest for gender equality. John Piper summarizes this view representatively:

The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of our maleness or femaleness. But this depreciation of male and female personhood is a great loss ... Confusion over the meaning of sexual personhood today is epidemic. The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relating on the basis

¹⁶⁵ Bevens, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Anne Graham, *Womanhood Revisited*, 273.

of abstract competencies. The consequence rather is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity.¹⁶⁷

From the African context, TAG interrogates the reason as to why women's empowerment caused marital conflict and notes the problem-causing shift:

“traditionally, a woman was financially dependent on her husband. But today a woman with a good education and job can buy whatever she wants. This financial independence can lead to family conflicts.”¹⁶⁸ Kamaara perhaps makes a valid observation to the association of women's empowerment and disharmony in that it empowers women alone without involving men causing the men to perceive themselves as social losers.¹⁶⁹ In this case, the outcome of the current approach in empowering women will fit into what Mugambi calls “the us-them syndrome” that leads to an incapacitating “winner-loser dichotomy.”¹⁷⁰

What these voices emphasize is that current gender approaches are divisive in nature, and cannot be successful in building strong social relationships in the family. While there may be successful achievements to be celebrated in the public domain, the family situation – particularly the relationship between men and women in marriage is characterized of disharmony because marriage brings together male and female the closest compared to all other social institutions. Moja urges that this

¹⁶⁷ John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical manhood and womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crosswa Books, 1991), 33.

¹⁶⁸ This was the third Theological Advisory Group project studying the challenges of marriage and the family in Kenya. See details from Theological Advisory Group (TAG), 208.

¹⁶⁹ Eunice K. Kamaara, “Gender Empowerment in Africa”.

¹⁷⁰ J. N. K. Mugambi, “Preface” *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War*, (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1995).

matter be approached as basically, “a gender issue, i.e. an issue about relationships between people of different sexes” and that “in addressing those needs men and women must all be involved.”¹⁷¹ The success of women’s empowerment, therefore, needs to be measured, not in terms of economic or political gains alone, but in terms of the promotion of harmonious relationships. These relationships are especially tested in marriage as the most basic unit of society. If there is disturbance here, the whole society will be built on a failing foundation.

All in all, women’s empowerment is being blamed by the church for diverse marriage challenges that destroy marriage. The question to ask is, after this discovery, how are the conflicts addressed, and are they addressed constructively? Without this step, this could lead to the reason why, as Wanjohi’s points out “a lot of men, even educated ones, loathe marrying educated women.”¹⁷² Somebody needs to ask why women’s empowerment is causing these challenges and keep asking “why” until the true picture is understood. If the reasons are not known, even the formation of organizations like the Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH) to address the violence that characterized the contemporary American Christian family¹⁷³ will not understand what it is dealing with. Only after understanding the reasons will the church be able to give leadership in marriage and family in the wake of women’s empowerment. Indeed, the close association of marital failure and women’s empowerment and the suggestion that it is against God’s design for people makes it

¹⁷¹ Tebogo Moja, “Response to Shope’s Paper,” in *Women in Africa*, Pamphlet No. 318 of Institute For Reformational Studies, eds., Gertrud Shope, Denise Ackermann, Tebogo Moja, & H. A. Kamkhwani (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1984), 11.

¹⁷² Gerald J. Wanjohi, “African Marriage, Past and Present,” in *Social and Religious Concerns of East Africa: A Wajibu Anthology*, eds., Gerald Wanjohi and G. Wakuraya Wanjohi, (Nairobi: Wajibu: A Journal of Social and Religious Concerns, 2005), 42.

¹⁷³ See Kroeger et. al., *Beyond Abuse*.

automatically incompatible with Christianity. This assumed incompatibility incapacitates the church in addressing the negative effects of women's empowerment beyond a direct and indirect rejection of the same.

Asking why women's empowerment is approached in this manner leads to a more foundational challenge: Most of secular development engagements leave out religious and spiritual aspects of people's lives – the very core of any people. For instance, even though Plan International's 2012 research in Kenya "found that parents and guardians presented a combination of cultural, religious and economic arguments to justify child marriage"¹⁷⁴, the researchers went ahead to eclipse religious elements totally in the recommendation section to the various stake holders. To the degree that the challenges are religiously or culturally caused, to the same degree would the challenge not to be addressed successfully if these aspects are not included in the solutions. It follows that successful efforts to alleviate discrimination against women cannot be fully and successfully undertaken by governments or legislation enforcements that downplay or ignore the religious and cultural bearing to the challenge. The gaps at the public level can go unnoticed, probably for a long time. But at the domestic level where people's religious beliefs and cultural positions determine how life is lived by male and female, the inadequacies show much more clearly.

Development organs dealing with development are not necessarily primarily concerned with family issues, but only interested in them if they hinder the success of

¹⁷⁴ Plan International, "Submission to the Report of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Preventing and Eliminating Child, Early and Forced Marriage" in Introduction number 9, (Geneva: Plan International, December 2013), accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ForcedMarriage/NGO/PlanInternational2.pdf>.

the agenda.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, anything that touches on marriage and society touches on God; and places the church and scripture at the center in the discussion much more than the government and non-government organizations. Theology therefore needs to play her role and foresee the negative effects of change, and address them constructively to protect the family from disintegration. If this context is not addressed by the church in her marriage theology, there will be a gap between theology and practice. When empowerment of women is identified to be the cause of the problem of marriage, the solution is quickly assumed to be basically the reversal, or at least the annulment of that empowerment. But this cannot be an option after the empowerment tremendous effects that women's empowerment has caused within such a short period of time ; and especially because this empowerment can be defended on Christian grounds in the principles of justice, equity and fairness. There needs to be a more helpful way of understanding the nature of the marital challenge.

Nyaundi correctly observes that the family in Africa is going through rapid social change causing much disorientation and resulting deviant behavior.¹⁷⁶ It may be that the escalating, and new forms of marital violence, increase in alternatives to formal marriage, and rise in divorce and separation discussed in chapter two are as a result of husbands and wives being caught up in currents and undercurrents of social change they are ill equipped to cope with. As a class of persons, women have been drastically changed in terms of their status and role and a corresponding shift needs to be expected in terms of social values, networks and structures of the society for the

¹⁷⁵ Severine Deneulin, and Masooda Bano, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (London: Zed Books, 2009).

¹⁷⁶ Nehemiah Nyaundi, "The Contemporary African Family in the Light of Rapid Social Change Theory," in N. W. Ndungu, and P. N. Mwaura, *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005).

social system to develop a new social equilibrium. Marital hiccups might as well be a strong signal that some of the elements did not respond to this shift in women's lives.

Turaki's theory of Social Systems gives valuable insight for understanding the functioning of society. The theory holds that social systems balance on four interrelated variables: its values and structures on the horizontal axis balancing with the social networks and persons on the vertical axis to give social equilibrium. He observes that when change is initiated in any of the four variables, it leads to ripple-action affect disturbing all the others until a new social equilibrium is located. If this does not happen, social hiccups will soon develop as the system strains against this inevitable change.¹⁷⁷ It is possible that the marital breakdown is an expression of the social disorientation in the disturbance of the social equilibrium occasioned by women's empowerment, and that theology much act to restore social order and bring about a new and better equilibrium.

3.5. Conclusion

The role and status of women in Africa have undergone a major shift as a result of their ongoing empowerment. Unfortunately, this shift is closely associated with the new developments of disharmony in marriage relationships. Although this project cannot as yet assign a causal relationship as some have done, it nevertheless acknowledges that women's empowerment has caused a social dis-order serious enough to disturb marriage. Just the way secular organs are limited in regulating harmony in marriage, the same way are they also limited in addressing social

¹⁷⁷ Yusufu Turaki, "Practical Preparations of Religious Bodies Toward Peaceful Elections 2014," accessed January 4, 2016, www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_15723-1442-1-30.pdf?150428164845.

challenges emanating from women's empowerment that impacts marriage negatively. The onus remains with the church and theology to stabilize marriage and fortify it against the disorientation of change in people's lives.

There is need for deliberate theological efforts to move from *what* causes marital challenges, thought to have been answered as women's empowerment; to *why* this empowerment causes these kinds of challenges. The reasons established from this second question will be followed up by further *whys* in order to establish the root causes. It is these 'root causes' that should be wrestled with by the church and reflected in its instructional formulation to guide its people live. For it may be that the marital crisis is caused by other factors other than empowering of women as it has been assumed before. But then even if it were so, it is still the responsibility of the church to put marriage back on track through the teaching and application of the Word of God. An audit needs to be conducted on marriage instruction taught by the church and lived out by married couples as well as the underlying theology that produces this instruction. The actual situation in the field will demonstrate how the cultural shift and its implications are addressed by the Evangelical church in its formulation of marital teachings for couples. This will be established by relating the pastoral teachings on marriage and the experiences of wives and their husbands in Mikuyuni sub-location in Makueni County as presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

MARITAL INSTRUCTIONS AND COUPLES' EXPERIENCES

4.0. Introduction

The overall goal of this dissertation was to study the deteriorating state of marriage in church and society in spite of much teaching by the church. In the previous chapter, the study has established that the role and place of women in the society has changed significantly alongside the deterioration of marriage and raised the question whether or not this situation is being addressed in the marital instruction of the church. To seek answers to this question, the researcher went to the field to find out the key elements of the church's marriage instruction as well as the needs and challenges of empowered wives and their husbands in Mikuyuni Sub-location of Makueni County, in order to determine the relationship between the two. This chapter presents the results of the interviews conducted on pastors and married couples mainly, supplemented by the results obtained from the examination of marriage instructional materials for women and participant observation of the researcher of various marriage-related meetings. We will first present a brief description of the area and the results from pastors' interviews. These will be followed by the findings from the examination of women's instructional materials together with the general content and emphasis of meetings observed. These will be followed by the results from wives and husbands' interviews. In conclusion, the relationship between pastoral teachings on marriage and the experiences of married couples will be drawn to shed light on the nature of the challenge. The results show

that the marital instruction hardly resonates with the marital needs and challenges empowered women and their husbands encounter today; and that couples make choose their own ways on how to address their challenges in their own way.

4.1 A Brief Description of Mikuyuni Sub-location

Mikuyuni Sub-location is in Kibwezi Sub-County of the Makueni County. The resident population of the entire County composed of the Akamba mainly and other people from other communities was 922,183 persons according to 2012 population estimates.¹⁷⁸ According to the 2009 population census, the Kamba people were ranked the fifth most populous after Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, and Luo with a population of 3,893,157. This was the situation when Kenya stood at a population of 38,610,097 people.¹⁷⁹ The sub-location is generally underdeveloped; a reality attributed by the local leadership to “primitive traditions”, high levels of illiteracy, “poor understanding of salvation” and the presence of strong ancestral altars in the area.¹⁸⁰ The neighboring sub-locations in the larger Kikumbulyu South Location are Mbui Nzau, Kalungu, and Ngandani. In terms of infrastructure and population, Mikuyuni leads them all by the virtue of Kibwezi town being located in Mikuyuni. However, in terms of education, it comes second to Ngandani which has more university students.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ See Government of the Republic of Kenya, *Makueni County: First County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017* (August 2013), accessed, July 15, 2016, [www.kenyampya.com/userfiles/MakueniCIDPsept2013\(1\).pdf](http://www.kenyampya.com/userfiles/MakueniCIDPsept2013(1).pdf).

¹⁷⁹ See Government of the Republic of Kenya, *2009 Population and Housing Census Results* (August 2010), accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/36670466/Kenya-Population-and-Housing-Census-PDF>.

¹⁸⁰ See Catherine Nzyoki, “Mikuyuni Sub-Location Research Paper on ‘Development’” (Current Assistant Chief’s unpublished report submitted to the Chief, Kikumbulyu Location).

¹⁸¹ Wambua Kiswii (The Area Member of County Assembly), interview by author, Kibwezi town, March 30, 2016.

Mikuyuni Sub-location is served by four main A.I.C churches. The pastors currently in charge of these churches were all interviewed. The area also has three resident pastors who have served in at least one of the four mentioned churches at one time but now are posted in other A.I.C Churches outside the sub-location. These were also interviewed because they are still ministers of the gospel to the region. The area has four other evangelical churches whose pastors at one time served with the A.I.C Church, and the pastors of two of these churches were interviewed. Two women ministers who have served the women ministry alongside their husbands as lay co-pastors, and who have had oversight responsibilities in women's Christian ministry were also interviewed. Two female pastors occupied the position of a senior pastor in their churches while the others served under other male pastors.

The pastors were named from the first to the last as P1 up to P11. Their details are presented in appendix 3 in their various categories in terms of gender, age, income, education, marriage and ministry experience, type of marriage and number of children. Out of the 11 pastors interviewed, six were men and five were women. Majority of the pastors, that is 90.9% , went as far as primary school completion grade in formal education before pastoral training. All the pastors were married, with marriage experience ranging from 6 to 66 years. 63.6% of them are fairly youthful with an age of 50 years and below. At the time of the interview, one pastor had separated from his wife for at least three years as a result of marital conflicts.

All the pastors had church weddings but three had had customary marriages initially before solemnizing their marriages in church. As for ministry experience, six of them had between 10 and 15 years while five of them had sixteen years and above.

The majority of pastors, that is 7 out of the eleven earned monthly salaries below the minimum wage level set by the government at the time of Ksh. 5844.20.¹⁸² This is equivalent to a monthly income of \$58.44 in current average exchange rate of Ksh. 100 for a dollar.

All the interviews with the pastors were recorded on voice recorder after permission was obtained from them and were transcribed by the researcher word by word for each one of the pastors. A lot of information was collected from which the researcher gathered the relevant data on the situation of marriage today. Coding process was done as repeating ideas were highlighted and grouped together under the themes they represented indicating the source of each idea. Then the themes were analyzed in their relationship and in turn grouped together to form theoretical constructions that the researcher used to make the conclusions in this report. The recurring ideas, themes and constructs are presented separately to provide the bases for the conclusions, and to prevent interruption of the flow of this report. The study is qualitative and the data is collected and analyzed through interaction with thick narrative though at times percentages are given where the picture they present is deemed critical for the study. Participant observation was done in weddings, bridal showers and the AIC ladies' annual conference to find out the marital instruction disseminated in these forums. The notes for these are presented separately on appendix 8.

¹⁸² Figures from the Government are scarce but in Labor Day celebrations of May 1 2015, the president announced a 12% rise of the minimum level which was proposed to bring it to 10,954.70 for Nairobi and for rural areas to 5844.20. See more details at "Mywage," Wage Indicator Foundation, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.mywage.org/kenya/home/salary/minimum-wage>.

Data was also collected from couples to find out the actual state of marriage as experienced by wives and husbands from Mikuyuni basically, including those who had moved to cities like Machakos or Nairobi for work, so as to cut across different categories of spouses. The data was collected from three sets of interviews. The researcher first made personal contact with wives and interviewed them individually to have the experiences of today's empowered woman in her marriage. Then follow-up was made with the husbands to these women also individually to have the men's perspective of their experiences in marriage as well. Not all the husbands were accessible. One of them worked in Western part of Kenya and could not be easily reached. Three of them declined permission to participate bringing the total number to 16 instead of 20. This deficit did not affect the study significantly because the saturation point of the interview was reached by the 12th interview. Nevertheless, the researcher interviewed the rest even though they did not give any additional information. Whenever a proportion of wives will be given, it will be against 20 while the husbands' will be out of 16. The researcher intended to record the interviews with the spouses on voice recorder as it was with the pastors. However, the first three contacts made preferred not to be recorded due to the sensitivity of the discussion and the researcher decided to carry out all of them without recording. The researcher also conducted a five-woman focus group centering on a set of seven questions presented in appendix 2.

4.2 Pastors' Interview Results

From the pastors' responses, unprecedented marital disharmony in Mikuyuni sub-location was evident. Marital challenges were commonly cited in various forms such as domestic violence, infidelity, come-we-stay unions, polygyny, temporary

separation and divorce. For the perceived root cause of the marital crisis, a pie chart best represents the responses and their visibility rate. A total of 38 responses were reported falling into 8 repeating ideas with their corresponding weight as presented in the figure below.

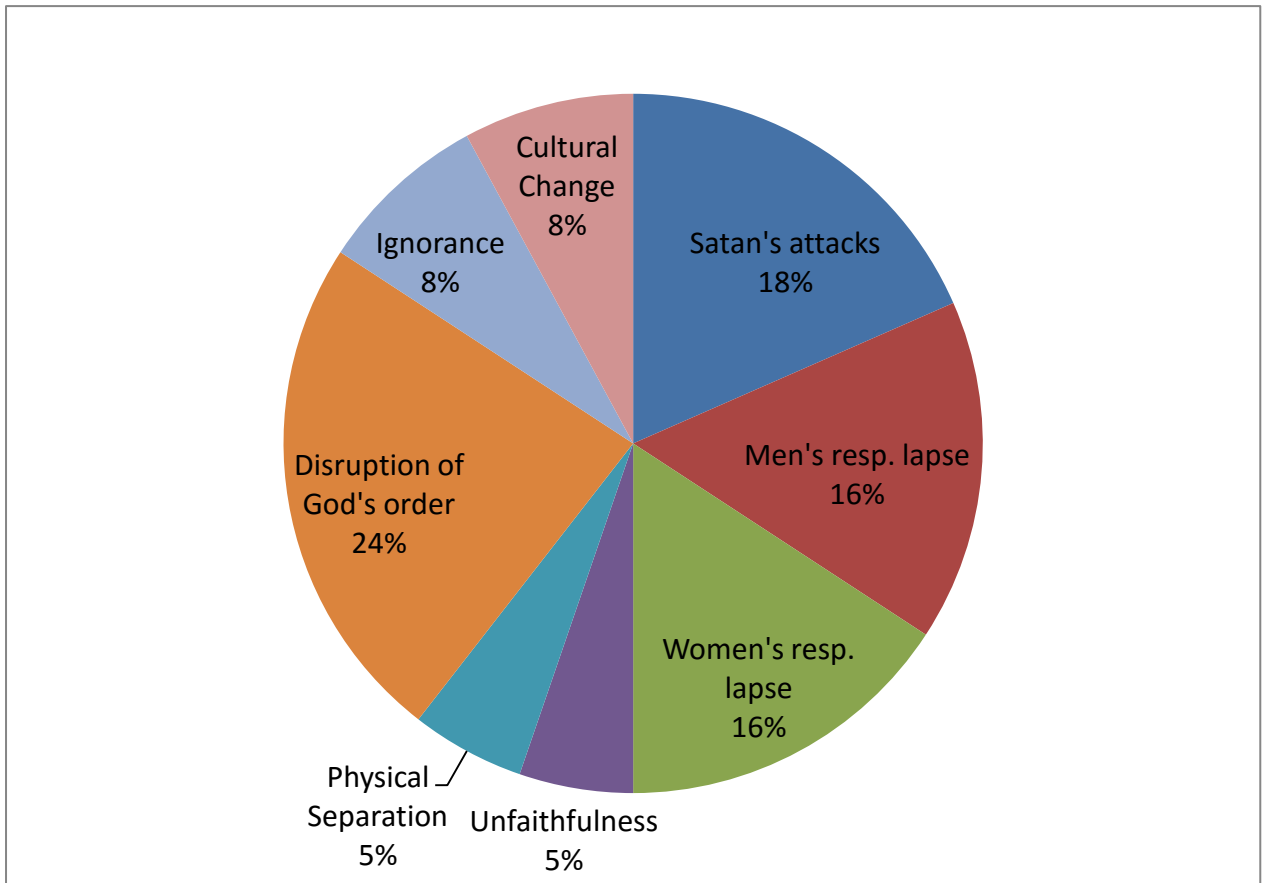


Fig. 1: Root causes of marital crisis and their repeating weight

The most recurrent causes of marital disruption were reported as Satan's attacks on marriages as well as the disruption of God's order of husbands' leadership and wives' submission. One pastor for instance explained why the spiritual attacks:

You know Satan is at work day and night and what we need to know first is that the church begins at home – where there is the husband, the wife and children. That is the foundation of the church ... If the family

is good, strong, and committed, you know when we come to church we will come up with a strong church. But because Satan does not want the church to be strong, he targets the home to destroy the church.¹⁸³

The third rated cause was that both wives and husbands were neglecting their roles and responsibilities. Wives were said to have become too busy to attend to their domestic roles of caring for their families and husbands. Husbands likewise were said to be leaving their responsibilities to be performed by their wives. The pastors also felt that when a woman is more empowered than her husband in a marriage relationship, that marriage usually failed. One of the women pastors gave her personal struggle when her husband resigned and lost income as she was working and earning. She said, “It is very easy for marriage to be destroyed ... It was such a trial. And God helped me through that season. It is a time like that which can push a man to commit suicide.”¹⁸⁴ Other relational reasons associated with failure of marriage were the geographical separation of husbands and wives; unfaithfulness, ignorance and cultural change.

Nevertheless, many of the repeating ideas raised as causes were more of expressions of the disharmony rather than actual causes, and their further interrogation pointed towards cultural disruption though it was less visible among the causes. Neglect of roles by husbands and wives; what was perceived as disruption of God’s order; the ease with which Satan was attacking marriages; separation; ignorance; and unfaithfulness could be by-products of cultural change. Under traditional cultural structures, husbands worked outside the home to provide for the family while their wives organized their homes in terms of domestic responsibilities.

¹⁸³ P1, interview by author, Kibwezi town, March 10, 2016

¹⁸⁴ P2, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, March 10, 2016

With women operating in the domestic realm, husbands used to have their wives around them attending to them and their needs. Moreover, culture understood that wives were inferior to their husbands in power and authority requiring their obedience as everything in the family, including the wife, was owned by the husband. Women are no longer where they used to be. They can now own money, property and anything they wish and acquire education to the level they desire just like their male counterparts. This shift was seen to disrupt relationships in marriage as one of the pastors describes: “Women have been taught especially this time high things like pursuit of education ... Their standards are higher compared to where they were 20 years ago. And so perhaps the man in his mind wants to live with his wife the way he saw his father living with his mother ... He forgets that the wife is not in the class of his mother.”¹⁸⁵ Again, in the traditional situation, women were not necessarily happy in their marriages, but they were expected by the structures to persevere and keep their marriages which could not be broken. One of them substantiated,

There were family laws that would be binding to the wives because they got married and were told that they were bought. And so having been bought she had no authority to do anything whatsoever. She had to obey in suffering or in problems to live in that marriage. Still community ethics were binding so that people know their customs as Akamba and she had to suffer in marriage but be humble and obedient.¹⁸⁶

To address the cultural disruption, the church responded in ways characterized by organizational, instructional and internal weaknesses. First, at the organizational level, couples ministry does not seem to be a priority in the churches; some of the churches do not have active ministry to couples. Those that have, ministry is in form

¹⁸⁵ P3, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, March 10, 2016

¹⁸⁶ P7, interview by author, Kibwezi town, March 11, 2016

of meetings that take place at most twice in a year and at times not at all because of many church programs. The pastor whose wife had deserted him for over three years even replaced the couples' meetings with "deliverance services the third Sunday of the month."¹⁸⁷ However, there are at least separate meetings for men and women at least one Sunday in a month totaling to twelve meetings in a year. At the regional levels, the churches hold three-day conferences for men and women again separately once a year in the month of August. So, apart from the scarcity of forums to minister adequately to the couples, pastoral ministry seems to cultivate more and more the disunity in the couples rather than unity through their separation approaches worsening an already bad situation.

When meetings took place, the men were not available even though they were the leaders in the families at which the pastors generally expressed concern and frustration. For instance, P7 explained,

There are things you call a man to tell him but they can't see what you are calling them for. They can say, I have the experience of 20 years in marriage and we are experienced so there is nothing to be taught about it. But you have some things that can help their marriages but they won't come. He runs his marriage by his laws in his authority, but they cannot help his marriage.¹⁸⁸

Secondly, the pastors' teachings demonstrated instructional weaknesses. The disruption caused by women's empowerment and the push for gender equality was perceived to be the causes of marital disharmony so that instruction was directed specifically to address these. The pastors explained that husbands were superior to their wives according to the Bible and they were required to instill obedience in their exercise of non-compromising authority. On the other hand, the pastors required

¹⁸⁷ P9, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, March 11, 2016

¹⁸⁸ P7.

wives to submit to the husbands' authority and decisions at all times. One pastor for instance explained his approach,

For husbands, he is told that ... he is the head of the family because he has been called the head by the Bible. And he needs to be the manager of his home and should not lose that authority and responsibility of his. It does not matter if you are not educated, or you have a small body size, or however you are, you need to sit on your seat as a man to be able to reject anything that you see is not moving well and say, 'I don't want this kind of thing in this home of mine.' This is because you are the owner of the home. If it is rebuking, he does so completely.¹⁸⁹

Secondly, apart from separating spouses' meetings, the pastors prescribed a clear statement of separate roles and responsibilities to husbands and wives to address the responsibility challenge. Wives were assigned specific and practical day to day duties such as washing clothes, spreading the bed, cooking, caring for the husband, children, the farm, cattle, looking for food, warming the husband's water for bathing, comforting him, giving him company, bringing up children and bathing them, to highlight a few. Husbands were assigned positional responsibilities as providers, priests, and protectors of their families. Eventually, while husband's responsibilities tended to pertain to things to *be*, those for wives had to do with things to *do*. Moreover, women's roles were more specific and elaborate than the men's that tended to be general.

On whether there should be sharing of duties for husbands and wives, pastors' responses demonstrated polarity casting a progressive view on one side, and a conservative view on the other with a minority middle ground. Generally speaking, women pastors were more inclined to have co-operation of husband and wives in domestic responsibilities while men pastors were opposed to it, or allowed it under

¹⁸⁹ p1.

conditions. The first category argued that marriage is founded on love and unity, not on roles or positions and a loving husband is expected to help his wife with the many duties. One pastor explained that “men ought to help” because “Abraham is the one who washed the feet of the visitors and cooked the meat for them and Sarah prepared the *chapattis*.”¹⁹⁰ Notably, 66.7% of the pastors who argued for husbands helping wives were ladies.

The category that maintained the conservative view also provided scriptural grounds for rejection of sharing of responsibilities arguing that duty lines at home should be strictly observed by husbands and wives. One pastor for instance said, “I guess God must have had a reason creating a man and creating a helper for him. Because God did not say that they help each other. He created the woman for the man to be his helper in various things.”¹⁹¹ Majority in this category were notably men pastors.

The last category struck a middle ground seeing the need for husbands to help their wives in these responsibilities, but attached conditions to it, demonstrating clearly that they were in opposition of radical feminism. One explained: “A man can wash clothes if approached well and respectfully. It should not be demanded or commanded authoritatively. A man can be told, ‘Baba so and so, please wash for me those clothes as I attend to this other thing.’ And let the clothes be already soaked in water meaning that the wife was on the process of washing them.”¹⁹² Another

¹⁹⁰ P11, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, March 12, 2016

¹⁹¹ P4.

¹⁹² P9.

explained that it should be done out of the man's own volition otherwise it would be demeaning. He explained,

The husband should help the wife in the home, but it should not be like a law like 'you chop the onion I will do the vegetables' or 'I have come back tired, you rise up and cook'. So it is like being forced. That in itself finishes a man because you know he was created to lead. And what you are doing is that you are intimidating him and lowering him to the floor.¹⁹³

Domestic responsibilities were clearly associated with inferiority and when a man is required to do domestic chores it is an onslaught to his manhood. All the pastors who had this position were all men representing a deliberate theological inculcation of distinctive dichotomy rather than co-operation. When it came to measures of addressing the challenge of the marital crisis, spiritual rather than relational solutions were emphasized. They recommended that a life of prayer and the fear of God on the part of the couples are the secret to working marriages especially, the role and salvation of the wife as well as her wisdom because, "a wise woman builds her own house but the foolish one pulls it down with her own hands."¹⁹⁴ The role of the husband and his spiritual standing were largely eclipsed as determinants for building or destroying marriage relationships. The pastors also stressed the fact that marriage is a permanent relationship and that God hates divorce. This spiritual rather than relational approach was used in marriage ministry perhaps responding to Satan's attacks and disruption of God's order in the family as causes of marital problems as noted above.

¹⁹³ P7.

¹⁹⁴ P9.

Relational factors such as love, commitment, and sharing were not developed significantly to promote marital relationships. It seems like marriage was understood more as a spiritual union rather than a primarily relational one. Even though, pastors who saw the need for sexual relations, saw this as duties or roles of the spouses whose essence was simply to prevent immorality not to cultivate a rich relationship. One pastor observed, “But when you look at Paul’s epistles you see him advising a lot about marriage and actually pinpoints where marriage should be located, because marriage is about intimacy ... simply because of sexual immorality.”¹⁹⁵ Another one said, “This is because this intimacy is like the greatest thing in marriage which ought to bring them together. So without this, the marriage has challenges.”¹⁹⁶ But with all these teachings, marital challenges do not relent after these teachings and guidelines, and if anything, the pastors said they are on the increase.

The greatest problem seemed to lie in the pastors’ understanding, or misunderstanding of women’s empowerment and gender equality. The majority of pastors (81.8%) held that gender equality and women’s empowerment are not biblical, and that they were secular movements to destroy marriage, the church and society. While the pastors relatively demonstrated fairly good understanding of the essence of women’s empowerment in terms of giving women access to education or employment and other opportunities, this did not follow with gender equality. Equality was dismissed as more unbiblical citing that God in the bible subjected women to men. Only a minority of pastors, that is 27.3%, demonstrated the understanding that gender equality as basically seeking equal treatment of men and women without

¹⁹⁵ P4, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, March 11, 2016

¹⁹⁶ P7.

discrimination on gender basis. For the rest of the pastors, it seemed like it was rejected even before it was understood. For them, women's empowerment and gender equality was simply worldly feminism that should be rejected. The impression created was that it was only when an empowered woman is properly saved and follows what the bible says about the inferiority of wives that her marriage can stand. One Pastor said, "But if she gets educated, and gets money and power but knows that the Bible calls her a woman who needs to submit to a man, she has been called a weak vessel and needs to know this. If she knows this and understands it, no matter how much education she has, there will be a lot of peace."¹⁹⁷

The pastors also enforced the culturally subordinated place of the wife in their teachings and insisted that women's empowerment should be kept outside the home. This posed serious challenges in the new changes, especially when a woman is the one earning an income. She does not necessarily need to do anything wrong: her empowerment itself was enough cause of trouble. One pastor explained why:

Many times, the person who has money is the financial advisor and it may come to the point that instead of advising, you have instead given instructions. And in it, you become the lord in the home. That might not have been in your mind and you were just advising on how we should use money. You must be the advisor because you are the one holding the economy ... And if it comes like this to the husband, it occurs to him that he is now being instructed by the wife. And if he looks for the source of his problem with his wife, the answer comes instantly – because she has money. So he may seek to have you sacked from your job, or leave you altogether to marry a woman that has no money.¹⁹⁸

What this reveals is that the struggles that men and women face in marriage are relational and having to do with the exercise of power. Disorientation to both

¹⁹⁷ P1.

¹⁹⁸ P7.

wives and husbands seems to have set in with the new situation of women's empowerment and especially where the women are more empowered than their husbands.

The political-relational problem is not only confined to the marriage realm; it is largely ecclesial. The fact that the women pastors were having different perspectives on some aspects of the church's teachings was indicative of dissatisfaction in those teachings. These differences are also indications of a deeper theological problem that subordinated women to men in the church. One pastor lamented,

But we ladies in our AIC churches have never had powers to come up with anything. Policies are formulated up there and brought to us to receive ... It is only of late that things are changing ... And for sure things are changing. Those years we are talking about by the time I got married, a woman who has gone for pastoral training could not be recognized as a pastor. They did not even have a name for her ... they did not know what to call her and what her role was.¹⁹⁹

Another pastor explained how the church developed its theological position on exclusion of women from power in the church. She reasoned,

The Bible is read to discriminate against women. There is a place that is written that a woman should not speak before people, and if she has any question, she should ask her husband at home. I don't know whether this is the verse that was being used or how it was approached ... I don't know why The Supreme Council did not have women ... If they have not joined recently, it has not had even one woman ... Yet women are even the ones that support the church.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ P3.

²⁰⁰ P5, Interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, March 11, 2016

Evidently, the church tradition worked closely with the cultural environment and led to ideologies which took a central place in the formation of the people's vernacular theology of inequality in marriage that generally devalues women. This vernacular theology was particularly evident in the content and emphases of instructional materials and different forums to which we now turn.

4.3 Instructional Materials and Marriage-related Forums

A sample of materials developed for women training in marriage enforce cultural and theological subordination of women and confine them to domestic responsibilities. In 1977, the Africa Inland Church developed a book adapted from Moody Bible Institute Correspondence School for instructing the Christian home. The book divides the material into three sections focusing on the married individual as a person; as a partner; and as a parent. The teaching is read directly to today's situation without any contextual background from Ephesians or other passages that have been raised; and effectively no contextual differences between the West and Africa. Words like the husband being "the head of the wife", "the leader of his family" among many others carry with them African cultural connotations which may not have been present in the western cultural context. The same applies to "submission of women", "obedience to husbands" and their being "a willing worker at home". The emphasis on individual roles and responsibilities is evidently originating a from Western individualistic worldview, and finds its way into marriage teaching in Africa in a subtle manner.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Africa Inland Church Department of Christian Education, *Biblical Foundations for a Christian Home* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1977).

An examination of hymns and songs and other training materials reflects this subjection of women in the oral theology. Generally speaking, the African Inland Church is Presbyterian in practice and evangelical by doctrine, and enforces a western theology by the use of a western oriented hymn book that “contains hymns, songs and choruses translated from English and American hymnals”²⁰². For instance, a study book for women fellowship on 2 John on sale in women’s annual convention of 2015 has placed two songs on the first pages of the book. The second song in the booklet cited above is titled “Wimbo Rasmi wa Ushirika wa Wake Wakristo” (that is, The Official Song of the Christian Women’s Fellowship). This song opens with the declaration that whoever finds a wife finds a good thing from God and proceeds to urge women to do all things to the glory of God whether by deed or words in stanza one. In stanza two, the song says that the duty of a woman is to obey her husband and to please him, to love his children so that the word of God may not be maligned. Stanza three states that a good wife is a crown to her husband and the husband is respected, contrasting this woman to the one who brings shame to rottenness in his bones. Stanza three continues that it is better to dwell on the roof than to live in the house of a nagging wife, better to eat vegetables with love than the best with hatred.²⁰³ Truly the song is deeply spiritual, entirely making biblical quotations from Col. 3:17, Prov. 18:22, Titus 2:4, Prov. 12:4, Prov. 21:9, and Prov. 15:17. Nevertheless, it gives a limiting role of women in terms of duty to her husband and children. Owing to its “extremely patrilineal and patrilocal” nature²⁰⁴ and without a strong foundation on God, the Akamba theology centralizes and organizes its

²⁰² Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology*, 18.

²⁰³ Africa Inland Church – Idara ya Elimu ya Kikristo, *Mama Mteule* (Nairobi: Maturity Publications, nod), 5.

²⁰⁴ Ndeti Kivuto, 68.

theology of womanhood with her husband and children at the center rather than the *Theos*, her creator. Duty to God is conspicuously missing but the understanding perhaps is that she is supposed to serve God in these duties. It is expected that God would also be interested in women's service today in exercising their gifts and competencies in influencing their churches, cities, counties, even states. So service in these areas today is held suspect as outside the scope that God has ordained for the woman. Besides, the song has no place for the Christian woman who is not yet married, or who is no longer married, or a widow. It appears to be a song behind a theology that edges out women from church leadership and assigns for them a subordinate role to their husbands in the family.

Also, the first song is entitled "Atakaporudi tena Yesu" (When Jesus Will Come Back). The song is spiritually provocative and eschatological, calling upon the singer to examine her life in the light of the second coming of Jesus. Justice and righteousness in community and social relationships are not immediately recognized as critical character marks of salvation nor are they emphasized as useful.

From the meetings observed, several aspects were emphasized. The importance of marriage was underscored as God's idea and a demonstration of one's spiritual and maturity. Separation of roles and women's submission were emphasized. Men were charged to prove their love for their wives by the way Christ loved the church sacrificially. Women were charged with submission to their husbands closely tied to superiority of husbands and inferiority of wives. Wives were encouraged to desist from "civilization" and "digitalness" of educated, working women but to submit themselves to God and to their husbands in everything. In the cultural bridal counseling meeting, the older counselors emphasized man's leadership and the wife's submission and instructed the bride to respect her parents in law and

her husband and to live well with them, not to embarrass her parents' family by being a bad wife. However, the younger couples instructed both the bride and groom to be, not just the bride, to cultivate unity and a strong relationship calling upon them to work together and beat every obstacle together, as marriage is not for cowards.²⁰⁵

Evidently, the older women were more inclined to cultural standards while the view of the younger couples was more dynamic urging for unity and togetherness rather than gender role differences signifying a changing situation not fully visible to pastors and the older generation. The Ladies' conference was a two-day event attended by about 500 ladies. From the observation, women valued the conferences hence the large numbers. Good character was emphasized across all ages. Teachings generally rotated around relationships with their husbands for the women who were married as the essence of womanhood, and the subordinate place of women in relation to their husbands. The church is keen for preparing women to function effectively in the church and family. However, nothing was said about functioning in the society or any other role apart from motherhood and being a wife. Challenges of womanhood in their new situations were neither presupposed nor addressed. Issues were addressed at *effects* level, not at the level of *causes*.

There was dissatisfaction among some women with the teachings passed. For instance, when the instructions were given to go for counseling in groups, one woman said "why are we even going to the groups and they keep telling us about one thing only?" The researcher asked her what the 'one thing' was and she responded that it was about taking care of husbands especially sexually, and added that women are tired and bored, and that they are no longer interested in sex. When the researcher

²⁰⁵ See Appendix 8 for a full report of the various meetings. These were two weddings, one bridal counseling meeting on the eve of the wedding and the AIC Ladies' Annual Conference.

proceeded to her age-group, the speaker challenged women to meet the sexual needs of their husbands and emulate the Prov. 31 woman in managing their homes themselves without the assistance of house-helps. Again the women around the researcher reacted in hushed asides showing dissatisfaction with these instructions. One woman said, “Am I not paying her (house-help) money to help me with domestic chores?” Another said, “We reject our husbands because they despise us and treat us roughly. They are the ones who show us arrogance.” Another one said, “Hey, when he comes home and says he is not eating, why should I plead with him to eat and he has even arrived at 11 at night. Why should I care?”

Marital instruction is usually passed on to women alone whether in the church meetings or done informally at home. The biggest responsibility for building marriages is seen as a responsibility of the wives. The practicality of the teachings is problematic leading to women’s spoken or unspoken protests. These protests echo the dissatisfaction registered by the women pastors on positions and standards that are unpractical and unfair to women. In the next section, we will see how the pastoral and cultural instructions are understood and worked out by the more empowered wives and their husbands so as to shed light as to why the marital teachings do not alleviate the challenge of marital disharmony. The results are presented below.

4.4 Wives and Husbands’ Interview Results

The church teachings were received differently by two categories of women from our study – the elder women whose experiences were studied in the focus group and the younger women who were later interviewed individually and their spouses. The results will be presented in their respective categories.

4.4.1 Experiences of Older Women in the Focus Group

The focus groups details are presented in appendix 5. This group was composed of five elderly Christian women who were born in the 1950s and 60s, the oldest being 65 and the youngest 56 years old. They had between 8 and 12 children each. They had between 38 and 49 years' experience in stable customary marriages as none had ever separated from her husband. Their incomes were between Ksh. 1000 and 2500 per month earned from small businesses or piece-work jobs. All of them were also involved in women self-help groups with monthly contributions from which they saved money to do their major projects.

The focus group played a critical role in this study by the virtue of their being married women also involvement in Church ministry. It is important to note that these women were all born before political independence in 1964 and some of them were even in their teens by that time. They are not only receivers and consumers of the church's teachings on marriage; but are also models and mentors of marriage to younger women. They also provide a crucial historical reference point for working marriages through changing circumstances of women's lives and for establishing the general impact of women's empowerment on women and marriage. They got married in the late 1960s and 70s when inequality between men and women was high and long before the campaigns for women's empowerment and gender equality would be born in Kenya as discussed in chapter 3.

In terms of formal education, they either did not go to school at all or they never went beyond class one in primary school. All of them attributed their lack of education to discrimination of the girl-child in their time as the girls were required by their parents to fulfill domestic responsibilities as their brothers went to school. In their time, all kinds of beliefs were propagated to discourage parents from sending

their girls to school. For instance, one explained, “In our time, girls were not being educated. My uncle advised my father not to educate girls saying that if they know how to read they will be able to read sign-posts and go to Mombasa and become prostitutes. So I was pulled out of school in class one and went to look after my father’s cattle.”²⁰⁶ Another lost the opportunity to go to school because “it was said that when girls get educated they disappear along the railway line.”²⁰⁷ Much as they were raised for marriage, they did not have it easy in their time. One explained, “I was married off at age fifteen but I refused. I was beaten up and still refused to go. Then I was later given over to another man who was working in Mombasa but he complained I was too dark to go to town. So I went back home, then I was married to my present husband.”²⁰⁸

For them, the secret of a working marriage lay in the woman’s exercise of patience and keeping quiet to avoid quarrels with her husband no matter what he did. In their view, marriage today was violent because of the confrontational nature of today’s empowered young wives and of lack of preparation for marriage for “this generation of ‘digitalness’ – equality of men and women.”²⁰⁹ The wives who

²⁰⁶ F1, Interview by author, Mikuyuni, May, 5, 2016. Mombasa is the greatest coastal town in Kenya and the second largest city of the country. It is well known for being a recreational and holiday center not only for the nationals but also the world over and therefore a great tourist and holiday destination where prostitution was rife.

²⁰⁷ F2, Interview by author, Mikuyuni, May, 5, 2016. These accounts are passed orally among Kenyan communities with few publications largely out of print. The railway line was not a welcome development among the Akamba. The railway line that cuts through Ukambani has cultural significance. A famous prophet called Syokimau had prophesied that a great snake would come from the Indian Ocean and head its way to the west passing through the region and it was not for any good to the people. So when the colonialists constructed the railway line from Mombasa to Kisumu, it was known to be that snake and the project faced violent opposition among the Akamba. See XX, accessed February 24, 2017 <https://laplaceramz.wordpress.com/2009/11/10/mekatilili-wa-menza-she-feared-no-man>.

²⁰⁸ F4 Interview by author, Mikuyuni, May, 5, 2016.

²⁰⁹ F2.

antagonized their husbands faced their wrath in the form of wife-beating and could be returned to their parents. Only one of them had ever been beaten by her husband, and only once because these were generally very well behaved wives.

Exonerating men from blame for infidelity, they said that men were naturally polygamous giving their own experiences, and were apparently not bothered by whatever the husbands did, neither did they try to question it. One woman explained,

A man cannot stick to one woman. At one point my husband brought in a woman he was living with at his working place to our home in the village where I lived and she even nursed me when I was sick. Then she blamed my husband for neglecting me and my children and told him she would not continue to live with him. She thanked him for educating her son up to university. This time, my husband and I had managed to take only one child to secondary and he dropped out in form 3 for lack of fees.²¹⁰

Instead, the rise of men's infidelity was blamed on their wives. One participant who was the third wife of her polygamous husband explained,

Women are allowing their house-helps to serve their husbands and men are taking the girls even elders in the church. My husband could not be served by anybody else even his child. And as you served him you had to do it with a good and pleasant face whether he has looked for the food or not. He can just decide not to eat it because your face is showing him that you are the one who worked in people's farms to buy food.²¹¹

These participants emphasized that a man's word or actions were to be accepted unconditionally by the wife no matter the difficulties and gave their own examples how they did this. One of them explained how the husband brought two women to their matrimonial home and required of the wife to surrender the bed for the three of them to which she obliged without questioning. She narrated, "I slept on the floor as the three of them shared the bed. My husband told me not to object

²¹⁰ F4.

²¹¹ W5, Interview by author, Mikuyuni, May, 5, 2016

because the women were bad and could harm us through witchcraft. I obliged because I feared for my family and did not want to be sent away from my matrimonial home.”²¹² Another one counseled,

A woman should put herself below a man like (name withheld) who used to wait on the husband while eating and she would only eat when he fell asleep. I myself delivered my last born and my husband sent a certain woman to pick me from hospital and we walked home (a distance of about 6 kilometers). Then my husband passed us in a passenger vehicle on his way home. I did not quarrel him on why he could not pay for me to also take a bus home after delivery but kept quiet and we had peace.²¹³

Although their formal education level was barely existent, these participants were highly educated culturally, proven by the fact that they succeeded to keep their marriages no matter the difficulties. Obviously they underwent cultural training as girls and knew how to treat a husband with the highest level of respect. They knew that they needed to have many children and they did, the one with the least having 8 of them. They knew the cultural survival strategies for a woman to keep her marriage even with the most difficult of husbands as explained above. They knew the role of a woman in taking care of her home and doing her duties to perfection, even providing for her family whether the husband did it or not. And they knew how to serve their husbands willingly and joyfully regardless of the circumstances. All they wanted was to have peace with their husbands and keep their marriages which they did at great costs.

²¹² F4.

²¹³ F5.

The position of these older ladies stands in agreement with that of the pastors on some issues but also differs from them in others. The women upheld cultural inequality and superiority of the husband over the wife; traditional gender roles; decision-making by husbands and wives' unconditional submission; and keeping family challenges private without exposing them to outsiders, no matter what the husbands did. Primarily, they placed blame on the deterioration of marriage on women for assuming equality with their husbands and refusing to submit and obey them in everything as the Bible says.

However the group differs from the pastors too. While the pastors saw the leading causes of marital crisis as mainly men and women neglecting their roles and marriage facing attacks from Satan, these participants saw the primary cause as the cultural disruption brought about by the push for the equality of men and women. Apparently, by the virtue of their being participants in marriage and having a closer proximity to the common men and women, the group is practically closer to "the ground" where marriage takes place today compared to the pastors. Secondly, while the pastors saw women's empowerment as generally destructive to marriage, the group felt it was very helpful as long as submission of women and openness in financial issues were inculcated. Thirdly, although they agreed with the pastors on division of roles and responsibilities, these ladies differed with them on the need for cooperation of husbands and wives in the home. They found the demarcation unpractical because they were also involved in providing food, fees and other things – roles that would otherwise be taken by their husbands. They encouraged husbands helping their wives with chores at home, a position they shared with women pastors only. Their difference of opinion and the deviation from the position of the clergy as pertaining to the value of women's empowerment and domestic division of labor are

critical as indicators of the struggle of marriage in the light of emerging realities. The study now shifts gears to look at the developing situation with younger more empowered women and their husbands.

4.4.2 Experiences of More Empowered Wives and their Husbands

Extensive details of the husbands and wives are presented in appendix 4 in their categories in terms of age, education and income levels, occupation, church responsibilities, type and length of marriage, and number and ages of children. Some key aspects stand out. It is expected of men in Kenya to marry wives junior to them in terms of age, education, and income.²¹⁴ However, the findings seems to comply to this only with the age factor as only one couple has the wife older than her husband. On income, the husband earns more than the wife among twelve couples while among eight, the wife earns more. When it comes to education, there is also a mixture of situations. It is only among eight couples where the husband has acquired a higher level of formal education than the wife. Five couples have the husband and wife with the same level of education and in seven of them, the wife has a higher level of educational than her husband. Women tend to be less educated only at the lower levels. At the highest level, one woman has Doctor of Philosophy degree and four others are in Doctorate programs while one husband only is in this category. There is not only the evidence of an emerging wave of educational advancement among the women, but also an unprecedented professional, economic and political upward movement among them.

²¹⁴ See the findings of TAG.

For instance the head of the Office of the President in the sub-location is a woman for the first time in history. She is married to a man who operates a *kiosk* in the village. Also there are at least 4 university lecturers among the women but only one among the husbands. At one time, the constituency's Member of Parliament was a woman. Clearly, the women are taking advantage of available opportunities to pursue education and to find access to high professional and government leadership positions. Besides, all the women had businesses or were involved in agricultural activities that earned them some form of income ranging from selling chicken, goats and farm produce to involvement in real estate and resulting to a monthly income ranging between Ksh. 1000 and 250,000. All the women except one participated in women self-help groups as a means of economic development. In some of the groups, women could access bank loans to develop their businesses with zero interest as government policy.

Apart from educational, economic and professional empowerment, particularly the most empowered ones reported the acquisition of information on human and women rights as well as the confidence and ability to work independently of their husbands and ability to make personal decisions. The fact that couples have between 2 and 4 children indicates informational empowerment of the couples and especially of the women in decision-making pertaining to their personal reproductive health.

The women demonstrated an excitement and commitment to their empowered and appreciated their new abilities. What was perceived by the clergy and the older women marriage champions to be destructive cultural disruption appears to the younger women and their husbands rather as rewarding cultural reorganization which carries benefits for both husbands and wives.

It is at the interaction point of the actual life experiences of today's couples where we locate the ineffective theological teachings and the deepening of the problem of marital disharmony. The major foundational teachings of the church are problematic for marriage in three aspects where they are most of the times found to be not practically possible; they cause confusion in some instances; and are found to inhibit the possibility of cultivating a more fulfilling relationship in marriages by coming in between the husband and wife.

First and foremost, the church rejects women's empowerment and gender equality and finds them unbiblical and unhelpful to marriage which is not the position of the married couples today. From the responses, husbands and wives made it clear that they were enjoying benefits from the wife's empowerment in their families. For instance, women found their empowerment rewarding as it gave them new identity and enabled them to act independently in ways their predecessors could not. They explained that their empowerment brought them financial stability, enabling them to meet personal and family needs, and affording them the ability to contribute financially to family projects more significantly than their predecessors in the focus group. But apart from these, they also acquired the ability to make good decisions, to function independently, to make meaningful social contribution and to stand against abuse. They indicated the ability to have a good relationship specifically with their husbands in that they acquired a certain element of respect and importance they could not otherwise have.

Thus, their empowerment was not only a means to meet their financial and families' needs; it was also a tool for negotiation for power and significance with their husbands on account of their independence. They explained that they were able to act independently to save situations in their families when the husbands would not be in a

position to or were not interested in doing it. For instance, one wife who was the sole breadwinner for the family explained her valuable intervention, “Our daughter has just finished her masters in counseling psychology but my husband does not appreciate the heavy investment I have made on her especially as a girl-child. When our son rejected two previous schools, my husband did not think we needed to take him to any other school.”²¹⁵

Husbands to these wives indicated from their responses that their wives’ financial empowerment eased the financial pressure on them on providing for the families and enabled them to run their projects comfortably. They also appreciated their wives’ added knowledge and ability to make better decisions; wisdom in resolving conflicts; and their ability to act independently for the family. One of the husbands said, “It (wife’s empowerment) enriches our marriage as a God-given blessing. I remember a time when I was out of job for two years. She never showed me that I was less important. Our bond is an old one so we have cultivated it for a long time.”²¹⁶ So as the pastors insist that women’s empowerment does not help marriages, husbands and wives have a totally different view.

While they appreciated women’s empowerment for one reason or the other, it is on whether or not this empowerment and gender equality are biblical where responses demonstrated serious confusion. Majority of wives (70%) were convinced that the two are biblical and they gave scriptural arguments in support, contrary to the view of the pastors.

²¹⁵ W15, interview by author, Machakos, June 2, 2016

²¹⁶ H8, interview by author, Kibwezi town, March 30, 2016

On the other hand, majority of the husbands (81%) were either convinced that these two are unbiblical or had mixed feelings about it, largely in agreement with the pastoral teaching. The fact that Christians are engaged in something they think not to be biblical, and yet appreciate it for its benefits, poses a big question on the understanding and working out of their faith. It is worse still because if one spouse believes it is biblical and the other one believes it is not, and both have scriptural backing for such a foundational matter.

Particularly, gender equality was resisted more than women's empowerment by both husbands and wives on the grounds that the Bible said that women should submit to the husbands in the love-submission dichotomy. Submission was understood to mean both inequality of husband and wife and inferiority of the wife. While both the pastors and husbands took equality in its literalistic meaning, the more empowered women especially demonstrated an understanding of what gender equality stands for in terms of the quest for equity, fairness and removal of discrimination against women. One wife contented, "I think the church does not understand the essence of equality as equal treatment for all without discrimination. It always thinks in terms of mathematical equality and concludes that equality is not biblical seeing the man as superior to the wife engraved in the love-submission instructions in the Bible."²¹⁷

Secondly, because of the church's affirmation of gender inequality, the wife is required to obey the husband's instruction and to agree with his decisions. It emerged that the new generation of wives does not agree with the cultural elevation of the man beyond accountability level, or the supposed inferiority of women. They insisted on

²¹⁷ W11, interview by author, Machakos, March 12, 2016

participating; they want to participate in the making of those decisions. All the women were familiar with the instruction that they need to leave their empowerment outside their gates as they come into their homes, and that the woman is the neck and the man is the head in a relationship that keeps the neck under the head. This teaching is occasionally passed and quoted as a verse in the Bible.

The wives not only struggled on how to do this; they also felt that the teaching is not well balanced, especially the more empowered women. One wife though with minimal empowerment brought this out clearly,

This is a teaching which generally wants to demean women and goes together with the other one that says that a woman is a weak vessel. The weakness is interpreted to mean little brains and emotional instability. I don't think it is so ... But if it could be taught well to support submissiveness and loving understanding leadership it would be okay. I think it is imbalanced and divisive.²¹⁸

One of the most educated and empowered in contention demonstrated how her empowerment even worked for her and her husband at home in the dynamics of decision-making rejecting the head-neck cliché and observed,

But then without the neck there is no head. I think the statement needs to be completed for both sides to benefit. As for leaving my CEO-ship, education, etc. at the gate, I think this is not practical. It is part of who I am ... My wisdom tells me that when I was outside chairing a board meeting and making decision, in the home I am part of the board and giving my suggestions with another to make the decision. This decision is however to be in line with what we have said as a unit and not on what one person thinks as an individual.²¹⁹

It also emerged that the wives were struggling with the tension of making contributions or holding back because empowered women were known to society not

²¹⁸ W5, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, April, 1, 2016

²¹⁹ W19, interview by author, Machakos, June 24, 2016

to make good wives. Even though they worked hard not to antagonize the social set up, they struggled with contributing to family projects they would not share in ownership. For instance, one of the wives confessed, “I find it unacceptable that my husband and I will save money for family development but when he buys property with it he puts it in his name alone.”²²⁰

On the part of the husbands, the challenges they faced on account of their wives’ empowerment were simple and straight forward: the idea of the wife being too busy to physically attend to their needs and to domestic chores as well as the idea of her being independent. One husband explained,

My wife is busy as a lecturer and so she is absent from home. Many of the house chores are not done well for this reason, or are not done at all. I like a clean home, good food and my wife’s presence at home. I don’t know how to live in the home if my wife is not there. I also find it difficult to bring us into an agreement because she has her own ideas and I have mine.²²¹

Another reiterated, “There is lack of total submissiveness. Submission is experience in only 10 years after marriage. At times my wife makes decisions without consulting me. She at times expects us to share domestic responsibilities such as cooking and washing clothes.”²²² It is probably in dynamics like these where empowerment of women is seen as the disempowerment of the man.

Some of the wives felt that their husbands had a problem with their career growth so there was the tendency to slow down for the sake of harmony because, as one wife explained, “people say that if as a woman you are more educated than your

²²⁰ W11.

²²¹ H11, interview by author, Machakos, June 2, 2016

²²² H17, interview by author, Machakos, June, 2, 2016

husband, you cause trouble for yourself. So I played dumb and sacrificed my potential and abilities for the sake of peace.”²²³ Another wife said that even when she had money, she behaved like she did not have and asked the husband for some so as to appear helpless and needy. She explained that the reason was “so that he may feel needed and in control in my helplessness.”²²⁴ These measures are not able to cultivate the potential and contribution of the wives into their own lives and relationships.

Thirdly, the teachings of the church fail to help empowered women and their husbands in the practicality of the traditional separation of domestic roles and responsibilities. While wives’ duties were specific, husbands’ duties were either defined rather widely and generally, or they did not require daily attention such as making chicken houses, meeting water and electricity bills and fencing or being “in charge of security” or being “the overseer of the home” as W1 and W9 pointed out respectively. More specific roles, though in line with cultural expectation such as paying fees and providing food, were done by husbands and wives together. Moreover, some of the wives doubled up as sole breadwinners for the families for various reasons. For instance, husbands to W3 and W15 were not able to provide for their families because of sickness and joblessness respectively. The challenge to women was that while they generally crossed the traditional demarcation of responsibilities to partner with their husbands with ease and flexibility, husbands generally kept the divide strictly. One wife had this to say: “We help each other in all things. But I don’t ask him to help. Men do not like the idea of being told what to do. A man is the head and they think it is mockery. Let him do when he wants to if he

²²³ W19.

²²⁴ W20, interview by author, Machakos, June 25, 2016

sees the need.”²²⁵ This resolve however, does not promote harmony or fulfillment in marriage.

A major struggle was indicated by wives who felt they worked hard to provide for their families but the husbands could not help with domestic responsibilities. One explained,

When I go to work in the morning and leave breakfast on the table for my husband, he does not even take away the utensils so that I find them on the same table in the evening. Never mind he did not go to work like I did. My husband cannot wash a spoon in the house so that I find a clean kitchen to start cooking dinner in the evening. He insists that I have to do everything as a woman in the house. It is a big challenge to me.²²⁶

Fourthly, the marital teachings of the church deemphasize strong relational aspects. When the church does not explain the cause of marriage instability in terms of Satan attacking marriages and people destroying God’s order in the family, it prescribes roles and condemns women’s empowerment for destroying marriages. The deepest longings for husbands and wives – spending time together, making decisions together, love and care for each other, as well as shared jokes and laughter remain invisible and unaddressed. The couples are crying out for unity: the church employs a theological approach of separation and dichotomy with little co-operation and complementarity. Particularly, the role of the saved wife receives a lot of emphasis in having working marriage relationships almost to the extent of eclipsing the man who is actually acknowledged to be the leader of the family.

²²⁶ W15.

After all, it is the wise woman who builds her own house and the foolish one who destroys it as pointed out above. This is perhaps how the church ends up having people who believe in God but their relationships, particularly their marriages that ought to be expressions of the image and likeness of God, are instead expressions of loneliness, loveless-ness and social entrapments. The way challenges were addressed demonstrates that the church did not help the husbands and wives to effectively engage the cultural shift for sustainable growth in their marriage relationships. It neither advised women on how to deal with their multiple responsibilities nor the importance of each responsibility in the eyes of God, nor did it advise the husbands on how to relate with their wives in the light of their new roles and challenges.

In desperate attempts to deal with their challenges, the couples engaged both destructive and constructive approaches. Some used compliance, others compromise and others radical measures with respect to expected social behavior. Choosing their families above their empowerment, some of the women chose to comply with socio-cultural expectation of accepting the man's decision as the head of the family, and went to great lengths to do this. One woman explains how she forfeited valuable opportunities:

At times my husband refuses to give me permission to go to some places where I have been invited to work. I just fail to go and give an apology. I rose in the teaching ranks to become Deputy and eventually Head Teacher of a primary school. My husband was not happy with it. I would inform him that we have a meeting in such and such a time or that I am required to take returns to my supervisor but he would refuse to release me clean-heartedly. He would be annoyed after that. Eventually I resigned and went back to be a classroom teacher to have peace at home and hence lost the responsibility allowance.²²⁷

²²⁷ W13, interview by author, Mikuyuni Village, May 5, 2016

Not all of the wives chose to comply in this manner. Some of them looked for compromise and balance between their many commitments and domestic responsibilities. Choosing to keep their empowerment responsibilities, all these wives sought to employing house-helpers to cover for them with home chores and negotiate for cooperation with their husbands. But this did not always work well to eliminate the challenges since this was not the only challenge as we have seen, and the role of house-helpers posed a problem as raised earlier by elder ladies in the focus group. The last category acted in drastic ways violating the cultural lines of behavior, obviously worsening the situation with their husbands. This wife who was also the sole bread winner in the family and whose husband would not help with domestic chores said, “I took back the decision-making responsibility for the sake of the family. Today I only do what I can and I have stopped wishing and worrying over my family situation. My husband is over 18 and an adult.”²²⁸ When W9 thought she had reached her limit, she opted for separation. She said, “I left him and went back to my parents and continued to make ropes to sustain myself.”²²⁹ Notably, four of the women in this non-compromising category were married by pastors including the one who left the marriage. They also did not belong to the category of most empowered women.

What about the husbands? Those who chose to keep social expectation employed the non-compromising route, such as the use of “manhood advantage of talking tough hoping to get obedience and compliance” from their wives as one

²²⁸ W15.

²²⁹ W9, interview by author, Kisayani Village, May 11, 2016

husband pointed out.²³⁰ Those who chose compromise reported that they held discussions with their wives hoping to reach consensus and planned ahead of time to avoid crises. Majority of the husbands however chose the radical route deviating from expectation of the social order where they chose to do nothing to change the situation. One for instance said, “I let her do what she wants to do and I mind my own business. I keep myself busy at work.”²³¹ When the majority of the wives and majority of husbands are using radical means to solve their marital challenges in the manner portrayed by these couples, there cannot be any growth or fulfillment in their relationships. But with guidance and willingness to address challenges creatively, many marriages would be saved in Mikuyuni.

4.5 Conclusion

There is evident disconnect between the teachings of the church on marriage and the actual experiences of wives and their husbands in terms of their needs and challenges. The root problem of the church’s inability to minister effectively to marriage today lies, not so much in the instruction it gives, however problematic, but in its understanding and handling of the twin development factors of women’s empowerment and gender equality. The church, first, fails to recognize the changing times as a reality with direct impact on marriage by rejecting the women’s empowerment factor and dismissing it as unbiblical, ignoring its implications on marriage and closing out any possibility for fruitful discussions on the subject. As a result, its teachings are not able to reach marriages where they are or to help them in their struggles.

²³⁰ H16, interview by author, Machakos, June 6, 2016

²³¹ H12, interview by author, Machakos, June 2, 2016

Gender equality particularly received outright rejection as marital instruction insisted on of women's inferiority and required that they submit to their husbands' authority and leadership at all times without question. On these grounds, the government-driven agenda to eliminate women marginalization through giving them equal access to opportunities with men, by removing socio-economic and cultural discrimination against them has been effectively rejected.

Consequently, the church in Ukambani missed the earliest opportunity to engage with this agenda constructively to reap its maximum benefits, but also failed to address any negative effects in the society, or at least among the people in the church. Instead, the church has continued to instruct people on marriage as though nothing significant has taken place, and to treat the symptoms of marriage struggles as the actual *causes*, thus limiting its vision in its theological instruction. Inevitably, the marriage theology has been basically a theology of inequality by orientation – a theology of women submission popularized by the dictum that the husband is the head and the wife the neck; and that at no time does the neck grow past the head - quoted at times as scripture by the pastors. It is such teachings that are unsatisfactory to empowered women as they now increasingly ask for a definition of submission and headship that promotes fairness and interdependency of the head and the neck. The church does not only fail to understand women's empowerment, it also fails to understand marriage and its struggles today.

The evangelical church has yet to come to terms with how women's empowerment and gender equality could be part of God-driven mission in the process of bringing about justice and righteousness in people's lives today. Until it does, men and women today as well as future generations in their time begin to imagine that strong and fulfilling marriage relationships are incompatible with women's

empowerment. Women will increasingly be forced to choose between their empowerment and their marriages as men will be prepared to marry empowered women only at their own risk. This thinking will continue to make marriage difficult and unattractive; alienate people from one another, from the church; and if unchecked and with time, from their God and fullness of life that can be found only in Him. Indeed God is the author and sustainer of marriage; and the church cannot shift the responsibility of nurturing marriage to any other institution because it is placed at the center of God's mission on earth in the changing circumstances of His people. The imperative for the church to reevaluate its teachings and position is unavoidable, to make sure that they are aligned with what God is doing in the world today among His people. Nowhere did the pastors examine their theological teachings or their approach to marriage ministry as possible nurseries where marital challenges could be bred. These teachings have been based on a long established theology of inequality and role-separation whose time is fast coming to an end. At best, married couples have become more disoriented than guided by the church's teachings.

What we see in this discussion is on one hand husbands who have been blessed to have wives able to help them in providing for their families in these hard economic times. They are however unprepared to deal with the physical and emotional gaps created by the removal of their wives from their culturally endorsed domestic chores. On the other hand, we see a newly empowered wife who has her own internal struggles on what to do, or not do with her empowerment, and who has a big problem with her husband who does not seem to understand her or support her in the empowerment which is helping both of them and their family. She is also struggling with the apparent conspiracy of the cultural environment and the church's teachings that largely resist her empowerment and alienate her from her husband. The

teachings of the church are largely abstract instructions rising from a reading of scripture that is believed to speak directly to the people's situations and circumstances and at times out of context. They are not based on a reflection on the big picture of how God is present in marriage or how He is involved in human relationships with respect to their use of power and sexuality.

Having established that the church *does not* effectively address marital needs and challenges today, we will move on in the next chapter to explain why the church *cannot* do so with the contextualized theology it works with and then proceed to make recommendations for a biblical marriage theology for the church today. For the disharmony we see in marriage should not be misconstrued as a struggle between men and women. It is rather a protestation of unresponsive cultural and Christian structures and teachings to changing situations and a theology that hardly rises to its true theological calling. For in the smaller scale, it is a problem between empowerment of women and the cultural background, with theology coming in to play a catalytic role to the struggle. But on the larger scale, it is not just a struggle between women's empowerment and Akamba culture: it is, rather, a major struggle between theology and development which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter

CHAPTER 5

A THEOLOGICAL-CONTEXTUAL PROBLEM

5.0. Introduction

The previous chapter related the pastoral teachings on marriage in Ukambani to the experiences of wives and husbands in the light of women's empowerment, and revealed that there is evident discordance between the two. The reason for this, as discovered, is that the church does not engage effectively the disruption occasioned by women's empowerment factor. In this chapter we seek to call attention to the theological problem inherent in the present teachings to explain why they cannot address today's marital needs and challenges constructively. To do this, we will highlight the historical circumstances surrounding the formation of the existing theology in Ukambani; and explain its role in shaping the existing marital teachings that the church works with. The chapter argues that theological teachings on marriage are incapable of competently addressing the needs and challenges of married couples today because they are based on a contextualized theology developed in the 1960s and 70s in Africa against a socio-cultural situation of gender inequality that no longer exists.

5.1 The Development of African (and Akamba) Contextualized Theology

Africa has a rich history with the gospel dating back to the early North African Christianity almost totally destroyed by Islam in the 7th century, and the western

missionary Christianity of the 18th to the 20th centuries.²³² In the spread of the latter, many African rituals, beliefs and practices were condemned as evil and judged as incompatible with Christianity until around the time of political independence of most African states when African scholars and leaders began to challenge this position.²³³ Even though not all missionaries had this negative bias as demonstrated by Andrew Walls²³⁴, the misrepresentation of African traditional religions and cultures was intricately interwoven with colonial hegemony whether in reality or by perception. Mushete makes a valid argument:

There was no possible way for European missionaries to escape the ambiguities of their historical situation. The mission church, in its personnel, its culture, its daily life and its daily actions, gave the impression of having struck a treaty of mutual assistance with colonialism. Thereby a heavy, painful ambiguity prevailed, and attempts were not always made to resolve this, whether in concrete fact or in the underlying theory²³⁵

So the urgent assignment to Africans at this time was to correct this anomaly and develop an African Christianity and theology founded on the backgrounds of

²³² See detailed discussion of the spread of Christianity and its different phases from Rosino Gibellini, Introduction to *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994) and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986).

²³³ Earliest voices were not from theologians. See for instance Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The River Between* (London: Heinmann, 1967) and *Weep Not Child* (New York: Collier Books, 1964). Theological voices would later join the picture represented by Mbiti and Idowu.

²³⁴ See for instance the analysis of how African theological thinking originated with various missionaries in Andrew Walls, "The Discovery of 'African Traditional Religion' and its Impact on Religious Studies," in Introduction to *Seeing New Facets of the Diamond: Christianity as a Universal Faith – Essays in Honour of Kwame Bediako*, eds., Gillian Mary Bediako, Behardt Y. Quarshie and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

²³⁵ Mushete A. Ngindu, "An Overview of African Theology," in *Paths of African Theology*, ed., Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 11.

African people, a theology that would have at its center “its African location – its culture, its religion, and its problems of civilization.”²³⁶

It is important to note however that this imperative has a long history and did not originate with African theologians. Smith Robertson had firmly stated the need as early as 1889 well before the end of the 19th century.

He observed,

No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a *tabula rasa*, and expresses itself as if religion were beginning for the first time; in form, if not in substance, the new system must be in contact all along the line with the older ideas and practices which it finds in possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which all religious feeling is embodied.²³⁷

Nevertheless, credit must be given to the African scholars for their hard work in establishing African theology as a legitimate strand in global theological conversation. Mbiti and Idowu, for instance, have had great input in the enterprise as foundation layers in that they developed a detailed presentation of African traditional religions and philosophy. This functioned as a valuable resource for those who would be interested in an in-depth study of the emerging theology.²³⁸ Bediako joins the conversation insisting on the need to have the Christian faith in Africa live out its character when crossing Western-African cultural boundaries as was the case

²³⁶ Ibid., 16.

²³⁷ Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: First Series – The Fundamental Institutions*, New Edition (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1889), 2.

²³⁸ See specifically Mbiti’s *African Religions and Philosophy* and *Introduction to African Religion*, and Idowu’s *African Traditional Religion*.

in Jewish-gentile boundaries of the first century.²³⁹ This does not mean that the African theologians agreed on the details of their perspectives, but they did agree on the role and priority of the cultural and religious backgrounds in the formation of African theology.²⁴⁰ This was a major milestone of achievement towards an African theology from the 1960s to the present time. It is important to note that Mbiti has not only been one of the greatest voices in this enterprise, his voice is of great significance among the Akamba, the community he was born into. This project will touch on some of his contributions and how they shaped the development of Akamba theology specifically.

The second achievement had to do with the translation of scripture into African vernacular languages. This had a tremendous effect on African readers and the spread of the gospel. Waruta presents a detailed account on translation of scripture in Kenyan languages, among them the Kikamba language which is our focus in this study. The earliest translation into Kikamba began with Dr. Krapf's translation of Mark in 1850 followed by Acts, Matthew and John. The New Testament and Old Testament translations were completed in 1920 and 1956 respectively, followed by a revision and correction of the New Testament which was completed in 1960.²⁴¹ In the 60s, the Akamba had the complete bible in their language.

The translations boosted the process of establishing what was understood to be an authentically African Christianity that bypassed western cultural practices as stated

²³⁹ See Bediako's, *Christianity in Africa and Theology of Identity*.

²⁴⁰ Although a contrary voice would be raised by Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishers, 1975).

²⁴¹ See a detailed account from Douglas W. Waruta, "Scripture Translations in Kenya" M.A Thesis. University of Nairobi, 1975, accessed March 9, 2017, <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/95524/Waruta%20Scripture%20Translations%20In%20Kenya.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

above. As Mbiti explains, Africans were finally able to “have *full access to the Word of God in their own language without intermediary, without foreign accents and without grammatical errors*, speaking with full force and full authority.”²⁴² The similarities of African cultures to the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds reflected in the Bible facilitated the hearing of God’s word directly spoken to them and found their cultures that had been criticized by western missionaries ‘vindicated’. The effects of the translations were tremendous because,

Africans feel that their own lives are described in the Bible, they as human beings are affirmed in it and that they belong to the world of the Bible. They identify their own presence in this big photograph. The world of the Bible did not vanish two to three thousand years ago. People discover that it is for them a world of yesterday and today, a world of their own lives and communities. It is a living portrait of their cultures and experiences, of their history and geography, of their fears and expectations and of their spiritual longings.²⁴³

Indeed, there cannot be an overestimation to the value of vernacular translations that provided the word of God read in people’s own language. But while the translation of the Bible was definitely a significant landmark in the development of African Christianity, it also, ironically presented some pitfalls that need special attention.

5.2 Theological Pitfalls in the Contextualization Process

It is important to note the use of the “big photograph” in Mbiti’s quotation above into which African experience was fitted; the reference to the “world of yesterday and today”; and this world’s overlap with the world of “two to three

²⁴² John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 26. Italics added.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

thousand years ago”. There were not two photographs but only one big one into which one world was framed. Willie James Jennings points out the danger of appropriating similarities of the world of the bible and that of the readers to have scripture speak directly to the people because it not only constructs the understanding of scripture outside the land-space contexts of the readers but on a totally foreign one; but also dislodges Israel and the early church from their spaces as the first and intended hearers of the word of God.²⁴⁴ It is not possible that Africa would have the same aspects – land, culture, circumstances and overall worldview with that of the biblical audience. This similarity was allowed to stretch too far to lose the real context of Africa and its significance in constructing a genuinely African Christianity.

The second danger is more subtle. Africans might have succeeded in bypassing western cultural hegemony, or so they thought, but only to subject themselves again into a different hegemony – not western this time, but the Israelite, Jewish and Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds through which Scripture was communicated. The assumption is that these cultures are more ‘scripturally superior’ and inadvertently Africans began to align their lives to Jewish patterns even though they might have had more ‘godly’ positions in some instances, as taught of God from their interactions with one another and the world around them. There is tremendous value in reading and memorizing the Bible as Mbiti advises²⁴⁵, but the question is, what happens after people have read and memorized it? To the degree that they hear it describing their situations and affirming their practices, to the same degree they might be missing the point of scripture. In any case, the Bible was not necessarily

²⁴⁴ Willie Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*.

²⁴⁵ John Mbiti, “The Bible in African Culture,” in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. by Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. 1994).

even affirming the practices of the biblical people let alone any culture, even though these cultures were the vehicle through which the message was embodied.

The point is, it is critical to keep the worlds separate and distinct without overlapping them, no matter the degree of similarity because there needs to be a theological gap between hearing what the word of God from the Bible has said, and using what it has said to formulate theological positions, instructions and doctrines. If two different cities in the first century would have different contexts enough to warrant the need to understand the background of different epistles for instance, two contexts separated by over 2000 years cannot be the same for God's word to be applied directly from one to another no matter how close they may appear to be. This was an oversimplification of the role and extent that similarities were to be taken at a time that African theology was in its formative years in the 60s and 70s.

Since the foundation of African communities is the family and marriage, the stretched cultural similarities in these two areas must have been found rewarding. It has been established that polygyny “was the most radical distinctive characteristic of African customary marriages which sets it apart from marriage in western cultures and has created more problems for the Christian church than any other traditional custom.”²⁴⁶ For missionary instituted churches generally, polygamous families were either not allowed to be members of church congregations; or polygamous husbands could only allow their first wife to be baptized, or they were required to send the other wives and their children away.²⁴⁷ Granted, the missionaries disrupted a very central and foundational institution informed by their cultural understanding of the word of

²⁴⁶ TAG, 24.

²⁴⁷ Julius K. Muthengi, “Polygamy and the Church in Africa: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives,” accessed March 3, 2017, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/14-2_055.pdf.

God. There is no doubt they disoriented family and the gospel in their approach to the African family at that time, a disruption which must have found relief in Africans seeing polygamous families and with key personalities greatly used by God in the bible.

These instances were instrumental in shaping marriage instruction. Indeed, Mbiti, even though he admits that polygyny was “becoming increasingly unworkable, outdated and a social deficit”²⁴⁸ in the 70s, he still justifies it on account of its presence in the bible insisting that these remarriages ought to be blessed by the church. This went as far as taking this position advising women whose husbands wanted to take second wives:

If you sincerely love your husband and have children by him, love covers a multitude of sins and ultimately you have to decide to remain with him and cling to him for the sake of the love you have ... In the sight of the law, you are the legal wife, and unless your husband insists on sending you away for good I would advise you to stay on with him, and to lavish upon him all the love you can spare ... if you fully flood your husband with that love, without any outward signs of jealousy, almost certainly you will win him back to you – you will make him wholly yours, entirely yours, exclusively yours.²⁴⁹

The driving force seems to restore that which was almost destroyed by the missionaries rather than finding out why such a strong African pattern of life was changing, why women were beginning to have a problem with it, or even why it was becoming impractical in the first place.

One may argue that the reading of the bible by the Akamba did not follow correct hermeneutical principles of contextualization that seek to disengage the word

²⁴⁸ Mbiti, *Love and Marriage*, 82.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 194-5.

from the cultural setting it was originally given, in order to apply it to new cultural situations. Graeme Goldsworthy, sees contextualization as an activity that was all along carried out long before the term was coined in the 1970s composed of six stages namely scripture translation, interpretation, and communication of the gospel, followed by “instruction of believers, incarnation of truth in the lives of believers, and the systematization of the Christian faith.”²⁵⁰ By the time the technical contextualization conversations were entrenching themselves in Africa in the 1970s and 80s, Africans had already “contextualized” their lives into the Bible and “contextualized” the bible into their situation. Besides, vernacular use of the Bible does not follow the complicated exegesis of historical-critical interpretation of texts, or the quest to arrive at an original cultureless intended meaning now proven impossible. Recent studies have shown that separating the word from the culture in the bible to apply it to another culture is not tenable as the reading of the bible, its interpretation and communication are basically cultural experiences throughout. William Dyrness faults previous approaches with a word of counsel, “that we don’t start with two things, something called Christianity ... and something called culture, which we then need to bring together. This way of putting things seems to assume that Christianity is something ‘pure’ that either will become contaminated by culture or will enter it as a cleansing agent.”²⁵¹

Rather vernacular use of the bible hears God speaking directly to the people in the reading of the bible as described above. This is not to mean that historical and critical interpretation of the Bible has no value. This process is invaluable and

²⁵⁰ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 276.

²⁵¹ Dyrness, *The Earth is God’s*, 67.

indispensable in the determination of the meaning of Scripture. Contextualization enterprise gets it right on the imperative of establishing the meaning of biblical texts in line with the contexts of the original hearers: it is the whole matter concerning what to do with the meaning established where the problem lies. Three renowned hermeneutics experts whose resources are widely used in theological institutions describe the process and goal of Bible interpretation: “Effective exegesis not only perceives what the message meant originally but also determines how best to express and apply that meaning to one’s contemporaries. The process of contextualization expresses anew the ideas presented in a biblical passage in the language of today so that they convey the same impact to modern hearers.”²⁵²

The drive to “convey the same impact” original hearers had to new readers poses immense challenges. It rules out the possibility of God being actively involved among his people, and limits his involvement to what he did and said, say to the Corinthians or the Ephesians or to Timothy which must be applied to the new situation which does not reflect similar situations. Secondly, creating “the same impact” on other hearers monumentalizes the understanding of the world of God. Fee and Stuart pin it down more clearly than Klein and colleagues clarifying the problem. They state through one of their key hermeneutical rules: “*Wherever we share comparable particulars (i.e. similar life situations) with the first-century setting, God’s Word to us is the same as his Word to them.*”²⁵³ At the critical time of

²⁵² William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Revised and expanded Ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004), 231-232. Emphasis added.

²⁵³ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 65. Italics retained from source.

contextualization of the gospel and theology to the African context, the cultural similarities played a critical role in establishing biblical truths.

But what if the context of the recipients changes? Does God's word that people have had all along cease from being the word of God? Worse still, what becomes of similar tendencies and practices in the two contexts that God does not approve of such as negative attitudes towards women? When and how are these addressed and critiqued by the believing community? So whether the bible was read and understood in a literal or by hermeneutical contextualization, similarities in both the Akamba and biblical cultures largely shaped the understanding of that word and its implication to life situations of the Akamba. In the process, a new understanding of the place and role of women was developed that would in turn affect the understanding of male and female relationships in marriage. Certain key aspects of Akamba contextualized theology show clearly how this theology developed teachings that disadvantaged women and consequently deters the workability of fulfilling marriage relationships in their empowerment.

5.3 Women-Disadvantaging Aspects in Contextualized Theology

First of all, this theology was bound to the socio-cultural background of 1960s and 70s of the Akamba. Chapter three has covered in great detail the changing place of women in Kenya from the traditional situation to their present state. We saw that by this time, the highest level of gender inequality had been entrenched in African societies by colonial policies to the disadvantage of women. This does not mean that African traditional context did not subordinate its women to men because the colonial policies only appropriated and widened inequality cracks in the traditional setting and

when indigenous governments took over after independence, they did nothing to correct it.²⁵⁴

It is a given that missionaries did not recognize or correct the marginalization of women as they were also a product of western theology greatly influenced by the church fathers.²⁵⁵ Since African theology was attempting to put an end to key missionary omissions, it should have constructed its theology without a subordinate role of women but with an empowering one, because women held high positions in political and religious leadership among the Akamba.²⁵⁶ These models were however pushed to the periphery as African theology was contextualized in a post-colonial situation continuing the missionary trajectory in critical foundational aspects of theology.

It is perhaps on these grounds that Oduyoye reads a deliberate act by African theologians to sideline women in Africa while blaming it on colonial rule.²⁵⁷ Even though, it is doubtful that at the formation point of African theology, the theologians were thinking about women and devising ways of keeping women subservient to men. It seems correct to state that when women subordination was read or implied in scripture in Africa, the readers did not see gender marginalization or discrimination as

²⁵⁴ Details of the situation in Africa in general and in Kenya specifically from Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and also National Council for Population and Development, *Insights on Family*. See also Rosalind Mutua, *Development of Education in Kenya: Some Administrative aspects 1846-1963* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975) as well as Chege and Sifuna, *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender Perspectives and Trends* (UNESCO, 2006).

²⁵⁵ One of the quotations occasionally cited is that of Augustine declaring that the woman bears the image of God with the man and not alone, whereas the man alone bears it. See for instance Laurenti Magasa, "From Privatization to Popular Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa", 34.

²⁵⁶ See the positions and arguments in John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* and Zablon Nthamburi, *The African Church at the Crossroads*. See also the political and religious roles played by different women in leading their communities in the struggle against colonialism in Rebeka Njau and Gideon Mulaki, *Kenya Women Heroes and their Mystical Power* (Risk Publications, 1984).

²⁵⁷ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Feminist Theology".

an aspect to be corrected by Scripture; but as a naturally acceptable and God-given instruction for church and family from the “big photograph” that Akamba life was framed on. The most preferred passages for marital instruction are epistles which appear to speak in simple and direct imperatives to husbands and wives more than any other biblical writings.

Since women did not feature prominently in Jewish cult or among the twelve disciples of Jesus, or in early Christianity of the first century, this similarity seems to have been appropriated to subordinate them to men and deter them in church leadership and public and family participation. Akamba Christians would naturally ‘understand’ the instructions for wives not to teach in public; to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord; and to obey and *revere* them (which could be translated ‘to fear’ if cultural patriarchy is allowed to reign). This subordination was understood to be ordained by God for all believers.

The irony of this is that at exactly the same time Africa was busy patterning life after biblical cultures of two or three thousand years ago to institute women subordination and exclude them from leadership through literal understanding of some passages, the Jewish law had fairly relaxed in some regions to include women in synagogue leadership even “to ordain the first woman rabbi in 1972”²⁵⁸, even though not necessarily in embracing the teachings of Jesus which offered a new understanding of the role of women.

Secondly, due to the way the Akamba conceptualized time in terms of present and past, the state of women’s subordination reinforced by the cultural worlds of the

²⁵⁸ Jacoba Kuikman, “Women in Judaism,” in *Women and Religious Traditions*, eds., Leona M. Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50.

bible could only be more of a given for all time than a situation of a journey in progress. Mbiti sheds more light on the minimal futureless conception of time noting that the aspect of “future is there in as far as it falls within the rhythm of nature, meaning the seasons (rainy or dry), day and night, procreation, birth, growth, death, and so on.”²⁵⁹ Consequently, Akamba theology had no conscious openness to change in the here and now, or in the near future of the people because they “look more to the ‘past’ for the orientation of their being than to anything that might yet come into human history. For them History does not move toward any goal yet in the future: rather, it points to the roots of their existence”²⁶⁰.

Bediako attempts to correct a perceived misunderstanding of Mbiti’s perspective on African view of life has elicited but the correction does not show how the worldview has a different future vision. He points out that these “two dimensions of ‘past’ and ‘present’ merge and hold forth promise of a ‘living’ future, which is already anticipated in a dynamic present that makes all things new.”²⁶¹ In any case, it is a common feature in African context that “change is usually frowned on and even inhibited by religious, cultural and social norms” because it disturbs the social harmony and balance that everyone works towards.²⁶² Moreover, African women themselves were particularly known to “resist change if change holds a possibility of jeopardizing the calm of the community.”²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Mbiti, “The Bible in African Culture”, 34.

²⁶⁰ John Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology*, 23-24.

²⁶¹ Kwame Bediako, “John Mbiti’s Contribution to African Theology,” in *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, eds., Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), 386.

²⁶² Turaki, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion*, 114.

²⁶³ Oduyoye, “Feminist Theology”, 172.

But then cultures change “because they comprise people, who constantly adjust to their surroundings and re-interpret available information into ever-changing contexts.”²⁶⁴ As noted above, a people’s present life is inseparably accompanied by their past. But in the same ‘present’ of a people, one finds the whisperings and early signs of a future in the process of becoming. The idea of looking backwards incapacitated African theology in sensing and discerning where the people would be going in terms of immediate and distant developments or what the God of the universe would bring their way.

Dyrness, who has an open support for African theology and other traditional theologies, is particularly concerned about the African theology’s lack of constructive interaction with change incapacitating its usefulness in addressing people’s modern issues, questions and concerns.²⁶⁵ The church has the responsibility of discerning the directions of inevitable change among its people and directing it in accordance to the purposes of God in line with what He is doing in the lives of the people and in the universe.

Women’s marginalization and discrimination were left to continue without church intervention until the red flag would be raised by the global push for their empowerment and gender equality towards the end of the 20th and into the 21st century. And theology would abet this marginalization by culturally enforcing the role and importance of women on their sexuality particularly in their getting married

²⁶⁴ Gregg Okesson, *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity within Akamba Christianity in Kenya* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publication, 2012). 181.

²⁶⁵ William A. Dyrness, *Learning about Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).

and bearing children for her husband that has no view of the changes that God is bringing their way. Mbiti substantiates how this limiting view of womanhood works:

Unhappy is the woman who fails to get children for, whatever other qualities she might possess, her failure to bear children is worse than committing genocide: she has become the dead end of him and life, not only for the genealogical line but also for herself. When she dies there will be nobody of her own immediate blood to 'remember' her, to keep her in the state of personal immortality: she will simply be 'forgotten'. The fault may not be her own, but this does not 'excuse' her in the eyes of society.²⁶⁶

If this were a simple description of how life used to be in the African traditional situation, it would be understandable. But given that the book was intended to be used as a text book in learning institutions and pastoral training guide, he is strongly also speaking of how the situation should be, powered by the strong use of the present tense in the description. This does not consider the role of women in changing cultural situations and values. In fact this point has not been missed by the eye of African feminists who love the family. Oduyoye particularly takes offence in the harsh and insensitive tone in describing women who may not have children and their purported insignificance of whatever else they do on account their failure.²⁶⁷ This is especially true because children come from God, and the times are changing where women are taking other important roles alongside, or besides childbearing.

The pastors' teachings in the previous chapter, and indeed the entire marital theology do not seem to understand how women's empowerment has changed social life or how it can be God's will. They continue to dispense teachings that are not

²⁶⁶ Mbiti, *Love and marriage*, 110.

²⁶⁷ Mercy Oduyoye, "A Critique of Mbiti's view on Love and Marriage in Africa," in *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, eds., Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993).

helpful to the members in the churches. What Henderson says about the struggles of American ministers in connecting with modern American life is also true concerning African life. We seem to keep posting bouncing parcels from God to His people that come back labeled: “Return to Sender” because “the address of the world around us has changed ... We keep delivering the same words to the old address, but no one is home.”²⁶⁸ The developments of women’s empowerment and gender equality were completely unexpected or prepared for. It is lamentable that it is the governments and international organizations, acting on their capacity in secular oversight role that realized that women have been marginalized and that something needed to be done, but not the church, the crusader for righteousness and justice.

Thirdly, the introduction of a definite eschatological Christian reality in life among the Akamba who did not have a substantial future dimension seems to have over-engaged theological discourse to emphasize this future with God so that the gospel has little or no bearing to the human social conditions of the believer.²⁶⁹ The deplorable state of marriage does not seem to concern the clergy; neither does it seem to be out of place among the people who acknowledge that marriage was instituted by God, and who have a religious worldview in all they do. Materials developed for teaching bear this mark as we have seen in the previous chapter. The proposed re-contextualization advocated by theologians has not taken place after the context has drastically changed.

²⁶⁸ David Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God’s Truth to our Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 15 – 16.

²⁶⁹ Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology*.

Perhaps it is in marriage where the true spirit of community life is compromised the most in African theology. The theology that emerged was separatist in approach and it pushed community to the sidelines emphasizing personal conversion and the fact that everyone will stand alone on the judgment throne of God. Even though Akamba Christianity stood on a religious background with strong kinship and community ties, African Christian theology reducing the family to a group of people occasionally coming together but each minding their own business as the wives and husbands in the previous chapter resorted to doing. The one-ness of husband and wife reflected in scripture in the Genesis accounts is lost as people opt for, for instance, Pauline instructions in Ephesians and Timothy. The readings that assign men only teaching roles in the church and a superior role in the family are thought to be contextualization of God's order in church and family. But this might as well turn out to be rather a contextualization of disorder to situations that did not have the problematic issues and dynamics that Paul was addressing.

Fourthly, Akamba theology does not seem to have God at the center of theology. There are different opinions regarding the central focus of African religions with some on one hand arguing that man is at the focus and others holding that God is.²⁷⁰ But there seems to be consensus that ancestral spirits were in constant daily communion with the community (were actually part of the community), and prayers, sacrifices or veneration were offered especially to them, and only occasionally to the Supreme God as in times of major occurrences such as war or draught.²⁷¹ Because

²⁷⁰ See Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* and Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *God and Man in African Religions* (London: Cassell Ltd, 1981) as representatives of the two groups.

²⁷¹ See Idowu and Jacob K. Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

daily lives were lived in view of the ancestors' will of preserving the community's customs and traditions, it is correct to argue that neither man or even God were at the 'practical center' of religious life, but the community itself, empowered by the role of their living dead. The understanding of culture has therefore been basically anthropological seeing it essentially as basically a people's shared way of life. Shorter, for instance defines it as "a framed, bounded, coherent system, shared by a number of individuals, on whom it confers a distinctive identity."²⁷² Dyrness sees the lack of incorporation of religious categories and particularly an absence of a theological framework in the explanation of what culture is and how it develops and works as the major set-back of anthropological views on culture. He agrees with anthropologists that culture is "that changing set of communal practices and assumptions that serve as a repertoire of a people's actions and by which they express their identity."²⁷³ However, he grounds this theologically on what people understand as they interact and engage with the working and presence of God embodied in creation and in the world around them.

In matters to do with women in the family and church, evangelical theology the world over is basically western and propagates an inferior position for women with reference to their male counterparts, barring them out of full participation in God's continuing program for the redemption of the world. Feminist theology protested this position to which the evangelical church responded towards the end of last century defending their position and blaming the breakdown of the family on feminism and the drive for equality of men and women that results to "more divorce,

²⁷² Aylward Shorter, *African Culture: An Overview* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998), 26.

²⁷³ Dyrness, *The Earth is God's*, 67.

more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity.”²⁷⁴ Evangelical feminists in turn responded in the beginning of this century challenging the hierarchical gender relations of and insisting on egalitarian complementary for family and church a re-reading of biblical passages.²⁷⁵ One can be sure that the ‘biblical’ locking of horns in arguments and counter-arguments will not stop any time soon even though both camps read the same bible to come to their conclusions. The concern raised by this stalemate is that scripture is the ultimate authority where divergence is resolved and it is on its very words and readings that this divergence is rooted. In the meantime, the deteriorating situation of marriage in the theology-culture encounter is going on, undeterred.

5.4. Conclusion

The Akamba (and African) theology was developed in its formative years with a strong and influential background of gender inequality, without a future vision or possibility for change of the people’s life situations; without a sense of God’s active involvement in the worlds of the people; and with a strong sense of individualism and separation of persons. This theology disadvantaged women perhaps more than any other group of persons. As the context has shifted in the light of women’s empowerment, this theology become the very block on which marriage would be

²⁷⁴ This quote is from John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity”, 33. See also similar contributions in the collection which has been hailed as ‘Book of the year’ for Christianity today.

²⁷⁵ For various contributions, see *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without hierarchy*, eds., Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothui and Gordon D. Fee (InterVarsity Press, 2005).

stumbling as it insists on teachings that cannot work for today's generation to create the relationships that God desires for His people. It is indeed the mandate of theology in Africa to create an understanding of the gospel in keeping with African context and realities, but also to discern that it is dealing with people who are on the move in the light of what is doing in their lives.

We strongly believe that an alternative marriage theology is urgently required to guide husbands and wives out of the disorientation of cultural disruption to enjoy the blessing of that empowerment and stand against its destructive effects. The next section will propose the foundation for constructing this theology, rising from a theological reading of His word, centered on God's presence and active involvement in the lives and relationships of His people in their contexts.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to assess the current situation of marital disharmony and the churches' response to it. Examining the relationship between the church's teaching and the marital challenges of husbands and wives, the study has demonstrated that the current teachings of the church are not able to address the marital disharmony in the wake of women's empowerment because the contextualized theology from which the church draws its teachings on marriage discussed in the previous chapter cannot adequately address the changing and complex cultural situation today. Owing to this theology, the church dismisses women's empowerment and gender equality as unbiblical and as Satan's tools for destroying marriage. Towards the end of the previous chapter, the need for the development of a more appropriate African Christian marriage theology for the complex changing situation in which marriage finds itself today was proposed. Also, the church was challenged to consider the possibility that women's empowerment and gender equality could be, after all part of what God is doing in the world today which would form the basis for such a marriage theology. The development of such a theology is an enormous task and obviously an on-going process hardly achievable in the scope of this project. However, in a way of conclusion, this chapter proposes a theological foundation for that theology centered on what God is doing in the world and in the specific contexts of His people. This chapter argues that women's empowerment and gender equality are not Satan's agenda but, on the contrary, are part of what God is doing by His

Spirit to restore the world, humanity, and marriage to what He intended of them from the beginning. We will first sketch out our understanding of what God is doing in the world and proceed to suggest how He might be at work in women's empowerment. This will be followed by some recommendations for the church.

6.1 God's Mission in the World

What God is doing in the world could be based on Scripture and summarized as creation and restoration. This program begins with His causing the world to exist by the word of His mouth – an ordered world that comprised of harmonious relationships and interrelationships of everything as described in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. The Bible opens with the words “In the beginning God created”, and this beginning does not include His own beginning. His name is “I am”, ever present yesterday, today and tomorrow. In the last stages of this process, He creates humanity, both male and female, in His image and likeness for the stewardship of the rest of creation in accordance to His will and purposes. This image of God has been discussed extensively in theology and explained as the ability of humanity to rule, to exist in relationships, to be moral, or to be emotional and eternal beings, just to name a few explanations.²⁷⁶ Whatever it is, we can say with certainty that male and female are equally bearers of the imprint of God and that their relationship at this stage reflects this image in mutual co-operation and harmony, unity and complementarity, sharing and caring – so strongly that the two stand united, and when they fall, they fall together united. The fall disrupts the harmonious running of creation and its

²⁷⁶ See: Stanley Grenz, “Journey toward a Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27” in *Journal of Theological Interpretation* Vol. 4.2 (2010). Richard S. Briggs emphasizes government aspects as God's representatives in “Humans in the Image of God and Other things Genesis Does Not Make Clear” in *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4.1 (2010). See also Gerald R. McDermott's explanation of moral and communicable attributes of God such as love, holiness and other aspects, “The Emerging Divide in Evangelical Theology” in *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* Ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, 56/2 (2013).

relationships with God and its elements, and causes a deviation from what William Dyrness calls the “trajectory of life” to the “trajectory of death”.²⁷⁷

God responds to the fall in a series of activities such as covering the nakedness of humanity; promising a final defeat of Satan by the offspring of the woman; and choosing Abraham and his descendants Israel and making a covenant to bless all the nations of the earth through them. God fulfills this covenantal promise by giving the nations access to restoration through the sacrificial blood of His Son Jesus Christ, the Revelation of the Father in human flesh, also called the Second Adam. Salvation needs to be understood in its entirety in terms of restoration as Jesus availing the opportunity and possibility for shalom-peace for individuals and relationships with creation, and with God as he had intended in the beginning, even though the final restoration ushered in as presented in Revelation 21 and 22 is yet to come. This ought to be the starting point of the healing process of marriage which requires the support of an empowering marriage theology of restoration. This process would not be possible without the working of the Holy Spirit whose ministry in the world is a major development in the continuation of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ after His ascension.

Jesus explains the two-fold role of the Spirit to the disciples disappointed with His having to leave them in John 16:5-15. Apart from Him being the abiding “Helper” who would teach them and reveal to them things yet to come that Jesus had not yet revealed, He would also be present and actively involved in the world – convicting it of sin, righteousness and judgment – a role that only God can and must

²⁷⁷ For full discussion on these trajectories, see William Dyrness, “Poised between Life and Death: The Imago Dei after Eden,” in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age*, eds., Beth Felker Johns and Jeffrey W. Barbeau (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 2016), 50-54.

play in the new developments of opening up the entire world and its peoples to the good news of restoration. So, in both an operational and chronological sense, Jesus brings together the work of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the on-going process of restoring the world.

There is need to understand the relationship between God and scripture because God Himself is not scripture. Those who tie their response to God too closely to the literal words of the Bible may find themselves, ironically, too far from what God is doing. A basic fact to bear in mind is that all that God is doing is not written in the Bible. Indeed, He is beyond and above it as “the God who stands behind and is mediated in Scripture.”²⁷⁸ Neither is He bound, contained or limited in the Bible’s words such that He cannot do anything new or unfamiliar to us. These facts can be unsettling to us evangelical believers because of the high regard we accord Scripture, and rightly so; but can also be liberating to know that God is in charge in the world in His Sovereignty, and we are not.

The Spirit’s powerful work is manifest in the great transformations in and outside the Bible with humanity as agents of the world’s relationships and situations, centered on, and driven by God. God is not limited in time or place, but actively involved in the world among all peoples and His entire creation.²⁷⁹ As we pointed out in the previous chapter, culture is not just a people’s way of life that develops from adaptation to their environment, but a product of communion with God in the Spirit and in creation. This means that we look even into Scripture to see this process of renewing and restoration taking place in, for example, Jesus’ treatment of women as

²⁷⁸ Joel B. Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 5.

²⁷⁹ William Dyrness, *The Earth is God’s*.

well as Paul's openness to the restoration of women in the church and ministry; and look further to see, and expect the Spirit's restoration of persons and their relationships, communities and their structures, nations and their systems as well as the world and creation to God. It is in this wider vision that the Spirit's is understood and expected to be at work in women's empowerment and gender equality as corrections of marginalization of women, and a of society and its relationships to the will and purposes of God as proposed below.

6.2 The Spirit's Mission in Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

Because God is present and active among people in their contexts, we suggest He is involved globally today, achieving His purposes through women's empowerment and gender equality campaigns in His own way. We wish to acknowledge that this argument is made in tension of two realities. First, we acknowledge that God is God, and sovereign. His ways are above our ways and cannot be contained by human understanding. He does what He wills whether it makes sense to humans or not. So, this section stands as suggestions on what God might be doing, lest we fall into the trap of assuming we know everything that God is doing or not doing in the world.

On the other hand, God has made plain His mission to us His people from the beginning to the end, and has invited us to take part in it as God's workmanship in Christ created to be included in the same mission of God (Eph. 2:10), so that what He is doing is considerably knowable. We therefore, with the humility just mentioned, dare to think theologically and invite others to do the same on what we think God is doing in women's empowerment and gender equality. We content that it is the role of the church to understand what God is doing in these enterprises and become part of it

guiding the ups and downs of the change process to stand against the wiles of the enemy. At least we are convinced that this is not the work of Satan, at all, but that Satan might take advantage of the emerging gaps to create confusion; or even claim ownership of the entire project.

First, we suggest that God is putting His world in order by addressing the problem of inequality and the adverse effects of male dominance over female. The fact that God is involved in cultural formation as we have argued earlier does not mean that everything in culture is good. God has provided creation and the entire universe, relationships, and the local physical environment to humanity to figure out and determine interaction structures and possibilities with this general environment which is not withdrawn from them after the fall. As fallen beings but still bearers of the image of God notwithstanding, humanity gets certain things pertaining to the will of God perfectly right and others awfully wrong. Through this interaction, humanity is able to gather fruits and roots for food and develop towards agricultural production, domesticate animals and birds, engage in trade with neighbors and create industrial and technological revolutions to benefit society as history has witnessed.

But some aspects of culture are still distorted because humans are still to an extent struggling with the consequences of the fall.²⁸⁰ It is also in such mastering of the environment that drove Cain to kill his brother Abel; Egypt saw the threat of the Hebrews and hatched a plan to enslave them and kill their male children; some nations took advantage of their strength and exploited others through slave trade and colonization; and manhood took advantage of its privileges and opportunities to marginalize womanhood. This last aspect arises early in Genesis 3:16 as one of the

²⁸⁰ Dyrness, *The Earth is God's*.

consequence of the fall when the man starts to rule over the woman – because God had created them and charged both of them with the responsibility, not one to rule the other, but both to rule the rest of creation according to chapter 1:26. God has radically addressed the effects of the fall in the work of Jesus Christ and has availed the possibilities for fulfilling male-female relationships today through His Spirit. What is experienced today is a sick state of marriage as described in chapter two of this dissertation in detail as an anomaly in God’s scheme of things, especially for the people who have been powerfully reconciled to Him in Christ.

Almost all the cultures in the world have functioned with structures that have empowered men socially, culturally, economically and politically more than women, creating inequality gaps that cultivate injustice and abuse of women’s rights.²⁸¹ It is these injustices that have attracted the attention of the United Nations in their concerted efforts to foster development by removing discriminatory structures against women by ensuring for them accessibility to education, employment and decision-making positions among others as described in chapter three of this dissertation.²⁸² God in his sovereignty might have chosen to stir the hearts of United Nations leaders in the 21st century to push through His agenda in the name of women’s empowerment towards the creation of a more just and equitable society through the consensus of well-meaning people (all created in the image of God) over time to affirm what is good.

²⁸¹ See Mill, *The Subjection of Women*; Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism* and Burn, *Women across Cultures*.

²⁸² For highlights though, you can see The United Nations, *26th Session of the Human Rights Council; Family Matters; Platform for Action* and also Africa Union’s Protocol for the African Charter.

Indeed, the quest for women's empowerment and gender equality is in no way incompatible with God's character of righteousness and justice, and the expectation of the same of humanity. Their nature and pervasive effects resonate with the unrestricted move of the Spirit in the world in the light of God's continuing work. One cultural reality the world over is the changing roles of women and the potential benefits this difference can make.

This would not be new work but a continuation of what He has been doing. God sent His Son as His personal revelation to preach and invite humanity to the Kingdom relationship with Him and with one another. Jesus further modeled what it means to be human in the image of God and particularly how He (being God) would treat His people – even the marginalized with full dignity– the poor, Gentiles, tax-collectors and women. Jesus demonstrated that the conception and use of power among God's people in terms of the greater being served by the lesser is not in line with God's vision for the world and true humanity. For instance, He taught and modeled servant hood by acts like washing the feet of the disciples and commanding them to do likewise. Moreover, God is at work in the Spirit in the continuation of Jesus ministry as we have seen above.

Unfortunately, our reading of Scripture today hardly leaves room for the Spirit to do anything in the world but largely consigns Him to the margins. To put it even more strongly, our understanding of the Bible reduces God to reproducing first century Palestinian or Jewish cultures to new situation. We either read the Bible directly, or depend on our historical critical study expertise “to isolate the one, single,

historically intended, correct meaning of a biblical text” which is not possible²⁸³.

Once we get this meaning, we then apply it through contextualization – “a process of ‘packaging’ biblical truth in ways that are relevant to the diversity of current cultures.”²⁸⁴ We not only fail to create room to the Spirit to work; we also effectively obstruct what He might be doing in the way we handle new cultural situation with scripture. If God is working out justice in gender relations and alleviating women’s subjugation, we stand against this process when we reject women’s empowerment and teach husbands and wives to reject them as well.

But why would God choose to do this without the church which should be in the forefront of what He is doing in the Spirit? That leads us to the second thing that we suggest God is doing: He is calling upon the church to put its house in order, and wake up to its restoration responsibility. Scripture is full of instances where God did something that His people were not ready to accept because of the way they had traditionally understood Scripture. For instance, in Mark 9:38-41, the disciples of Jesus find a man casting out devils in Jesus’ name and they stop him because he is not ‘an insider’.

Jesus commands them not to stop him and gave the reason, “whoever is not against us is for us.” The ‘us’ here immediately refers to Jesus and the disciples. But the man would not be doing that kind of ministry without the Spirit of God. So, in another sense, the ‘us’ also includes the Godhead as participants of the great restoration program of which Jesus and the disciples are part. Again, God sent Jesus as the messiah king of the Jews but they rejected him and eventually killed Him. Also,

²⁸³ Joel B. Green, “The Challenge of Hearing the New Testament,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd Ed., ed. by Joel B Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 11.

²⁸⁴ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 213.

when God opened the doors for the Gentiles into His economy to share in the inheritance of Israel according to His purposes, His people rejected it precipitating Jewish resistance that would not be fully resolved by the Jerusalem Council in Acts of the Apostles chapter 15, but would stalk Paul's missions throughout.

The evangelical church similarly rejects women's empowerment and gender equality on the grounds that both attempt to make husbands and wives equal, and to contradict Paul's commands for husbands to be the heads and wives to submit and obey them as we saw in chapter 4. As a result, the empowerment and equality agenda are dismissed as Satan's strategies to destroy family, church and society. One element easily missed in such reading of Paul's letters is the radical shift that elevates women from their subordinated identities in Judaism and Greco-Roman backgrounds in Paul's elaboration of Christ's teachings. Through an analysis of this background, John Bristow argues that Paul radically opposed the degradation of women in the first century advocating for equality of men and women, husbands and wives; and that the church reverted back to pagan beliefs instituting husbands' control over the wife. Effectively, "Paul's model for husbands and wives, based on the way that Christ as head of the Church by being its savior – even willing to die for his beloved – was lost to Christian theology" and how "Aquinas by example established Aristotle's model, in which the husband is the lord of his wife, as more authoritative for Christians."²⁸⁵

Borrowing Dyrness' language of trajectories cited above, we can say that if the fall projected life in the "trajectory of death" so that Jesus restored it back to the "trajectory of life", Greek philosophical worldview that perpetuated inequality in

²⁸⁵ John T. Bristow, *What Paul really said about Women: An Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991), 118.

church and family again derailed the course of theology setting it on a trajectory of women devaluation whose effects would haunt the church and its life for many centuries. William Weinrich surveys church traditions and practices depicting how great church reformers like Tertulian, Luther, and Calvin were influenced by the Church fathers who were in turn influenced by this Greek thinking, to keep women off some leadership positions in the church. He however notes that John Wesley took a different position as he believed that ““an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit’ suspends the apostolic regulation and allows a woman to speak in public.”²⁸⁶

The weight of this profound insight on the “impulse of the Spirit” has not penetrated deeply in the church, or the realization that after the Pentecost event, the “extra-ordinary” becomes “ordinary”. The worrying possibility is that God might have waited for the church for many centuries to spear-head this project in vain. The church has not only failed to play its role, but it even enforces a practice that does not rhyme with God’s vision for co-operation and complementarity of male and female in the world and in the church.

Feminist protests, perhaps as God-sent to stir the church to reconsider its position, are usually resisted getting the church to work even harder to affirm their heritage that women are subordinated to men by God’s order from the beginning. Feminist rereading of the Bible hermeneutically, for instance, to reveal that Paul’s epistles were not assigning women an inferior place universally but were a reflection of the contextual situation of the time, is dismissed as unnecessary “amount of energy

²⁸⁶ William Weinrich, “Women in the History of the Church: Learned and Holy, But Not Pastors,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds., John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 278.

and ingenuity expended to rescue Paul from himself”²⁸⁷ and “an increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts.”²⁸⁸ The church is largely out of shape spiritually and socially. It does not only fall into the danger of misrepresenting God, it also minimizes the accomplishment of Jesus’ work and the efficacy of the cross with respect to restoration. Thirdly, God may be calling upon the church to rise above its ignorance in the misunderstanding of the essence of the calls for women’s empowerment and especially gender equality which are in pursuit of God’s principles of justice, equity, righteousness and peace.

For equality itself is a mathematical misconstruction when applied to male and female as created by God, because God did not create sameness in them. He created the two different for His purposes and that difference does not bear superiority or inferiority.

In fact, equality is strongly implied in both bearing the image of God and both called to exercise their gifts in having dominion over the rest of creation.²⁸⁹ The church might benefit to reconsider its position in the light of God’s standards for a just and righteous people. Instead of spending almost two millennia discussing whether men and women are equal and using it against women, the church would gain more by listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches and leading believers after His

²⁸⁷ D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: on the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds., John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 141.

²⁸⁸ Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood*, 469

²⁸⁹ William A. Dyrness, *Let the Earth Rejoice: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1983), 35.

example. This is because “the message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination”.²⁹⁰

The third thing that God might be doing in women’s empowerment is that He might be vindicating His name that has been profaned among the nations for many centuries. In Ezekiel chapter 36, God describes how His name was profaned when He punished His people with Babylonian exile, and the nations understood Yahweh to be like other gods who would forsake their people and fail to protect them, a position that destroys the “otherness” of God. He repeatedly told them that it was not for their sake that He was delivering them but for the sake of His own name. The arguments and counter arguments between evangelicals and their feminist counterparts leave God’s people with confusion, even questioning the love and fairness of God for women where God is portrayed as one who endorses injustice.

In the meantime, Christianity is lumped up together with all other religions in their oppressive practices and philosophies to women. For instance, Christine Mubonzo Mbeya enumerating the woes of African women crowns it with this observation: “Furthermore, the patriarchal God of Christianity and Islam has not rescued African women from their second class status. It has reinforced the bias of certain African cultures which keep women subdued, controlled and excluded in some area of full leadership, (for instance the exercise of the ordained ministry)”.²⁹¹

Although Christianity preaches equality of persons, those who see this as theoretical

²⁹⁰ John Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant – An Exposition and Commentary* – Lausanne Occasional Papers no. 3 (Wheaton: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1975), paragraph 5.

²⁹¹ Christine Mubonzo Mbeya, “Recovering the True Self African Women in the Household of God,” in *Divine Empowerment of Women in African Complexities*, ed. Elizabeth Amoah (Accra-North, Ghana: Sam-Woode Ltd., 2001), 83. See also Burn, *Women Across Cultures* and Daniel Maguire and Shaikh Sa’diyya, eds., *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religions*.

and non-practical cannot be dismissed as baseless because of the church's propagation of structures of inequality.²⁹²

Such a discrepancy robs Christianity of its power and "otherness" and the ability to be a successful witness to the world on the saving, transformative and restorative power of God through Jesus Christ. In other words, the situation works against the mission of God. So, by empowering women the world over, and riding on gender equality, God is bringing the world to experience what he had intended and vindicating His name and glory. Unfortunately, the average Christian believes that these are driven by the secular world, or even by Satan – because God, as understood, would not approve of such contradictory development.

Finally, we suggest that God is at work in aligning marriage to His vision of a loving and fulfilling relationship of male and female through the divine precipitation and management of the marital crisis. A crisis is not necessarily a presentation of danger as much as of an opportunity for growth of marriage relationships.²⁹³ If the crisis is well understood and taken advantage of, the emerging marriage relationships will be better and more fulfilling than the former relationships.

God is not destroying marriage, for He instituted it: rather, He is reorganizing it so that it reflects Him better and bears witness to the world and creation of His goodness, love and justice in true manhood and womanhood. The fact that society has maintained the marriage institution universally makes a cross-cultural statement of God's stake in its formation, protection and commitment to its renewal at all times. First, God could be constructing women's identity and dignity in His vision as fellow

²⁹² Mill, *The Subjection of Women*.

²⁹³ Stephen R. Covey, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

bearers with men of His image and likeness. Previously women have reportedly remained in unhealthy marriage situations because of their over-dependency on their husbands for everything.²⁹⁴ Instead, empowered women well aligned with God's purposes choose marriage, not because they have to, but because they want to. The process of women's empowerment creates personal independence which is a prerequisite for meaningful interdependence of male and female in marriage.

Women's empowerment for the Spirit driven womanhood is not an avenue for individualistic independence but a growth stage towards interdependence of two individuals who both depend on God as instituted in the beginning. Secondly, God is also training manhood in different mindset of leadership so that, as Raymond Ortlund captures it, "*In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.*"²⁹⁵ So the church needs to rejoice at the process of removing oppression of women and be concerned that this removal enables women to exit oppressive marriages, enough to want to instruct and construct marriages without divisive structures of inequality, through empowering structures of both male and female for more stable and God glorifying relationships.

God is also redefining leadership of the husband to accommodate the empowered participation and contribution of the transformed women. These women are now equipped to contribute their gifts in the family and society. This is because marriage is not just a foundational institution for community or society, but, more

²⁹⁴ Burn, *Women Across Cultures*.

²⁹⁵ Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds., John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 95. Italics retained.

than that, the very foundation of God's idea of creation as well as His restoration work. If Jesus brought in any restoration in the world, and He did, it cannot exclude the restoration of male and female relationships to be closer to the original state. In other words, God wants to raise the standard in developing the culture of humans in marriage that originally operated in injustice to now operate at a higher level of unity, co-operation and intimacy by changing social structures necessary for this. The marriages of believers especially ought to be different because, one, they believe in God and in what He is doing from the beginning. Secondly, they have powerfully been reconciled to God in Jesus Christ and restored to His original intent. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit of God is working among them. In the creation of this new culture, the church cannot afford to leave the process to be shaped by the forces in the environment. It needs to be more involved, and directly, as facilitators of what God is doing with the environment. Other facilitators such as the media shape society in their own wisdom often out of tune with the working of God. For instance, as discussed extensively in chapter 1 of this dissertation, the newspapers have for a long time propagated their position that marriage no longer works today, and that couples, and especially women are happier in sexual relationships outside formal marriages. This picture of marriage as a failing institution ought to be counteracted by the church, especially through its modeling of happy and fulfilling marriages within its walls as a possibility of people embracing the will of God, and working together with Him to the glory of His Name. There is no limit to what humanity can achieve in the right shape that comes from being connected and driven by God.

In the process of writing this chapter, the researcher got the opportunity to visit the magnificent Red Rocks in the city of Denver in the State of Colorado. The landscape of this place is rugged with huge red rocks and valleys that badly terrace

the hilly landscape. But in this place, there exists the most beautiful park and an open-air amphitheater established in 1941 appropriating the natural gradient of the terrain to fill the trenches and construct an excellent slope for the sitting space enough to accommodate thousands of persons. People come from far and wide to behold this wonder. The spectacle stands there, beautiful, giving testimony to the possibility of the Trinitarian relationship of God, His creation and His people. God has provided creation and nudges humanity to act in the creativity He gave them to cultivate and make His creation more glorious. Without what has been done now, the place would have passed for useless wasteland. It was for me a symbol of the possibilities of God's creation thoughtfully brought to be, with room for humanity, created in the image and likeness of God to exercise their creativity to participate in their calling. For, indeed, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10).

Yet this may be nothing compared to what God the creator, and men and women as the created creative beings can accomplish, when they have been restored back to God through Jesus Christ. This is possible when God's idea of true manhood and womanhood driven by His Spirit, to act in accordance to His will and purposes for the world, is empowered by the church to do what it was created to do. As things stand, this is not tenable in the current situation. For this to be possible, there are certain things the church generally needs to do, to which we now turn.

6.3 Recommendations

The global church of Jesus Christ needs to get concerned when the walls of the marriage and family institutions lie in ruins after many years of Christianity's presence in the world. This is because marriage is at the center of what God's

creation in the beginning and even now. The church should no longer be satisfied with simplistic answers to the marital crisis that marital disharmony is caused by women's empowerment and modernity leading it to resist change as solution to the problem. Instead, church's theology has to position itself to expect, prepare for, and even take part in bringing about certain changes; not just because change is inevitable, but because it is God's agenda as He moves the world forward in His will according to His purposes, and inviting His people to participate in what He is doing.

Also, the church needs to realize that theology and development are not foes or hostile bedmates, but can be allies and tools in the hands of the working God. This calls for more cooperation of theology and development, and the need for the church to expand pastoral training curriculum to include development courses so that this cooperation can be enhanced. The dualistic approach that divides life aspects into sacred and secular limits God's involvement in the world; and attributes the work of development to Satan. Previous understanding of Scripture also needs to be re-examined in the light of what God is doing in the world to have scripture speak afresh to God's people. Any reading of the Bible that rules out God's active involvement in the world not only abuses God's Word, but also obstructs what He might be doing in the world in the life of His people.

For this reason, the church worldwide needs to reconsider their hardline positions in humility and have evangelical hierarchists and their egalitarian complementarian counterparts sit together and come up with agreements on what God actually desires for male and female, and what He is doing in the world today. The erection of walls and the cementation of hard lines on the understanding of manhood and womanhood does not help congregations in knowing the will of God for their lives in their time, but leaves them at the point of divergence of positions that do not

give a working way forward for male and female in the most intimate of human relationships. Difference on the meaning of Scripture is expected from time to time; but openness and fruitful conversation are necessary and only possible when the two listen to one another, and to what God might be doing in His Spirit.

Theology must be worked in close relationship to the cultural context of the people for it to be meaningful to them. But the context needs to be thoroughly appreciated in its turnings so that the message does not become the very hindrance to what God is doing in the world. The commitment to read scripture needs to be matched with the commitment to hear the cries of the society. The church ought to be informed by three critical points in the development of theology and theological teachings – humanity and the world as God intended of them in the beginning before the fall; the work of restoration of the world through Jesus Christ and its effects and implications; and the working of the Spirit of God in the world today. Insisting on teachings that inculcate inequality in the world that is moving towards equality and egalitarianism, which have been rejected before they are understood is no longer helpful. It becomes anachronistic and instantly alienates the context from the will of God for it. But the context also ought to be critiqued and aligned to the will and purposes of God, not just in the light of the written word of God, but also by what God is doing in the world through His Spirit. The church also needs to be in touch with the context in order to understand it. It is a shame when the church does not understand the struggles of couples to realize that the marital instruction it is disseminating is both unpractical but also, ironically, unbiblical.

Finally, the church, especially in Ukambani, needs to invest not only in the training of pastors for ministry but also encourage them to pursue higher holistic education. It is not proper when the pastors have the least levels of education, or are

much younger compared to the people they are pastoring, or are among the very poor in terms of income. These become points of discredit of their ministry, and demotivate people in seeking their intervention in times of struggles as people tend to look up to, and seek counsel from people who are more experienced, exposed and enlightened than them. Two things need to concern the church. The first one is the tendency of wives and husbands not to consider their pastors as mediators in their marriage struggles. This is very critical for stability of marriage is God's business with the church at the center. The second trend is the tendency of persons with higher levels of empowerment to leave the Africa Inland Church and opt for other churches in both rural and urban contexts. This needs to be investigated. It might that the teachings of other churches are more relevant to their world than their church.

We have argued that God is present and actively involved in the present situation of His people today fixing the world, the church, and marriage and restoring the glory of His name. God expects the church to occupy a central position in this mission and play an instrumental role in bringing about this vision. The church therefore cannot afford to remain alienated from its context and from what the Spirit could be doing in the world by the way it reads the bible. God "chose" to empower women by creating them in his own image, it is we who have decided to disempower them and has chosen again to restore this empowerment that has been lost over time. For if the Lord has chosen to do this, who are we to negate that empowerment and defend the status quo of marriage to the extent of instructing wives to leave their empowerment at their door steps because it cannot co-exist with marriage? When married persons in the church are craving after co-operation, unity and intimate

relationships motivated by the Spirit Himself, how do we insist on separation, division and alienation as our approach to couples' ministry demonstrated?

The church's view that separates husbands and wives in teachings, duties and roles, deters God's purpose of one-ness of male and female – not just limited to sexual intimacy but pervasive in all areas of marriage. The one-ness is so critical that God commanded that those He has put together should not be put asunder by any man. Caring for each other's needs and bearing one another's burdens ought to be most evident in marriage – the most intimate of human relationships. God, indeed, treasures the right image of marriage to the extent of making the Church the image of Christ's own spouse according to Ephesians 4:22, 33 and II Corinthians 11:2-4. In fact, in the book of Revelation 19 the church is likened to a bride adorned in white linen for her husband where the linen is the righteous deeds of the church. In short, the marriage and the church cannot afford to deviate from the shape that God desires.

So, women's empowerment may not be the secular agenda in Satan's hands to destroy the family as brought out the pastors in the study, but could be a tool in God's hands to heal that family and society in general. Also, marital disharmony in the church is not caused by women's empowerment nor is it really caused by cultural disruptions precipitated by women's empowerment because these could be competently addressed by an appropriate theology. To a greater extent, this disharmony is caused, and maintained by a marital instruction that fails the much needed relevance test to the context, and fails to recognize what God is doing in the world and plug in as His instrument in achieving better marriage relationships. It is caused by a twin failure of the church to discern and seize the grand opportunity inherent in crisis on the one hand, and on the other, the failure to address the danger therein to harness change's benefit for betterment of society.

For when dealing with matters to do with the will or purpose of God in the world, the question to ask is not just whether or not something is in the bible, because this could be misread to mean what God does not intend. Rather, the question should be: what is God doing at this juncture in His program with His people in their time and place? If we can figure out that, and a thorough knowledge and understanding of the bible will help us do this for it is the authority above all other – then we can have a good foundation upon which to base our marital theology and biblical teachings. Hopefully, after knowing where the problem lies, working out its solution should not be difficult especially in partnership with the God who is at work in the world. For it is the highest level of contradiction when the church finds itself unable to bring positive change in marriages because it positions itself against the very marriages by the inappropriate teachings it dispenses. We insist that a theological approach founded on God's presence and active involvement in the contexts of His people will provide a better foundation for developing an African marriage theology and marriage instruction that can foster healthier marriage relationships today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Abagi, Okwach. Foreword to *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender Perspectives and Trends*. UNESCO, 2006.
- Abbey, Rose. "I Am the Woman." In *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, edited by Musa Dube. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001: 23-26.
- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Greenwich, Fawcett Publications, 1959.
- Africa Union. *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*, Article 6. Accessed January 29, 2016. http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/women-protocol/achpr_instr_proto_women_eng.pdf.
- Bediako, Kwame. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western religion*, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- _____. "John Mbiti's Contribution to African Theology." In *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, eds. Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993.
- _____. *Theology of Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*. Oxford: Oxford Regnum Books, 1992.
- Bevans, B. Stephen. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Revised and Expanded Edition. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Brandon, Dorothy and Apollo Rwomire. Introduction to *African Women and Children: Crisis and Response*, edited by Apollo Rwomire. London: Praeger Publishers, 2001.
- Briggs, S. Richard. "Humans in the Image of God and Other things Genesis Does Not Make Clear." in *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4.1 (2010): 111-126.
- Bristow, T. John. *What Paul really said about Women: An Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and Love*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991.
- Burn, Shawn. *Women across Cultures: A Global Perspective*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2005.
- Carson, A. D. "'Silent in the Churches': on the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991.
- Chebii, Jerop Stella. "Menstruation and Education: How a lack of Sanitary Towels reduces School Attendance in Kenyan Slums." Accessed on January 28, 2016. <http://www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/27-31.pdf>.

- Chege N. Fatuma and Daniel N. Sifuna. *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender Perspectives and Trends*. UNESCO, 2006.
- Covey, R. Stephen. *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Craig, Detweiler and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003.
- Daly, Mary. "Theology after the Demise of God the Father: A Call for the Castration of Sexist Religion" in *Sexist Religion and Women in the Church: No more Silence*. Edited by Alice L. Hageman. New York: Association Press, 1974: 125-142.
- Daystar University. 37th Graduation Ceremony Programme. Saturday 27th June, 2015.
- Deneulin, Severine and Masooda Bano. *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* London: Zed Books, 2009.
- Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* New York: United Nations, 2010. Accessed January 4, 2016. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW_full%report_color.pdf.
- Dube, W. Musa. "Fifty Years of Bleeding: A Storytelling Feminist Reading of Mark 5:24-43" in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Edited by Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001: 50-60.
- _____. Introduction to *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.
- _____. "Divining Ruth for International Relations" in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Edited by Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001: 179-195.
- Dyrness, A. William. *The Earth is God's: A Theology of American Culture*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1997.
- _____. *Learning about Theology from the Third World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990.
- _____. *Let the Earth Rejoice: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission*. Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1983.
- _____. "Poised between Life and Death: The Imago Dei After Eden." In *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age*, edited by Beth Felker Johns and Jeffrey W. Barbeau. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Endeley, RoseMarie-Rita and Rosetta R. B. Thomson. *Management of Credit Schemes for Women Entrepreneurs in Africa: A Training Manual*. United Kingdom: Commonwealth Secretariat and SFI Publishing, 2005.
- Fatuma, N. Chege and Sifuna, N. Daniel. *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender Perspectives and Trends*. UNESCO, 2006.
- Green, B. Joel. "The Challenge of Hearing the New Testament." In *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed., edited by Joel B Green. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.

- _____. *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.
- Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya. "Gender-Based Domestic Violence in Kenya." Accessed August 3, 2015. www.womankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/FIDA-Kenya-Report-pdf.
- _____. *Key Gains and Challenges: A Gender Audit of Kenya's 2013 Election Process*. 2013. Accessed February 5, 2016. <https://www.ndi.org/files/Kenya-Gender-Audit-2013-Electoral-Process.pdf>.
- Fee, D. Gordon & Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993.
- Gehman, Richard. *Doing African Christian Theology: An Evangelical Perspective*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1987.
- Geibel, Scott. "Same-Sex Sexual Behavior of Men in Kenya: Implications for HIV Prevention, Programs, and Policy 2004-2008." Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ghent University. Accessed July 31, 2015. <http://icrhk.org/sites/default/files/Thesis%20Scott%20Geibel%20Final%20text.pdf>.
- Gibellini, Rosino. Introduction to *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Gifford, Paul, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya*. London: Hurst & Company, 2009.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Government of Canada. "Response to Information Requests" (RIRs). Accessed October 16, 2015. www.justice.gc.ca/sits/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/11/07/KEN100271.FE.pdf
- Government of the Republic of Kenya, *2009 Population and Housing Census Results*. August 2010. Accessed July 15, 2016. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/36670466/Kenya-Population-and-Housing-Census-PDF>.
- _____. *Development of Education: National Report*. Ministry of Education. November 2008. Accessed January 28, 2016. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/kenya_NR08.pdf.
- _____. *First Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the First Medium Term Plan (2008-2012) of Kenya Vision 2030*. Nairobi, 2010.
- _____. *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2008-2009*. Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010.
- _____. *Kenya Population Situation Analysis*. July 2013. Accessed July 30, 2015. <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/Kenya/drive/FINALPSAREPORT.pdf>.

- _____ *Kenya Vision 2030: Second Medium Term Plan (2013-2017)*.
- _____ *Makueni County: First County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017*. August 2013. Accessed July 15, 2016.
[www.kenyampya.com/userfiles/MakueniCIDPsept2013\(1\).pdf](http://www.kenyampya.com/userfiles/MakueniCIDPsept2013(1).pdf).
- _____ “Sessional Paper No. _ of 2004 - A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research” Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. October 2004. Accessed January 28, 2016.
<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Kenya/Kenya%20Policy%20Framework%20Education%20Training.pdf>.
- Graham, Anne. *Womanhood Revisited: A Fresh Look at the Role of Women in Society*. Geanies House: Christian Focus Publication, 2002.
- Hanks, Thomas. “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities.” Accessed November 6, 2015.
<http://www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar/ingles/brochure.pdf>.
- Henderson, David. *Culture Shift: Communicating God’s Truth to our Changing World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Human Rights Watch, “Double Standards: Women’s Property Rights Violations in Kenya” in *Human Right Watch*. Vol. 15, No. 5(A). March 2003. Accessed September 27, 2011.
<https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/kenya0303/kenya0303.pdf>
- Idowu, Bolaji. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. Orbis Books, 1975.
- Institute of Economic Affairs-Kenya. “Status of Gender Desks at Police Stations in Kenya: A Case of Nairobi Province,” September 2009.” Accessed October 16, 2015. www.ieakenya.or.ke.
- Izugbara, Chimaraoke, Ronny Tikkanen and Karn Barron. “Men, Masculinity and Community Development in Kenyan Slums.” In *Community Development 2014*. Accessed October 6, 2015. www.aphrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Izugbaraet-al.pdf.
- Kamaara, K. Eunice. “Gender Empowerment in Africa.” In *Theologies of Liberation and Reconstruction*, edited by Isaac M. T. Mwase and Eunice K. Kamaara. Nairobi: Acton, 2012.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi, “Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Contribution” in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Edited by Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001: 101-113).
- Kato, Byang. *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishers, 1975.
- Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics. *Economic Survey 2015*. Accessed September 24, 2015. <http://www.knbs.or.ke>.
- _____ *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2003*. Accessed July 21, 2015. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnacy934.pdf.
- _____ *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2008-09*. Accessed November 6, 2015. <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR229/FR229.pdf>.

- _____. *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey: Key Indicators 2014*. Accessed July 21, 2015. <http://www.knbs.or.ke>.
- _____. *Makueni District Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2008*. Accessed July 21, 2015. www.knbs.or.ke.
- _____. *Women and Men in East, Central and Southern Africa: Facts and Figures*. Nairobi: KNBS, 1995.
- Khamisi, Joe. *The Politics of Betrayal: Diary of a Kenyan Legislator*. USA: Trafford Publishing, 2011.
- Kieti, Mwikali and Peter Coughlin. *Barking, You Will be Eaten: The Wisdom of Kamba Oral Literature*. Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers, 1990.
- Kim, Kirsteen. *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007.
- Klein W. William, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and expanded edition. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004.
- Kuikman, Jacob. "Women in Judaism." In *Women and Religious Traditions*, ed. Leona M. Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Jennings, Willie. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origin of Race*, New Haven: Yale University Press. 2010. Kindle version.
- Kimilu, D. N. *Mukamba Wa W'o*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 2013.
- Kisembo, Benezeri, Laurenti Magesa & Aylward Shorter. *African Christian Marriage*. London: G. Chapman, 1977.
- Kivuto, Ndeti. *Elements of Akamba Life*. Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1972.
- Kroeger, Clark Catherine and Nancy Nason-Clark. Introduction to *Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change*, edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger, Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008.
- Kuria, J. M. Muthari "The Challenge of Feminism in Kenya: Towards an Afrocentric Worldview". PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2001.
- Kyalo, P. M. "Family Values and Rituals in Changing Cultural Context: Analysis on Traditional Akamba Marriage and its Implications for Christian Marriage." *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities* Vol. 1, No. 2 (2011): 73-89. Accessed July 9, 2014. www.irssh.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/8_IRSSHVol_1_No_22.254141855.pdf.
- _____. "Quran and Cultural and Legal Challenges Analysis of the Practice of Islamic Law of Marriage and Divorce among the Akamba Muslims in Kitui, Kenya." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 1, No. 8 (July 2011): 189-197. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol.1.No.8;July.2011/22.pdf>.

- Magesa, Laurenti. *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004.
- _____. "From Privatization to Popular Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa." In *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology*, edited by Hanna Kinoti and John Waliggo. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1997.
- _____. "The Challenge of African Woman Defined Theology for the 21st Century." In *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century*, edited by Nahashon Ndung'u and Philomena Mwaura. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.
- _____. *The Church and Liberation in Africa*. Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1976.
- _____. "Reconstructing the African Family." In *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, edited by Andrew Kyomo and Sahaya G. Selvan. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004.
- Magoti, Evarist. "Globalization in Africa: Its Impact on Families and Christian Responses." In *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, edited by Andrew Kyomo and Sahaya G. Selvan. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004.
- Maguire, Daniel and Sa'diyya Shaikh, eds. *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religions: Roots and Cures*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007.
- Mbeya, Mubonzo Christine. "Recovering the True Self African Women in the Household of God." In *Divine Empowerment of Women in African Complexities*, edited by Elizabeth Amoah. Accra-North, Ghana: Sam-Woode Ltd., 2001.
- McDermott R. Gerald. "The Emerging Divide in Evangelical Theology." *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Vol 56, No2 (2013): 355-77.
- Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969.
- _____. *Akamba Stories* Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- _____. *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- _____. "The Bible in African Culture." In *Paths of African Theology*, edited by Rosino Gibellini. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994.
- _____. *Concepts of God in Africa*. London: S.P.C.K, 1970
- _____. *Introduction to African Religion*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1975.
- _____. *Love and Marriage in Africa*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- _____. *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*. Oxford University Press, 1971.
- _____. *The Prayers of African Religion*. London: SPCK, 1975.
- Mill, John. *The Subjection of Women*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988.

- Millard, Erickson. *Where is Theology going? Issues and Perspectives on the Future of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.
- Ministry of Health. *Policy Brief on Gender Based Violence: Health Policy Paper Sept. 2012*. Accessed September 24, 2015. www.vsojitolee.org.
- Moja, Tebogo. "Response to Shope's Paper." In *Women in Africa*. Institute For Reformational Studies Pamphlet No. 318, edited by Gertrude Shope, Denise Ackermann, Tebogo Moja, and H. A. Kamkhwani. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1984.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. Translated by Kohl, Margaret. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Mooney, Ann, Chris Oliver, and Marjorie Smith. "Impact of family Breakdown on Children's Well-Being: Evidence Review." Institute of Education, University of London, 2009. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11165/1/DCSF-RR113.pdf>.
- Mucai-Kattambo, W. Vicky, Janet Kabeberi-Macharia and Patricia Kameri-Mbote "Law and the Status of Women in Kenya." In *International Environmental Law Research Centre*. Geneva: International Environment House, 1995. Accessed February 15, 2016. www.ku.ac.ke/actil/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LAW-AND-STATUS-OF-WOMEN-IN-KENYA.pdf.
- Mugambi, N. K. Jesse. *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*. Nairobi: Acton, 2003.
- Mugambi, J. N. K. *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War*. Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1995.
- Muthengi, K. Julius "Polygamy and the Church in Africa: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives." Accessed March 2017 https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/14-2_055.pdf.
- Mutua, Rosalind. *Development of Education in Kenya: Some Administrative aspects 1846-1963*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975.
- National Council for Population and Development. *Insights on Family Health in Kenya: Further Analysis of Two Decades of Demographic and Health Surveys 1998-2009*. Nairobi: NCPD.
- Ndung'u, Nahashon and Philomena Mwaura, eds. Introduction of *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.
- Ngindu, A. Mushete. "An Overview of African Theology." In *Paths of African Theology*, edited by Rosino Gibellini. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Ngundo, M. Bibiana. "The African Family: Its State and Role in Contemporary Church and Society." In *African Family Today*, edited by Giuseppe Caramazza and Beatrice Churu. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015.
- Njau, Rebeka and Mulaki, Gideon. *Kenya Women Heroes and their Mystical Power*. Risk Publications, 1984.

- Njoroge, J. Nyambura. "The Bible and African Christianity: A Curse or a Blessing" in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Edited by Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001: 207-236).
- Nkulu-N'sengha, Mutombo. "Muntu, Kintu, and the Pursuit of Bumuntu: Reflection on the Roots of Violence against Women in African Traditional Religions." In *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religion: Roots and Cures*, edited by Daniel Maguire and Sa'diyya Shaikh. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007.
- Nthamburi, Zablon. *The African Church at the Crossroads: Strategy for Indigenization*. Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1991.
- Nyamidie, Kwami Esseboe John. "African Proverb of the Month – September 1999." Accessed February 3, 2016. <http://www.afriprov.org/african-proverb-of-the-month/25-1999proverbs/146-sep1999.html>.
- Nyaundi, Nehemiah. "The Contemporary African Family in the Light of Rapid Social Change Theory" In *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century*, edited by Nahashon W. Ndungu and Philomena N. Mwaura. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. "A Critique of Mbiti's view on Love and Marriage in Africa" In *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993.
- _____. *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004.
- _____. "Feminist Theology in an African Perspective" In *Paths of African Theology*, edited by Rosino Gibellini. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994.
- _____. *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*. Accra: Sam-Woode Ltd, 1986.
- Okesson, Gregg. *Re-Imaging Modernity: A Contextualized Theological Study of Power and Humanity within Akamba Christianity in Kenya*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publication, 2012.
- Oladipo, Rebecca, Michael Bowen, Mike Kuria, Peter Mageto, Alice Munene, Peter Ngure and Abraham Waithima. *A Synopsis of the Status of the Christian Family in Kenya*. Nairobi: Daystar University, 2003.
- Olupona, K. Jacob. *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Onah, Roseline. "Unequal Opportunities and Gender Access to Power in Nigeria" In *African Women and Children: Crisis and Response*, edited by Rwomire, Apolo. London: Praeger Publishers, 2001.
- Ongicho, Tom. "Battered women: A Socio-Legal Perspective of their Experiences in Nairobi." *African Study Monographs*, 21(1). Accessed January 10, 2015. http://jambo.africa.kyotou.ac.jp/kivoku/asm_normal/abstracts/pdf/21-1/35-44pdf.

- Orobator, E. Agbonkhianmeghe. *Theology Brewed in an African Pot: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from an African Perspective*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2008.
- Ortlund, Jr., C. Raymond. "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3" In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991.
- Otiende, J. E; S. P. Wamahiu and A. M. Karugu. *Education and Development in Kenya: A Historical Perspective*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Paulines Editorial Team. *Gender Concerns*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2010.
- Penwill, D. J. *Kamba Customary Law*. Nairobi: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1951.
- Phiri, Khofi Arthur. *African Traditional Marriage: A Christian Theological Appraisal*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2011.
- Pierce, W. Ronald, Rebecca Merrill Groothui and Fee D. Gordon, editors. *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*. InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Piper, John. "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible" In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991: 31-59.
- Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991.
- Plan International. *Submission to the Report of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Preventing and Eliminating Child, Early and Forced Marriage*. Geneva: Plan International, December 2013. Accessed February 15, 2016
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ForcedMarriage/NGO/PlanInternational2.pdf>.
- Raines, John. "The Mother of Life and the God of Death: Religious Roots of Violence against Women in Christianity" in *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religions: Roots and Cures*. Edited by Daniel C. Maguire and Sa'diyya Shaikh. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007: 90-107.
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1989.
- Ruether, Rosemary and Eleanor McLaughlin. *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Tradition*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.
- Sexton S. Jason. "The Imago Dei Once Again: Stanley Grenz's Journey toward a Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27" In *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 4.2 (2010).
- Shope, Gertrude. "Liberation of the African Woman" In *Women in Africa*. Institute for Reformational Studies Pamphlet No. 318, edited by Gertrud Shope,

- Denise Ackermann, Tebogo Moja, and H. A. Kamkhwani. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1984.
- Sifuna, D. N. *Short Essays on Education in Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980.
- Smith, W. Robertson. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: First Series – The Fundamental Institutions*. New Edition. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1889.
- Shorter, Aylward. *African Culture: An Overview*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1998.
- Sommers, Christina. *Who Stole Feminism: How Women have betrayed Women*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- Stevenson, Loise and St-Onge, Annette. “Support for Growth-oriented Women Entrepreneurs in Kenya”. 2005. Accessed January 29, 2016. <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/GOWE%20Kenya.pdf>.
- Stott, John. *The Lausanne Covenant – An Exposition and Commentary – Lausanne Occasional Papers no. 3*. Wheaton: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1975.
- Taiwo, Olufemi “Feminism and Africa: Reflections on the Poverty of Theory” In *African Women & Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*. edited by Oyèrónké Oyèwùmi. Trenton: African World Press, 2003.
- Tembe, Matthews Mangaliso. “An Investigation into the Causes of Divorce Amongst the Evangelical Church Members in Namakgale Township”. Thesis, Master of Theology. South African Theological Seminary.
- The National Treasury. “Treasury Circular No. 14/2013.” Accessed January 29, 2016 <http://www.ppoa.go.ke/images/downloads/circular/Treasury%20Circular.pdf>.
- Theological Advisory Group (TAG) of the Africa Inland Church. *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*. Machakos, Kenya: Scott Theological College, 1994.
- Thiong’o, Ngũgĩ. *The River Between*. London: Heinmann, 1967.
- _____. *Weep Not Child*. New York: Collier Books, 1964.
- Tuovinen, Marjo. “Mission and African Women: Women's Traditional Roles and New Identities in Christ.” in *African Theological Journal* Vol. 32 No. 1, (2009): 40 – 56.
- Turaki, Yusufu. *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview*. Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006.
- _____. “Practical Preparations of Religious Bodies Toward Peaceful Elections 2014.” Accessed January 4, 2016. www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_15723-1442-1-30.pdf?150428164845.
- UNICEF. “Early Marriage: Child Spouses.” *Innocenti Digest* No. 7, (March 2001). Accessed January 29, 2016. <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf>.

United Nations Development Programme – Kenya. *Report on the Regional Dialogue on Women’s Political Leadership 2012*. Accessed January 4, 2016.
<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/kenya/docs/Democratic%20Governance/UNDP%20champion%20womens%20leadership%20booklet3%20%281%29.pdf>.

The United Nations. 26th Session of the Human Rights Council. Accessed September 22, 2015.
www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBpdoes/HRC/REgularSessions/Session26/pages/26RegularSession.aspx.

_____. *Family Matters: Occasional Papers Series, No. 1*, (1992).

_____. *Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration*. New York, 1996

_____. *Women: Challenges to the Year 2000*. New York, 1991.

United States Census Bureau. “Remarriage in the United States: American Community Survey Reports, March 2015.” Accessed October 13, 2015
<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/acs/acs-30.pdf>.

Walls, Andrew. “The Discovery of ‘African Traditional Religion’ and its Impact on Religious Studies” In Introduction to *Seeing New Facets of the Diamond: Christianity as a Universal Faith – Essays in Honour of Kwame Bediako*, edited by Bediako, Gillian Mary, Behhardt Y. Quarshie and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2014.

Wanjohi, J. Gerald. “African Marriage, Past and Present:” In *Wajibu: A Journal of Social and Religious Concerns*, edited by Gerald Wanjohi and Wakuraya G. Wanjohi. Nairobi: Social and Religious Concerns of East Africa, 2005.

Waruta, W. Douglas. “Scripture Translations in Kenya” M.A Thesis. University of Nairobi, 1975. Accessed March 9, 2017.
http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/95524/Waruta%20_Scripture%20Translations%20In%20Kenya.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Weinrich, William “Women in the History of the Church: Learned and Holy, But Not Pastors”, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991.

World Bank. *Africa Development Indicators 2007*. Washington D.C., 2008.

World Economic Forum. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2015*. Accessed February 3, 2016. <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR2015/cover.pdf>.

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Pastors' Interview Questions

1. Preliminary questions

Age ----- Married or single ----- Type/length of marriage ----- Gender ----

Educational level ----- Income level -----

Involvement in church ministry (position and years' experience) -----

Number/Age of Children (where applicable) -----

2. Marriage enrichment forums

(a) What forums does the church organize for couples, for men, and for women?

(b) What are the three main areas emphasized in their central teachings?

(c) What is the frequency in a year?

(d) How would you rate the attendance?

(e) How would you rate the success of each one of these?

(f) What is your greatest challenge pertaining these meeting?

3. What would you say is the main challenge facing marriage in your experience?

4. What would you recommend as the solution to this challenge?

5. Do you think women empowerment and gender equality are biblical? Please explain.

6. Do you think women empowerment helps stabilize or destabilize marriage? Please explain briefly?

7. Have you dealt with the following cases in your ministry? If so please give some details on how frequently, the main causes, and how you dealt with it.

(a) Wife-beating in your church?

(b) Infidelity

- (c)
 - (d) Come-we-stay unions?
 - (e) Homosexuality?
 - (f) Polygyny?
 - (g) Divorce and separation?
 - (h) Any other? Briefly explain.
8. In your experience, has it had any effects on marriage – positive or negative when a woman earns more money than the husband or if she is more educated than the husband or if she holds a better job, etc.? Please explain.
9. How do members of your church share family duties and responsibilities as far as you know? What motivates them to share the duties this way?
10. What would you describe as the main elements of evangelical/biblical marriage theology?

Interview Questions for Women

Preliminary questions:

	INTERVIEWEE DETAILS	INTERVIEWEE'S SPOUSE DETAILS
Age bracket		
Educational level		
Income level		
Affiliation (Clubs, welfare Groups, etc.)		
Responsibility in Society		
Church affinity and Attendance		
Responsibility in Church		
Kind/length of marriage		
Involvement in church ministry		
Number of Children and their ages		

1. In what ways would you consider yourself an empowered woman?
2. What positive change has that empowerment caused in you as a person, a mother, a wife?
3. What are some of the challenges you face as a result of that empowerment and how have you addressed them?
4. How has your empowerment and your marriage supported or threatened each other?
Has there been any indication that your husband is uncomfortable with your empowerment? Please explain briefly.
5. What does your church teach as the pillars of a strong marriage and what is your comment on each?

6. What were the highlights of pre-marital and wedding counseling pertaining to your contribution and that of your spouse in marriage?
7. Have you heard of the teaching that the neck does not pass the head or that even if you are a manager, e.g. In your place of work you have to leave them at your door-step when you come home to become a wife? What is your opinion of this?
8. On family responsibilities
 - (a) What family responsibilities are done
 - (i) By you alone?
 - (ii) By your husband alone?
 - (iii) By you and your husband together?
9. If you are financially empowered, how do you decide on how to spend your income?
10. In case of a major conflict between you and your husband, do you consult the following – why or why not?
 - (a) Your parents?
 - (b) The pastor or any other church leader?
 - (c) A friend?
 - (d) Others, please explain

Which one of the above would you not consult and why?
11. What three things demonstrate to you that your husband loves you?
12. Do you think women empowerment and gender equality are biblical? Please explain.
13. What is your church's position of women's empowerment and gender equality?
14. There is much family breakdown associated with women's empowerment. What is your comment on this?
15. What measures do you take to strengthen your marriage?
 - (a) Talking to friends about marriage

- (b) Attending church meetings
- (c) Reading books
- (d) Watching movies
- (e) Any other. Please explain briefly.

Interview Questions for Husbands

Preliminary questions

	INTERVIEWEE DETAILS	INTERVIEWEE'S SPOUSE DETAILS
Age bracket		
Educational level		
Income level		
Affiliation (Clubs, welfare Groups, etc.)		
Responsibility in Society		
Church affinity and Attendance		
Responsibility in Church		
Kind of marriage		
Involvement in church ministry		
Number of Children and their ages		

1. In your opinion, what are the five main characteristics of a happy marriage?
2. Are there any challenges you have encountered as a husband to an empowered woman? How have you addressed these challenges?
3. In what ways would you consider your wife an empowered woman?
4. Does her empowerment enrich your marriage or does it threaten it? Please explain.
5. Do you think women empowerment and gender equality are biblical? Please explain.
6. Does your church hold the same view with you on gender equality and women's empowerment being biblical? Please explain.
7. On family responsibilities, what family responsibilities are done;
 - (i) By you alone?
 - (ii) By your wife alone?
 - (iii) By you and your wife together?
8. What are some of the things would you like to see in your marriage to make it better?
9. In case of a major conflict between you and your wife, do you consult the following – why or why not?
 - (a) Your parents?

- (b) The pastor or any other church leader?
- (c) A friend?
- (d) Others, please explain

Which one of the above would you not consult and why?

10. How do you go about using the money you both earn from your job/business/etc.?

How do you determine what is used where?

11. Some people think that a man would be happier if he did not marry an empowered woman. What are your thoughts on this?

12. What measures do you take to strengthen your marriage?

- (a) Talking to friends about marriage
- (b) Reading books
- (c) Attending couples church meetings
- (d) Watch movies
- (e) Any other. Please explain briefly.

13. What three things demonstrate to you that your wife loves you?

14. There is much family breakdown associated with women's empowerment. What is your comment on this?

15. What does your church teach as the pillars of a strong marriage and what is your comment on each?

Appendix 2: Focus Group Questions for Wives

1. Why is it that there are so many challenges in marriage today?
2. Why are “mipango ya kando” so many today?
3. Is women empowerment for wives helpful to marriage or harmful to marriage?
4. What would be your advice for dealing with the marital crisis today?
5. What is your take on gender roles today?
6. What cultural solutions are helpful in addressing marital challenges and which ones are not?
7. How does the Bible encourage or discourage equality of men and women; husbands and wives?

Appendix 3: Pastors' Details in Categories

	Categories	Men	Women	Total
Gender		6	5	11
Age in years	Under 40	1	2	3
	41-50	3	1	4
	51-86	2	2	4
	Total	6	5	11
Marriage experience in years	Under 10	0	1	1
	11-20	3	1	4
	21-30	3	2	5
	Over 30	0	1	1
	Total	6	5	11
Type of marriage	Church wedding	4	4	8
	Customary-Church	2	1	3
	Total	6	5	11
Income level in Ksh.	Below 12,000	5	4	9
	13-20	1	1	2
	Total	6	5	11
Education level before ministry training	Primary 8/7 and below	5	5	10
	Post-Primary	1	0	1
	Total	6	5	11
Ministry Experience in years	10-15	3	3	6
	16+	3	2	5
	Total	6	5	11
Number of children	Up to 4	6	4	10
	Above 4	0	1	1
	Total	6	5	11

Appendix 4: Details of Wives and Husbands in their Categories

	Categories	Women	husbands
Age	30-40	4	0
	41-50	14	8
	51-60	2	11
	60+	0	1
Education level	Primary education and below	4	1
	Secondary school level	2	3
	Secondary +College	7	9
	University degree	0	2
	Master's degree	2	4
	PhD, student or candidate	5	1
Occupation	Small businesses and piece-jobs	6	2
	Formal employment	12	17
	Established businesses	2	1
Income level in Ksh.	Up to 50,000	10	8
	50,001 – 100,000	5	7
	100,001 – 150,000	3	3
	150,001 – 200,000	1	0
	200,001 – 250,000	1	1
	Above 250,000	0	1
Church details	AIC	12	
	AIC+Other	8	
Ch. responsibilities	With Responsibilities	16	13
	No responsibilities	4	7
Affiliations	Membership to self-help groups	19	13
	Non-membership to self-help groups	1	7
Type of marriage	Church	13	
	Customary	3	
	Church-customary	3	
	Civil	1	
Length of marriage	≤ 20 years	7	
	21-30	7	
	31-40	6	
No. of children	2	6	
	3	9	
	4	5	
Ages of children	Adults	6	
	Minors	10	
	Adults and minors	4	

Appendix 5: Women Focus Group Details

Participants	Age	Date of marriage	Education	Income p.m.	Church responsibility	Type of marriage	Number of children
	1958 (59)	1978	Class 1	2,300	Church elder Choir treasurer Women fellowship leader	Customary	12
	1956 (61)	1971		2,000	Church elder Women fellowship leader Church treasurer	Customary	10
	1951 (66)	1968	Class 1	2,500	Local church council member Women fellowship leader	Customary	10
	1960 (57)	1976	Nursery school	1,000	Local church council member	Customary	8
	1952 (65)	1967		2,000	Church Counselor, women's fellowship leader	Customary	8

Appendix 6: Participant Observation Notes

Weddings

1. April 16, 2016 – Wedding at Kalamba AIC

This was a church wedding to solemnize a customary marriage of a man in his 70s and a woman in her late 60s. The man had separated with his first wife and she passed away. The ceremony was characterized by tension because the children of the first wife had purposed to object to its taking place on account of their inheritance. In the opening prayer, church wedding was closely connected to qualification for certain ministry position in the church. In the message, John 2:1-11 was read. Men were charged to prove their love for their wives by the way Christ loved the church sacrificially. Women were charged with submission to their husbands to prove that they got a good thing. Wives were encouraged to desist from “civilization” and “digitalness” of educated, working women but to submit themselves to God and to their husbands. The preacher emphasized different instructions for wives and husbands.

2. April 23, 2016 – This was a function for cultural instruction of a bride.

This was the eve of the wedding for a young man and woman in their early thirties. The parents come to instruct the wife to be on how to run her marriage. The older counselors emphasized man’s leadership and the wife’s submission and instructed the bride to respect her parents in law and her husband and to live well with them, not to embarrass her parents’ family by being a bad wife. The younger couples instructed the two to cultivate unity and a strong relationship calling upon them to work together and beat every obstacle together, as marriage is not for cowards. The wedding took place on April 24, 2016 at Mikuyuni AIC. The pastor preached from Ephesians 5 and emphasized the man’s leadership and the wife’s submission. Parents were instructed to give the new couple space to grow and establish their family.

Women’s Meetings

1. May 16, 2016 at CITAM Athi

The topic was “Women Etiquette”. Romans 12:9-12 and 13:8-12 were read. 6 aspects of women were outlined – as women, mothers, employers or business women, employees and home-makers. Each was associated with aspects such as dressing, submission, prayerfulness, leadership, personal and family values and relationships.

2. August 22, 2016 at CITAM Athi

The topic was “Self-Esteem” and Isaiah 54:1f was read. The word of exhortation emphasized that women do not draw their definition from their clothes, appearances or from other people but from God; but by who they think they are and by what God says they are. They were told that they were not made to be dominated but to dominate and challenged to let God only define them.

November 15, 2015 – at Valley Road, Nairobi. The speakers were a married couple who gave the differences between men and women looking at studies done such as the development and functioning of the brain in boys and girls. They emphasized things that men and women can do with excellence emphasizing that the differences were for a purpose not for one to domineer over the other. Womanhood and manhood were placed in the perspective of complementarity not separation.

3. AIC Ladies’ Annual Conference

This was from August 20 – 21st 2015 at Kalulini Primary School

This was a two-day conference and the venue was a beehive of activities. Many women had travelled with their cooking stoves to camp for the two days. Business people had pitched tents to cater for the needs of those who did not prepare to cook. Many people arrived in buses and matatus to attend the meeting.

There were 5 speakers in different sessions, three speakers on the first day and two on the second day. The first speaker gave various exhortations counseling people against technology, false preachers, homosexuality, wrong dressing, traditions of witchcraft and encouraging people to get married to keep morality. The second speaker read Acts 5:1-11 and preached on “spiritual hypocrisy” from the story of Ananias and Saphira. She isolated 4 aspects – the character of hypocrisy; consequences of hypocrisy; effects of hypocrisy and company of hypocrisy. The message touched on all age groups including girls

in school, married women, old women and mature unmarried women. She challenged women to abstain from immorality in the church in pursuit for bursaries, money, children's fees or even food. The third session had the congregation divided into age groups. As the leaders were giving instructions for the groups there was murmuring around where I was seated. One woman said "why are we even going to the groups and they keep telling us about one thing?" I asked her what one thing that was and she responded that it was about taking care of husbands especially sexually, that they are tired and bored, and that they are no longer interested in sex. There was discontent in this group. A total of 8 groups were formed.

My age group fell on those married for 21-30 years. The speaker read 2Kings 1; Jer. 17:5; and Prov. 31. She rebuked immorality and emphasized that a woman who depends on another woman's husbands for her upkeep is cursed. She said, "Some of you have been treated to weaves, clothes, etc. by other women's husbands. You are cursed by the tears of those wives." She also challenged women to meet the sexual needs of their husbands and emulate the Prov. 31 woman in managing their homes and supporting their husbands themselves without the assistance of house-helpers. Again the women I was seated with would speak in asides. One objected, "Am I not paying her money to help me with domestic chores?" Another said, "We reject our husbands because they despise us and treat us roughly. They are the ones who show us arrogance." Another one said, "Hey, when he comes home and says he is not eating, why should I plead with him to eat and he has even arrived at 11 at night. Why should I care?"

The researcher sought representatives from every group to explain what they were taught.

Class 1-4 girls were taught about obedience of parents and teachers, attending Sunday school faithfully and working hard in school. Class 5-8 were told to have good character and avoid laughing aimlessly, were warned against bad company and having relationships with the opposite sex. High school girls were taught about good character, association with the right company and right relationships and against boyfriends. College, university and working class unmarried ladies' meeting emphasized good character and sexual purity. Married women between 1-10 years were taught on taking care of their husbands, hygiene, and fulfilling the sexual needs of their husbands unconditionally. Those married for 11-20 years were taught on good character as women and parenting. 21-30 were taught on good character, trusting God, taking care of husbands and shunning immorality. Those married for 31 years and above were taught on good character and relationships with daughters in law.

On the second day, the first speaker read Titus 1:11f and spoke about discerning the spirits emphasizing that the Spirit of God gives peace of the heart, victorious hope and the promise for eternal life. The second speaker read James 1:2; 5:7; Gal. 5:22; and Rom. 5:3 and spoke on Patience. She encouraged students, wives, God's servants and widows to have this patience. Women were challenged to exercise patience taking the example of one woman whose husband brought in another woman to their home and was forced to sleep on the floor as the husband shared the bed with the other woman; and another woman whose daughter was given off in marriage by the step mother when the real mother was available. The preacher also emphasized that loving patience to the husband always overcomes no matter what he does because God eventually intervenes. Those women who have never left their homes to go back to their parents were asked to raise their hands and were honored because they stuck in it through thick and thin.

General observations

1. The church is keen for preparing women to function effectively in the church and family. However, nothing was said about functioning in the society or any other role apart from motherhood and being a wife. These were the main essence of womanhood.
2. Women valued the conferences as they attended in large numbers.
3. Good character was emphasized across all ages.
4. Teachings generally rotated around relationships with their husbands for the women who were married as the essence of womanhood, and the subordinate place of women in relation to their husbands.
5. There was dissatisfaction among some women on the emphasis of relationships with husbands and protests that relationships are two-way and the role of husbands also mattered a lot.
6. Challenges of womanhood in their situations were neither presupposed nor addressed. Issues were addressed at *effects* level, not at the level of *causes*.

Appendix 7: The Map of Kenya and its 47 Counties

