

MARITAL COUNSELLING
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF RWANDA

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DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

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Kigali- Rwanda, January 15th 2011

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SUMMARY

This thesis is based on the research that has been carried out on marital counselling within the context of the Anglican Church of Rwanda, Diocese of Kigali (EAR/DK). Marriage plays an important role in the Rwandan society, and the traditional Rwandan wedding customs are highly valued. Usually three legal paths are followed: the civil wedding before the government officials, the religious ceremony in the Church (where God's blessing is invoked over the couple) and the traditional wedding ceremonies before and after the other ceremonies. On one hand a strong resistance to question or change to these ceremonies was observed, including in the case of a clash between traditional and modern culture. On the other hand a lack of knowledge of Church members and pastors on the Biblical principles of marriage was observed. The purpose of this research was to study the continuity and discontinuity of traditional Rwandan marriage customs in the Church in order to be able to make a contribution to the pastoral counselling in the Anglican Church of Rwanda. Thus the following questions were raised: What is the view and attitude of the Anglican Church in Rwanda on marriage? What is the view and attitude of the Church towards traditional wedding ceremonies? Does the Church offer (pre)marital counselling? One hindrance was that there was hardly any material available, mainly due to the emphasis on oral culture and the impact of the genocide on the country and the Church.

To be able to present an overview of Biblical marriage principles, first the results of the exegesis of some key texts from Genesis 1-2, Matthew 19: 1-12 and Ephesians 5: 22-33 were described. A literary research was done, about traditional Rwandan marriage customs (mainly based on the available literature of the fifties and sixties). To be able to get actual information, different interviews were carried out. Three senior leaders of the Anglican Church were interviewed. The pastors of the Diocese of Kigali were interviewed through a questionnaire with quantitative and qualitative questions, about their knowledge of and involvement in the traditional Rwandan marriage customs. Four married couples within the AER/DK were interviewed through in-depth interviews. The results of these interviews were described, compared with

one another, and with the findings from the literary research. Finally, these findings were compared with the Biblical principles, as they had been formulated earlier.

The outcome of the research was that many of the traditional wedding ceremonies are still celebrated today, although some customs simply disappeared, have been abolished, or have changed in character. The principal conclusion was that the Anglican Church of Rwanda never really studied neither the Rwandan marriage customs, nor the Biblical principles. The Church did not formulate a view on marriage, and did not provide guidelines or teaching material for pastors. The pastors received hardly any training on the matter and a lack of knowledge of the pastors on Biblical principles was observed. The pastors seemed to put more emphasis on the traditional ceremonies than on the wedding ceremony in the Church, and were said to be very involved in them. Although pastors claimed to give premarital counselling, they were not equipped well for this task. The research showed that the pastors' teachings were more culturally oriented than Bible based. The results revealed that the Church is not prepared to give premarital and marital counselling, even when couples find themselves in a clash between three cultures: the traditional and the modern Rwandan cultures, as well as the Christian culture.

It is recommended that the Church formulate a Biblical view on marriage, and provide proper teaching for its pastors to be able to teach a Biblical foundation on marriage, to equip couples for marriage and to help its members in case of marital problems. Apart from that, the traditional Rwandan cultural concepts of marriage ought to be reviewed. The Church would do well to study the traditional wedding ceremonies in light of the Biblical principles, and provide guidelines for its members. The candidate hopes that this thesis will contribute towards a better understanding of the Biblical concepts on marriage and that the Church will accept the challenge to elaborate on a theology on marriage, and provide proper education and Biblical marital counselling, in order to be able to build solid marriages that reflect the Biblical principles.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Preamble

In this thesis a description will be given of the research on marital counselling, as done in the Diocese of Kigali of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. The concepts and view of the Anglican Church on marriage, the view and the attitude of the Church towards traditional Rwandan wedding ceremonies, and the marital counselling that the Church offers will be analyzed. To be able to do so, we must first formulate Biblical marriage principles. Next the traditional Rwandan wedding ceremonies will be described and compared with current practices in the Anglican Church. These research findings will later be compared with the Biblical principles, followed by conclusions and recommendations for further research.

In this chapter, section 1.2, the background of the thesis and the main research problems will be described. The motives for the research and the objectives of the thesis will be explained in 1.3. Finally, in 1.4 the research methodology and design will be given and the hypothesis formulated along with the expected outcome of the research.

1.2 Background, problems and research questions

1.2.1 *Background*

The research for this thesis focussed on marriage and marriage counselling in the Anglican Church of Rwanda. There is a great difference between the perception of marriage in the Western and the Rwandan cultures. While marriage in the Western culture is above all a bond between individuals, in African society in general and also in Rwanda marriage is a relationship between two families. A marriage is a process, and a wedding consists of many steps, whereas in the West where the accent lies on the day of the wedding and the involvement of the wider family is confined to that day. For Western people, whether they are Christians or not, the relation between the

spouses is the reason for, the basis and the point of departure of their marriage, while for Rwandans there is a strong accent on fertility and procreation.

Rwanda has its own marriage customs and the Rwandan people value this cultural heritage highly. In the past the preparations for marriage started during childhood: a child was raised and educated to become a good husband or wife. During childhood, during preparations for the wedding and also during their marriage people were surrounded by others to give them advice. The preliminary literary survey revealed that many people still follow the old customs and rituals as described in the literature from the fifties and sixties, although other customs have disappeared or changed. But the books that were written later mainly refer to the old marriage rituals and customs and do not describe current marriages. And none of the books found for this research indicated whether the old rituals just vanished or were abolished on purpose, nor did they explain why and when that happened.

In general, people follow three legal paths when they marry: civil marriage, the “Church wedding” and the traditional ceremonies. The Rwandan government prescribes the civil wedding as the way to contract marriage legally. The Anglican Church of Rwanda requires the civil wedding, carried out before the government officials, before the “Church wedding”, a ceremony where God’s blessing is invoked over the couple’s marriage. And before and after the official wedding day, there are several traditional wedding ceremonies, mostly celebrated at home. In the Anglican Church of Rwanda couples are supposed to follow preparation classes, but it is the individual choice of the pastors involved how to shape these.

Being a missionary from the West in Rwanda, and observing the Rwandan marriage customs, I was confronted with a totally different cultural system than the one I was brought up in. On one hand I was impressed by the beauty of certain traditional ceremonies I attended. On the other hand I was puzzled why Christians felt pressured to submit to certain customs, although these seemed to contrast with what I considered Biblical principles. Yet I want to express explicitly that in this thesis I do not want to promote a Western reference framework, because Western weddings also

need to be reformed by Biblical principles. Both Western and Rwandan Churches need to submit themselves to the Biblical principles.

1.2.2 Observed problems

From personal conversations and observation, from conversations during the meetings with the members of the Women's Fellowship, and from group discussions during conferences, provisional conclusions about the state of Rwandan marriage were made. Originally four observed problem fields within marriage were identified: the extended family, verbal communication, sexuality and the "dowry".

First, the extended family proved to be either a positive or a negative force. By marrying, a woman becomes part of her husband's family. Often a conflict of authority is observed when the husband remains under the control of his own parents (especially the mother). Moreover, both husband and wife are confronted with the expectations and demands of the extended family (with a strong emphasis on respect for the parents). Second, many spouses are not used to verbal communication (expression of thoughts and feelings), due to the lack of a basis of mutual trust and confidence. People said that it is easier to communicate with someone from your own family than with your spouse. Third, in the old traditions there was a strong emphasis on procreation and sexuality, which put considerable pressure on unmarried women. However, there seemed to be double standards: young women were supposed to remain virgins, while young men were free to experiment. It was said that even now women are supposed to remain faithful, while for husbands there seem to be other rules. Because of a lack of good Christian teaching about sexuality, oppression and dualistic thinking is perpetuated. Fourth, the *inkwano*² (the dowry): of old this was a mark of honour to marriage, but these days it is popularly regarded as a payment for the bride (the "price" rising with the social status and education of the girl). The dowry

²This Kinyarwanda term is for lack of a better translation is mostly rendered with the English "dowry" or the French "dot" (see 3.3.2). Originally the handing over of the *inkwano* symbolized the "transfert de fécondité" [transfer of fecundity. EHV]. When the father of the girl accepted the *inkwano* he accepted that when his daughter married she would belong to the family of her husband and their children would be recognized as legal descendents of the husband's family (Adriaenssens 1964:47).

seems to be a stumbling block for many modern young couples, as young men cannot afford the dowry that they are expected to give, with often premarital pregnancies as a result. Other young men postpone the possibility of a marriage indefinitely and resort to illegitimate affairs. The fact that the price of the dowry (or the number of cows) rises confirms the idea that the value of a woman is measurable in money (and that the future husband will own his wife) and this mindset will obstruct a healthy relation between two people of the same value.

The common solution for many a problem is *kwihangana* (to be patient, to put up with). Women especially often have to “swallow”; this is even regarded as their duty. Many Bible texts are misused among women to encourage each other to submit to their husbands without complaining, thus causing even more bitterness and lack of mutual understanding.

These four examples of problems and their “remedy” came up in several conversations with Rwandan Christians. It was observed that the deeply rooted cultural practices and beliefs caused tensions in marriage. The individual Christians consulted during the preliminary research were not aware of the fact that a Christian way of thinking could contribute to their marriage. On the contrary, a strong aversion towards change was observed, as if considering a more Biblical way of thinking would mean a rejection of their Rwandan culture and the adoption of Western concepts of marriage³. However, I still assumed that Christians struggle how to cope with the different demands the church and the traditions make on them.

For this reason the question came up as to how the Church reacted to these problems, and if the Church tried to offer solutions. Preparatory conversations with pastors did not clarify how the Church viewed certain cultural marriage customs and if the Church had played a role when certain rituals had disappeared or had even been abolished. The Rt. Rev. Archbishop Emmanuel M. Kolini of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda assured me that there is no historical material available on how the Church has reacted to traditional marriage customs. Therefore, in my

³In one conversation a lady shared about her marital problems, and concluded that her Christian duty was to “swallow”. When I objected, she cut me short that her own culture was too important, and that in the past they even used to say: “...more important than ‘the white man’s book’”.

preliminary research I could not find any information on why and when these and other rituals passed into disuse while others were still practised and how the Church viewed the traditional wedding ceremonies.

However, a general lack of Biblical knowledge on the subject of marriage in the Church was observed. The lack of Biblical knowledge and the lack of proper (marital) counselling form a challenge to the Church. Christian marital counselling needs to find a niche in the cultural system. The problem to be addressed was therefore that a lack of clear Biblical instruction on marriage by the Anglican Church of Rwanda contributes to the widespread confusing practices in the church and general society.

1.2.3 Research questions

The problem observed in the Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK) was that the lack of clear Biblical instruction on marriage causes confusion in Church and society, as Christians do not know how to evaluate the different value systems stemming from culture and from the Bible. Through literary and empirical research this study will attempt to answer the following questions concerning the view and concepts of the Anglican Church on marriage, the view and the attitude of the Church towards the traditional ceremonies, and marital counselling within the Anglican Church:

- (1) What is the view of the Anglican Church in Rwanda on marriage, and what concepts does the Church teach?
- (2) What is the view of the Church towards traditional wedding ceremonies, which ceremonies are still being observed by Christians, and in which steps is the Church directly involved?
- (3) How does the Church prepare people for marriage, what does the Church teach about certain problems in marriage, and how does the Church offer marital counselling?

1.3 Motivation and objectives

As mentioned in 1.2, in the Anglican Church (DK) on one hand there is a general lack of Biblical knowledge on marriage. On the other hand, Rwandans seemed to be very fond of their traditional marriage ceremonies. However, they were not able to explain the purpose or implications of these ceremonies, and they appeared to be very sensitive-- some were even offended-- when simply asked questions. It was not clear how Christians integrate Biblical principles with their own cultural system.

Originally the idea behind the research was to find out if people receive premarital counselling to be able to handle certain problems during their marriage. Soon this was broadened towards marital counselling, i.e. counselling before the wedding and in case of marital problems. This was further expanded to include an exploration of general teachings and concepts on marriage. Thus, the scope of the research has changed throughout the research, as other questions and pressing needs came up.

Through the lack of literature the research had to resort to oral research. However, it turned out that this oral research did not provide the necessary data, and it was soon clear that the lack of literature and oral knowledge was more of a limitation than was realized before the research (see 5.2 for limitations to the research). The research was therefore expanded to gather new information about the concepts of the Church, but also about people's knowledge on Biblical principles and current traditional customs.

This research hopes to make a contribution to the pastoral counselling in the Anglican Church of Rwanda and to invite Christians in general and the pastors, priests and lay workers in the Church specifically to review their teachings on the family and marital counselling.

The cultural marriage customs have an impact on the practices and precepts on the local church level. In order to address the above described needs this study will focus on the question of continuity and discontinuity of Rwandan marriage traditions in the life of the Church members. The objective is to compare Biblical principles with

traditional customs and make an attempt to contextualize marriage preparation for the practice of pastoral counselling.

1.4 Research design and methodology

1.4.1 *Original research design and methodology*

A preliminary literature survey showed that the literature on Rwandan marriage customs mainly dated from the fifties and sixties. Because Rwanda was colonized by Belgium, the literature is predominantly in French and Kinyarwanda. More recent literature is almost nonexistent, due to the fact that during the genocide many libraries and archives were destroyed and many personal book collections got lost. It is only after the genocide (1994), with the return to Rwanda of the former refugees (by then Anglophone) that English has become more generally used and has become one of the official languages. However, there is still little English literature available. One reason is that the country was recovering from the genocide, and has been preoccupied with the reconstruction of basic structures of society and economy. Another reason is that even in such an apparently modern African society as Rwanda the oral tradition prevails above the written, especially when it comes to customs that were always passed on orally.

The original idea was that the oral research would compensate for the lack of written literature and provide actual knowledge and information about the Biblical concepts and view of the Church on marriage, the traditional ceremonies, and marital counselling. Originally one small chapter was planned for Biblical principles to provide a background and a Biblical frame of reference. A literary research would provide the information on the traditional wedding ceremonies.

For the oral research, three types of interviews were used. First, a questionnaire (with exploratory, descriptive and causal questions) to interview the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali was designed to provide information about the concepts and practice of the Anglican Church. Second, in-depth interviews were planned with four couples within

the Diocese of Kigali to verify the facts derived from the responses from these questionnaires. Third, exploratory interviews and a pilot study with the members of the Women's Fellowship of St Etienne's Cathedral was envisaged. Finally all these findings would be the basis for conclusions and recommendations.

1.4.2 Problems faced; final design and methodology

Although an initial research design and methodology were presented, the methods have changed slightly throughout the research, as noted above.

First, although in a preparatory interview the Rt. Rev. Archbishop E.M. Kolini warned that there is no historical material available about the practices and teachings of his Church in Rwanda concerning marriage, I had not grasped that this would prove to be the case. During the research proper I not only found out that indeed there was no written historical material available, but also that there was nothing written about the current situation in the Church. Since the Church had nothing written concerning the view and concepts on marriage, the lack of knowledge showed an urgent need for a more extended description of Biblical principles (chapter 2). Besides, since even at the headquarters of the Church (the Province of the Anglican Church) no archives could be consulted oral interviews with three senior leaders of the Church were planned to learn about the history of the Church and the Church's viewpoint on marriage (see 4.2).

Second, the information from the interviews with the pastors could not easily compensate for the dated literature and the lack of literature in general. Not only did the pastors exhibit lack of Biblical knowledge, but also a lack of knowledge of their own culture, and even the information they provided was difficult to assess (see 4.3 and 5.2). The in-depth interviews with the four couples were therefore used not only to verify the facts that were shared by the pastors, but rather to discover missing information (see 5.2 for limitations to the research). The interviews with the four couples proved to be valuable to cover the time gap between the old literature (from the fifties and sixties) and the current practices in the Church. This compensated for

the fact that the plan to hold interviews with the Women's Fellowship had to be abandoned because I had too close a relationship with the group members, and because of the development of misunderstandings on this topic between the group members and myself.

Therefore, not only the methods changed during the research, but the topics that were considered expanded as well. The first interviews showed that there was nothing written down of the view and concepts of the Church on marriage, nor of the traditional ceremonies and the Church's standpoint, nor on the way the Church counsels people before the wedding or in case of marital problems. Thus, since there was so little material available, I had to touch on more subjects in the interviews than were raised initially in the questions.

Consequently, part of the research was used to broaden my perspective, and to gather more information on subjects that had never been written down. This thesis contains a lot of information therefore. First, since there is nothing written about the view of the Church on Biblical principles, I extended the chapter with Biblical principles. Then, because most interviewed people value their cultural heritage but have little knowledge, I fully described the traditional ceremonies and customs. Next, although many of the data from the interviews were not suitable to be used in graphs, they provided a valuable source of information, often because of added remarks by individual pastors. Since the data from the interviews had to be compared with the literature, and, respectively, these findings with the Biblical principles, there is a certain overlap of information. For that reason the thesis is more lengthy than originally planned.

The study will start with an introduction of Biblical marriage principles, based on the exegesis of texts from Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 19: 1-11, and Ephesians 5: 21-33. Emphasis will be given to the texts from Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19: 5 and Ephesians 5: 31 that provide the recurring words: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become be one flesh". The intent in examining specific passages of Scripture is not to do groundbreaking research, but to provide a Biblical and theological context against which the evaluation to follow will be

conducted. Describing Biblical marriage principles will place our own views, whether they are Western or African, under the authority of God.

Through a literary survey the traditional Rwandan marriage customs and concepts will be described. Through oral research information was gathered about the influence of the old traditional customs and rituals on the perception and practices of church members and pastors of the Diocese of Kigali. Because of the lack of modern Rwandan literature, much of the research had to be based on observation and oral research, to be able to describe modern marriages. The experience, concepts and practices of the pastors concerning marriage preparation will be studied and described. Use will be made of questionnaires, through which 35 of the then 53 pastors of the Diocese of Kigali were interviewed (see appendix 3). The experience and concepts of married couples concerning marriage in general, marriage preparation and marriage counselling in the Anglican Church will be described. Use will be made of in-depth interviews with four married couples in the Diocese of Kigali, two in the country side, and two in the city of Kigali (see appendix 4). The in-depth interviews with three senior leaders from the Anglican Church of Rwanda will be used to provide knowledge about the history, view and concepts of the Anglican Church on marriage (see appendix 2). Comparisons will be made between customary marriage concepts and practices and Christian teaching.

Other important things to mention are the following.

- The (Province of the) Anglican Church of Rwanda uses the French abbreviations: EAR (Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda) and PEAR (Province de l'Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda). When the Diocese of Kigali is referred to, the abbreviation DK is used.
- If the title of a book appears in Kinyarwanda or French in the text, a footnote will be added to indicate the English translation in square brackets, with the author's initials: [Translation of the title. EHV].
- A glossary is added with a wordlist in Kinyarwanda-English (see appendix 1).
- Bible passages are from The Holy Bible, New International Version.
- The Greek Nestle Aland 27th Edition and the Hebrew Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 4th Edition have been accessed through BibleWorks 6.0, which

is a software program developed by Biblical scholars, and used by Biblical scholars and students. Some of the Lexicons mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis have been quoted from BibleWorks, as these Lexicons are easy to access through direct Greek and Hebrew word searches: by clicking on a word, related topics in the different Greek and Hebrew Lexicons pop up. These Lexicons are identical to the hardcopy versions, except that they now form part of this software tool called BibleWorks, which proved to be very useful for a missionary living in an environment without suitable library sources. The other advantage of the use of the BibleWorks 6.0 program has been the grammatical help and -resources the program offers, as my knowledge of Hebrew and Greek falls short of analyzing each word to the full, and the program facilitated the in-depth analyses I wanted and needed for my thesis.

Hypothesis

Teaching Biblical marriage principles by the Anglican Church of Rwanda can enhance the marital counselling in a traditionally influenced culture.

To be able to answer the research questions and to verify the hypothesis, the thesis has the following outline. In chapter 2 the Biblical marriage principles will be explained based on the exegesis of parts of Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 9: 1-12 and Ephesians 5: 21-33. Chapter 3 containing the literary research, describes the traditional Rwandan marriage customs and offers a preliminary assessment of certain customs. Chapter 4 describes the teachings and practices in the Anglican Church of Rwanda, by making use of different types of interviews. In chapter 5 the findings of both the literary and the oral research will be analyzed and compared with one another. These research findings will be compared with the Biblical principles in chapter 6. In chapter 7 conclusions will be made, and recommendations and suggestions for further academic research will be given.

Chapter 2: Biblical marriage principles

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter will be dealt with some basic Biblical principles on marriage. It is not possible to study these principles without referring to what is called “hermeneutics” in theology, the science that searches to apply the Bible text within the context of the reader or receiver. In hermeneutics the triangle of the own culture of the Bible writer, the given Bible text and the culture of the reader are taken into account. The variable factor in this hermeneutic triangle is the culture of the receiver. The question hermeneutics therefore faces is how the culture of the receiver influences the Biblical factor and on the other hand how the Biblical truth can be applied in the variable culture, and moreover how the tension between both issues should be addressed (Oosterom n.d.:20-21).

For people in a cross-cultural position another question imposes itself as they have to deliberate about how the Biblical truth should be applied in their own and in the other culture- independently from each other, but also relating reciprocally. For a Western person in Rwanda it is quite confusing to be confronted with a totally different view on marriage as many Rwandans have until now. Many Rwandans nonetheless will recognize some of the customs described in the “books of Moses” in their own Rwandan culture. For Westerners it is a challenge to face one’s own views and to recognize that these are also influenced and shaped by the (Western) context.

Therefore we want to search for key principles about marriage, that exceed our own point of reference and cultural framework (Van Bruggen 1981:ch 1), to learn what God wants to teach us these days about husband-wife relationships, marriage and its implications for society. We chose the texts of Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 19: 3-9 and Ephesians 5: 22-33, upon which we will ground this content. Genesis 1 and 2 are chosen because they refer to the situation “in the beginning”, before the Fall, and give us guidelines of how God intended marriage to be. Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5 both quote the text from Genesis 2: 24 though in different contexts.

The fact that Jesus Himself, in Matthew 19: 5 reverts to this text grants it implicit authority. When Paul In Ephesians 5: 31 cites Genesis 2: 24, he places it in the context of the early church, the first Christians living amongst people strange to the Gospel. This context had similarities with the situation of modern Christians- although many people now are not that much strange as well as alienated from the Gospel.

As Bible translation the Holy Bible, New International Version® will be used, unless otherwise indicated. The Greek Nestle Aland (27th revised edition) and the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (4th edition) will be used, as is done in the Bible Works edition that is being used.

2.2 Hermeneutical reflection

We believe that the message of the Bible transcends time and place, although the Bible was written in a different time and in a different context (or in different times and in different contexts) than our context in the 21st century – wherever we live on this planet and in whatever situation we might live in. We believe that the Scripture has authority and that it gives us regulations for our Christian life that go beyond time and place (Van Bruggen1981). Nevertheless, those regulations are never static; we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discover what their application is in the life of the believers in this day and age. A good balanced view requires an open attitude towards the Bible, the direction of the Holy Spirit, and an honest and critical attitude towards ourselves.

God reveals Himself in the Bible, and He does so in a progressive way; we receive gradually more knowledge of God and insight of His nature. What people knew from God in the times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is less then what they knew of Him during Moses' time. The people who had access to "the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms" were able to study and therefore understood more about God than the people before those times. When Jesus lived on earth He showed the people that He and the Father were one, and through His life and words we again learned more about His character (Hebrews 1: 1-2).

Thereafter God gave the Holy Spirit to the believers; they received authority, were equipped to bring the Gospel to all the ends of the earth and were guided and taught by the same Spirit of God. The Christians of the early church had the letters and written testimonies of the first Christians at their disposal (as we read in 2nd Peter 3: 15-16). So we see that even in the history within the Bible there is a development of the knowledge of God, which is called “progressive revelation” (Stewart 2009).

Hence in the course of time God does not only reveal more of Himself, the relationship of God with His people also changes in character. When God reveals more of Himself, He also reveals more of His intentions for His people and we become more aware of what He expects from us. We see that for example clearly in the “laws of Moses”, given after a period where His people, adapted to the customs of the surrounding regions lived according to other values than those that God wanted to teach them. We see that God speaks to His people on their level, in their own context.

The reformer John Calvin describes this phenomenon which is known as the “accommodation of God”. Calvin explains that God humiliates Himself: He presents Himself in such a way that human beings, limited by their sinful nature and intellectual capacity, can understand (Calvin Institutes 2009:110). Man in himself does not have the capacity to know God as He is, and therefore, when we read about communication and the relation between God and man, we understand that God “lowered” Himself to man’s level and capacity. In times where His people are not yet aware of what He wants from them God does not hold them responsible for demands He did not place on them before. But apparently God found it necessary to show them that their physical departure from Egypt also meant a break with the way of thinking and practices of that country and the country where they were heading to (Leviticus 18: 1-4).

There are many texts that breathe out the spirit of their context in such a way that it is difficult to find the application of that thought for our times. We should therefore ask

ourselves always what the original meaning was, regarding the historical context of the given scripture, because “a text without a context is a pretext”⁴.

It is possible that examples such as the regulations on marriage, polygamy and adultery that God gave in the Old Testament context, and that seem very strict to us, showed God’s care for His people. Those laws and prescriptions might have been very progressive and liberating for women in those times if you would compare them with the customs of the surrounding cultures, where single women or childless women were of no value (Van Bruggen 1981:32). On the other hand, while reading the Bible, we might be so influenced by our own cultural context, that we need the Holy Spirit to confront us with our own thoughts and perceptions when they are at odds with what God wants to teach us.

Our aim is therefore to extract Biblical principles from the Biblical texts, taking into account that those texts, written in another time and in another context, had a special meaning for the people concerned.

We have to study the Bible texts very carefully to be able to detect what the message was for the days in which the text was written. Only then can we draw conclusions on what the message will be for our times. It is easy to justify our own thoughts and deeds based on some Bible texts, and read what we want to read in them. We will explain this on the basis of two examples: slavery and Levirate marriage.

The text (about slaves that should submit themselves to their masters) in 1Peter 2: 18-21, has been a pretext to practice slavery. In history people have defended this notorious (but in those days socially accepted) custom. When the Apostle Peter stresses Christian slaves to submit themselves to their masters, the Bible does not give us approval for slavery, not to mention slave trade.

Those slaves in those very times were taught by Peter that they should be a testimony in their own given environment, so that their masters, even if they were bad

⁴De Wit uses the same terms, when he discusses Mesters’ hermeneutical triangle “context-pretext-text” – “pretext” here meaning the context of the reader-- to explain the relation between text and context (2002:236-237).

would see and experience something of the giving love of God. In this text Peter did not address slave owners or slave traffickers, and in no way are we to draw the conclusion that he is affirming their practices.

The second example is about Levirate marriage. When in the Old Testament God gave rules concerning Levirate marriage, for example in Deuteronomy 25: 5-6, Westerners admit immediately, without any hesitation, that this is a cultural issue, not to be applied these days as it belongs to another, patriarchal system. It is confusing however, that in Rwanda not long ago this custom was still common as being part of the culture, and it is even practiced today, although not officially or openly. In Rwanda the Old Testament practice of Levirate marriage is even brought up to defend several cultural practices, for instance “the belief that a woman belongs to the family of the husband” (Muramutsa 2002) and specifically the “right” of a man to sleep with the wife of his brother (i.e. while the latter is still alive, this in contrast to Levirate marriage), or even the custom of “husband sharing” (unofficial though factual polygyny) between widows and single women. Being a Rwandan, while reading these texts about Levirate marriage or polygamous marriages, one could easily ask oneself the question if the Bible opens the door for polygamy or whether a Levirate marriage is a real choice for Christians. A Westerner will probably answer this question negatively, however often not based on theological grounds, after a thorough exegesis of the text, but exclusively on his feelings as he does not recognize these customs in his own culture.

Some customs of the Old Testament (like the use of the dowry) formed part of the cultures of the Western world in earlier days, but disappeared years ago. With the same fervour with which the Rwandan people defend their current culture as norm and standard, Western people defend their own concepts concerning relationships and marriage and consider as *passé* the customs that they left behind. We all tend to reject, *a priori*, what is not according to our own culture. But we all need to be open-minded. Westerners should reflect on the possibility that some of the Biblical texts and regulations for example on marriage might be so close to what God intended for his people, that we should regret that they were ignored or abolished.

On the other hand, Rwandans should also be willing to consider the possibility that some Rwandan marriage customs might seem very Biblical as we recognize them from the Old Testament. However, after a determined study we might come to the conclusion that some of these Rwandan customs are contrary to the message and the spirits of the New Testament and the whole Bible.

The two above mentioned examples show that, whatever our own context, we should read and interpret with great care, to be able to try to understand what the meaning was in that context in that time (for those whom the text was meant for). We also need to compare it with the surrounding historical context, and thereafter should we read the text in the bigger context of the entirety of the Bible (comparing texts with texts), and only at long last can we ask ourselves what the message of this text is for our situation in our time.

When we start reading and studying the Bible in general, we proclaim that we believe that the Bible is an entirety, that the whole Bible is inspired by God, that we depend upon the Holy Spirit for the understanding of it, and that we place ourselves under the authority of the Word of God.

Likewise, when we study specific Bible texts on marriage we confess that only an exegesis directed by these reference points can determine God's message for us today.

2.3 Biblical key notes from Genesis, Matthew and Ephesians

The exegetical notes in this chapter are taken from the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old and New Testament as much as possible. Use has been made of the program of Bible Works, to be as close as possible to the original text in the study of the different key words. Without further reference the rendered words have been taken from Bible Works: for the Hebrew use has been made of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (4th edition) and for the Greek of the Greek Nestle Aland (27th revised edition). However, the Hebrew and Greek exegesis in this chapter is limited, as this

thesis is not an exegetical thesis towards the awarding of a Masters in Biblical Studies or Biblical languages.

If we compare texts on marriage from the Old Testament and the New Testament, apparently, at first sight, the message differs. It is even more confusing as we take into account that we, modern Christians, live in a different situation from the Christians in the time of the early church in the New Testament. We could ask ourselves whether a message of so many years ago still has relevance for us today.

Yet when we look for the common message about marriage it is very remarkable that Jesus Himself, the centre of the Scriptures, in Matthew 19: 5 (and Mark 10: 7-8) reverted to a Bible text in Genesis (Gen. 2: 24). At the same time this text was also referred to in other places (partly in 1 Corinthians 6: 16 and as a whole in Ephesians 5: 31).

The Bible itself presents us with the text “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” as a key text. We will therefore in the first place consider the given context of Genesis 1 and 2 where is described “how it was from the beginning” and in the second place the section in Matthew 19: 5, where Jesus compared the prevalent practices with how it was meant to be, and in the third place the passage in Ephesians 5, where Paul elevates marriage to another than a merely social, physical or sexual level, also using the same text from Genesis 2: 24.

2.3.1 *Genesis 1 and 2*

On the sixth day, after having created the domestic, wild and small animals, everything is ready for the creation of man. The story of the creation freezes, like a scene in a movie, and God draws the attention of everything around Him to pay attention to this very important moment of the creation. God announces: “Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1: 26 KJV).

2.3.1.1 *The use of the plural in “Let Us make man”*

In Genesis 1: 26 is read: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם “Let Us make man”. An obvious question is why God used the plural instead of the singular *I* or *Me*.

In his commentary on this text in the World Biblical Commentary Wenham (1998) explains that in the course of church history different scholars have had different opinions. According to Wenham the plural was explained in the following ways:

- (a) That God was addressing His heavenly court (an opinion that Jewish commentators have held, together with Philo, Skinner, Von Rad, Gispén)
- (b) That Christ was present at creation (Epistle of Barnabas and Justin Martyr)
- (c) That the writer (P) held a polytheistic account (Gunkel)
- (d) A plural of majesty was used (Keil, Dillmann)
- (e) A plural of self-deliberation (Joüon), or self-encouragement (Schmidt, Westermann)
- (f) The plurality within the Godhead: God addressing the Spirit (Clines, Hasel).

Wenham himself states that the two most reasonable explanations are (a) God and His heavenly court, or (e) the plural as self-exhortation (though the latter does not seem very obvious to him). Therefore, although the WBC recognizes that angels are also created beings and therefore in no way co-creators, Wenham concludes that “Us” seems to point to God and His heavenly court. God was calling the attention of the angels around Him to what He (i.e. God, singular, see verse 27) was going to do.

Different scholars are of the opinion that the plural refers to a certain plurality within the Godhead. Basil the Great, a theologian of the 4th century, rejected the idea of self-deliberation and stated that it is absurd to claim that God spoke to Himself in the same way as human beings speak to themselves. Basil saw Christ revealed in the use of the plural: “Does not the light of theology shine, in these words, as through windows; and does not the second Person show Himself in a mystical way, without yet manifesting Himself until the great day?” (Basil 2009:106).

In his Commentary on Genesis 1: 26 John Calvin rejects the idea of God addressing the heavenly court or the creation and calls it even “ridiculous” to suggest that God needed human or angelic counsellors. According to Calvin the use of the plural refers to a plurality within the Godhead. God “finds within Himself something distinct; as, in truth, His eternal wisdom and power reside within Him”. It is not entirely clear if Calvin hints at the Trinity, but the editor of the English text of Calvin’s commentary adds in a note that in the French these words were rendered as “Wisdom and Power”. The editor writes, referring to Calvin, that in that way “...it would appear that the second and third Persons of the Trinity were in the mind of the writer when the passage was written. And perhaps this is the only view of it which renders the reasoning of Calvin intelligible” (Calvin Commentary 2009).

It might be possible that Calvin thought of Irenaeus who stated that the Trinity was involved in creation and revelation. Irenaeus believed that Christ and the Holy Spirit were active as “the two hands of God”, as the image of God’s Word, Christ, and Wisdom, the Holy Spirit (Ferguson and Wright:341).

Matthew Henry (2009:12) takes the view that “Us” refers to the Trinity. According to Henry God addressed Himself to a council: “The three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about it and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Into that great Name we are, with good reason, baptized, for to that great Name we owe our being”.

Different scholars however have dismissed the idea that the plural was used to indicate the Trinity. Vriezen (1987:354-355), rejecting a polytheistic view, states that instead the writer used the plural to accentuate God’s majesty: God addressed Himself to the holy beings around Him. Wentzel (1987:592) asserts that “Us” cannot refer to the Trinity, as this idea was unfamiliar to the writer. According to Wentzel the writer used the plural as “*plurale reciprocatitis*” or “*pluralis deliberationis* or *complexicatis*” (p 596) to indicate that with the creation of man God revealed something essential of His own Being. Van Gemeren (1997:405) declares that the plural refers to a “richness and complexity ... such that later Trinitarian developments

seem quite natural". Wenham (1998) as well dismisses the possibility that the writer referred to the Trinity, stating: "It is now universally admitted that this was not what the plural meant to the original author". He states however that, although the writer of Genesis 1: 26 might have referred to God and His angels only, the "sensus plenior" of the text might be that Christ was present and active in the creation.

Van Bruggen (1981:28) comments that sometimes even prophets ask themselves what the meaning is of their message (like in Daniel 12: 8-13). For that reason he makes a distinction between "the Divine Author and the human servant". In light of the unity of Scripture, taking into account the texts about the Spirit (in Genesis 1: 2) and about the Son (in Hebrews 1: 2-3, John 1: 1-3, 10), we see that God, the Father, the Spirit and the Son, were present and involved in the creation of the world. Therefore, although the writer most probably did not understand the full extent of his own words, he might have spoken in a prophetic way.

Louis Berkhof (2003:85) states that the OT "does not contain a full revelation of the Trinitarian existence of God, but does contain several indications of it". According to Berkhof (2003:85-86) Genesis 1: 26 points to a plurality, not yet to a Trinity, but this is a matter of progressive revelation: the revelation increases in clarity during the OT and the NT.

Hence the conclusion should be that the writer might not have understood himself what the reach of his words was when he used the plural. The whole setting of the story suggests in fact that God spoke to His angels, to announce the creation of man. But although God indeed might have addressed Himself to His heavenly court⁵, man is not made in the image of "God and the heavenly beings". Thus the plural in "Let Us make man" cannot stand for "God and the heavenly beings" but has to refer to God's plurality, to the fullness of God, the community within God.

Although indeed Genesis 1: 26 itself does not state it explicitly, from other Scriptures it is understood that God exists in the three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

⁵Some present the text of Isaiah 40:14 to prove this idea, but in this passage God questions his audience, and it is a rhetorical question: "Who consulted God?" presuming that the listener would understand that he even did not need to answer "Of course nobody!" because that was too evident.

(distinguishable yet not divisible). These three Persons were active in the creation, and since the text mentions the plural specifically, and exactly when the creation of man in the image of God is announced, we have to conclude that this is important.

2.3.1.2 *God created man*

Already in the first chapter of Genesis (1: 26) we read that God made man, and the whole setup of the story makes us think that man was the crown on the rest of the creation. Man is most valuable and precious in God's eyes. At different times (Genesis 1: 3, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) during the recount of the creation we read: "And God saw that it was *good*". It is only after the creation of man that we read that "God saw all that He had made and it was *very good*" (verse 31).

Gibson (1981:70-73) states that all too often this verse has been interpreted as a glorious recount on man. He believes that the interpreters that put man in the centre of this text, have been influenced by humanistic thinking. Gibson emphasizes that the general Old Testament view on man is more down to earth, literally: man is made from dust from the ground, weak and sinful. Nevertheless, although this might be true, this particular verse shows that God was the actor and creator, and that He considered his creation as very good. There is no hint of human weakness and sin, but everything points to the Creator and his wonderful creation.

God shows Himself here as the Creator of man, but the Interpreter's Bible underlines that the creation is not something of the past alone. The writers emphasize God's ongoing creativity. God created Adam, but after him many other people were created. And God does not only create people, throughout history we see that God raises up new men, calling people and shaping events (Simpson and Bowie 1952:482-483).

In Genesis 1: 27 we read: ".... God created man (....) male and female He created them". The Hebrew word for "man" is here אָדָם, (adam) (Harris, Archer and Waltke

1980)⁶; the Greek equivalent being ἄνθρωπος, man (human being, adult, male, husband) (Thayer 1998)⁷. The word “adam” and the name Adam mean “man”, and the word probably originates from the colour red, referring to the dust, the earth of which man was formed (Harris et al 1980).

In Hebrew the word “adam” is often used in the generic sense of “human being” or “mankind” (Whittaker 1995)⁸, without distinction of sex, while the word “iysh” is used for “man” as male, opposite of woman, and even as husband (Harris et al 1980). The name Enosh (Genesis 4: 26) also means “man”, specifically man in his vulnerability (Harris et al 1980). Psalm 8: 4 uses the same word “What is man (אִנּוֹשׁ, enosh) that You are mindful of him, the son of man (אָדָם, adam) that You care for him?” (in Hebrews 2: 6 where this verse is quoted, in both cases ἄνθρωπος is used).

In Genesis 2: 22 we read that God made a woman (ishshah) from the rib of the man (adam). And in verse 23 Adam exclaims: “She shall be called Woman (אִשָּׁה, ishshah), for she was taken out of Man (אִישׁ, iysh)”. The words “ishshah” and “iysh” here are used as a word play, to accentuate their oneness.

It is confusing that the word “man” in English can either mean mankind in general, or the male variant of the human species. We see in Genesis 1: 27 “adam”, man/humankind, existing in “zakar” (male) and “neqebah” (female). In the Kinyarwanda Bible we see also that *umuntu* (man as humankind) and *umugabo* (man as male) are two different words. In verse 26 we read in the Bibiliya Yera version (The Holy Bible, the traditional translation) “*Tureme umuntu*”, “Let Us create *umuntu*” while verse 26 in the Ijambo ry’Imana (The Word of God, the newer translation) reads: “*Tureme abantu*”, “Let Us create *abantu*” (people, *abantu* being plural of *umuntu*). In verse 27 of the Bibiliya Yera as well as of the Ijambo ry’Imana is written that God created “*umuntu (...), umugabo n’umugore ni ko yabaremye*”, “man and woman is how He created them”.

⁶The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament from Harris, Archer and Waltke as used in BibleWorks, therefore no page numbers are added.

⁷Thayer’s Greek Lexicon as used in BibleWorks, no page numbers are added.

⁸Whittaker’s revised BDB Hebrew- English Lexicon as used in BibleWorks, no page numbers are added.

The Bible portrays man in Genesis 1 as creation of God, made in the image of God, as a crowning glory of God's creation, created by divine counsel, created with two elements body and soul (Genesis 2: 7), as a responsible being, destined for a higher task (Berkhof 2003:182-183). Boice (2002:97) explains that there is a debate on whether man exists in two (body and soul) or three parts. In 2.3.1.6 for instance I will use the different terms: body, spirit and soul (or mind). This is not a very important issue, as Boice states, because generally all agree on the fact that man consists of a physical body and an "immaterial part that lives beyond death". Some call this part the soul, while others distinguish soul (mind or personality) and spirit (which communicates with God). This ability to relate with God makes him very special.

On the other hand man in Genesis 3 and in general is also depicted as weakened and corrupted by sin after the Fall, in need of a Saviour (Grudem 1999:ch 13). However, in the New Testament is seen that man is so precious in God's eyes, that Jesus became man, to reconcile man with God. Romans 5 emphasizes that Adam, the first man represented the whole human race when he sinned, but the death of the man Jesus Christ gave life to all men. The NT speaks about a new creation (2 Corinthians 5: 17) and a new man (Colossians 3: 9-10 KJV and Ephesians 4: 24 KJV), and it is striking that firstly we are asked to put this new man on, and secondly that this new man is *created* after God in righteousness and true holiness.

2.3.1.3 *God made man in His image and likeness*

We read that God created human beings in His own image and likeness, in Genesis 1: 26: "... Let Us make man in our image, in our likeness", the Hebrew word for image being *צֶלֶם* (tselem), and for likeness *דְּמוּת* (demuwth). In the Septuagint image is translated as *εἰκών*, (image, figure, likeness) (Thayer 1998) and likeness as *ὁμοίωσις* (similarity, likeness, resemblance) (Louw and Nida 1988)⁹.

⁹Louw-Nida Lexicon, as used in BibleWorks, therefore no page number is added.

The Hebrew word for “image”, *צֶלֶם*, is rare and its etymology uncertain (Wenham 1998), but usually the meaning seems to describe a physical image or a model (Harris et al 1980). The origin of the word “likeness”, *הֶמּוּת*, seems easier to explain, as it is derived from the verb *דָּמָה* “to be like, resemble” (Wenham 1998). Instead of “according to our likeness” also “something like” or “in the likeness of” could be used. When the Lord tells Moses in Exodus 25 to build the tabernacle He adds that it should be “according to...”, i.e. “after the pattern” God showed him (verse 9 and 40); in the same way we are made in the image of God. According to the WBC (Wenham 1998), although in general the prepositions “in” and “like” do not have completely the same meaning, most commentators agree that in verse 26 *ב* “in” and *כ* “like, according to” are interchangeable, *ב* here meaning “according to, after the pattern of”, since in following texts these words are interchanged (Genesis 1: 27; 5: 1; 5: 3). If both “image” and “likeness” mean the same, i.e. “according to, after the pattern of” consequently “according to our likeness” is just a reinforcing and explanatory repetition after “in our image”. According to the Dictionary of the Old Testament on the Pentateuch (Alexander and Baker 2003:442) this is confirmed by a Syrian- Canaanite creation text. In the bilingual Acadian and Aramaic Tell Fekheriye both terms are used, and appear interchangeable.

Calvin states about image and likeness in his Commentary on Genesis 1: 26 that “the second term was added for the sake of explanation” (Calvin Commentary 2009). Wentzel (1987:593) is also of the opinion that these terms explain and complement each other. This is in contrast with explanations that distinguish between “image” and “likeness”. Especially the early church fathers, for example Irenaeus, have made the distinction between the natural image and the supernatural likeness (Berkhof 2003:202). However, likeness seems to be added to explain that although man is made in the image of God, man is not identical, and made to be like God, to “live as His created analogy” (Ferguson and Wright 2003:328). The strict distinction between “image” and “likeness” seems therefore more to be based on a theological *a priori* than on the interpretation of the text itself.

We do not find any mention of the fact that man is made in the image of God in the Old Testament after Genesis 1: 26-27, 5: 1, 9: 6. It is only in the New Testament that these words are mentioned again, sometimes to explain that Christ is the (visible) image of God (2 Corinthians 4, Col 1: 15), other times to state that when a sinful man comes to Christ, he will be conformed to the likeness of God (2 Corinthians 3: 18, Colossians 3: 10) or His Son (Romans 8: 29, 1 Corinthians 15: 49). In Philippians 2: 7 Paul also remarks about Christ: "He made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, *being made in human likeness*". In this text "being made" is an aorist tense, which indicates a unique onetime action in the past.

The text itself does not explain what it means to be "made in the image and likeness of God". It is possible that the meaning was so obvious for the first readers that the writer did not deem it necessary to specify. From the context however, from the fact that man is depicted as the crown of God's creation it can already be deduced that man is extremely important and of great value. But particularly since the text adds three times (verse 26 and 27) that man is made "in the image of God" it is understood that this is a key issue in these verses (and this is even repeated in Genesis 5: 1 and 9: 6). The text connects the image of God in man with man's rulership over creation (Harris et al 1980). This rulership however is more function than a definition of the term "image of God" (Ferguson and Wright 2003:328). The above mentioned Pentateuch Dictionary states as well that there is a connection between the use of the word "image of God" and the task of humanity to be "God's vice-regent in the exercise of divine lordship" (Alexander and Baker 2003:444).

The observation that the Bible itself in this text does not specify in what the image consists, brings Wentzel (1987:594) to the conclusion that man in his *totality* reflects the *whole* image of God. According to Wentzel "image" is related to the idea of sonship (Genesis 5: 1-3 and Luke 3: 38) which shows the deep relationship between God and man. This is confirmed when the OT attributes certain "anthropomorphic" qualities to God, like His grace, goodness, fidelity. Also Paul's use of the term "image" for Jesus as man and Son of God (in II Corinthians 4: 4 and Colossians 1: 15) shows the relation between God and man as God's image. According to Wentzel Genesis 1: 26-28 teaches us that humanity as a whole reflects the image of God, and also that

the mandate to rule the earth is given to man without distinction. And although our text itself or other texts do not specify the meaning of “being made in the image of God”, the whole Scripture expresses the idea without mentioning it explicitly (Wentzel 1987:594).

When mankind is created by God, and each and all of them are made in the image of God, we cannot but conclude that no human being is of more value than other human beings, irrespective of their race, gender or social position. No human being has therefore reason to consider him- or herself as more valuable than others: no human being has the right to determine someone’s fate regarding lifetime; no human being has the right to buy and “own” another human being. This thought will have huge consequences for our view on marriage where two people that bear the image of God come together; both man and wife should consider each other (and themselves) as a human being made in the image of God.

Gibson (1981:85-86) stresses that both man and woman are made in the image of God. He states that it is exactly because they are equal at the level of the “image” that both are called to rulership of the earth¹⁰.

God created man, He blessed *them* and commanded them to be fruitful and to subdue the earth (Genesis 1: 26 and 28). This is mentioned immediately before and after verse 27, the text that man, male and female, is made in God’s image. It is when we observe man in his relationships, man as pro-creator, man as ruler of God’s creation that we realize that he is made in the image of God.

Verse 27, sandwiched between the two parallel verses 26 and 28 has a peculiar structure. Three parts can be distinguished:

- a. So God created man in His own image
- b. in the image of God He created him
- c. male and female He created them.

¹⁰After this remark however Gibson states that far too often women have been excluded from ministries in church and society. He continues to my mind oversimplified, blaming Paul’s attitude towards women (for instance in I Corinthians 11: 7) for it and rejects this view as “unworthy”, “whether it is in the bible or not”, and chooses for the Genesis view against Paul’s view.

There have been discussions about the meaning of this juxtaposition. Kaiser and Silva (2007:ch 9) explain the different forms of parallelism, and state that R. Lowth distinguished three basic types: synonymous, antithetic and synthetic parallelism. In my view in verse 27 a and b are chiastically arranged as a *synonymous parallel* (the second line more or less repeating the first line). Also according to Wenham (1998) the three clauses in this verse are in apposition: the first two, a and b, forming a chiasm. Wenham is of the opinion that the third clause c is added to emphasize that women are also made in the image of God.

This is in contrast with what Karl Barth's asserted in his Church Dogmatics: according to Frame (2009) Barth considered b and c also to be a form of "synonymous parallelism". He therefore claimed that human sexual differentiation *is* the image of God; God's image can be found in the marital relationship specifically, and in other social relationships in general. However, mankind as a whole, each individual, man and woman alike is created in God's image. Therefore we cannot draw the conclusion that only through the marital relationship between a man and a woman, the two individuals together represent the image of God. God's image is not incomplete if a person remains unmarried or loses his or her spouse. Nor could we say that all males and all females together, men and women in general, represent the image of God. Ortlund (1997) reacts to A.S. Spencer who in her book "Beyond the curse" states that men and women together are needed in positions of authority to reflect the image of God. He quotes her by saying: "God's image needs male and female to reflect God more fully". Nevertheless, God is not made in our image and He does not depend on us. Neither is God a duality existing in a male and a female part (see 2.3.1.4.). He is not portrayed in the Bible as sexually differentiated.

Frame (2009) states that verse 27c "describes a prerequisite for the subduing of the earth in 28ff" since in the next verse is explained that they received God's blessing of fertility. In my opinion verse 27c could be considered as a form of poetry which Kaiser and Silva (2007:143) call "*climactic parallelism*" or "*staircase parallelism*". The writer develops a thought in a and b, which culminates in the idea of c: verse c builds on a and b, and is a further description of how man is created in God's image (Frame 2009).

While Genesis 1: 27 a and b, however, put emphasis on the fact that man (as “man and woman together”) is made in the image of God, verse 27 c differentiates between them, and shows that God has a special purpose for either men or women. The context of the verses 26 and 28 shows that God’s mandate is given to man as “man and woman together”, verse 27 a and b stresses that both are made in God’s image and 27c explains that male and female have their own part in God’s plan.

Human beings individually, and entirely, i.e. including their sexuality, reflect the image of God (Frame 2009). Grudem explains that in marriage however, man and woman together reflect the relationship within the Godhead. Man, in a general sense, is made as a relational being. But specifically in their marital relationship man and woman together form a unity (one flesh, Genesis 2: 24) that reflects God’s character and the plurality (Father, Son and Spirit) within the Trinity. In marriage man and woman together reflect the perfect relationship within the Godhead.

And in the same way as there is subordination within the Godhead (the Spirit to the Father and the Son, and the Son to the Father), so the wife is subordinated to her husband (Grudem 1999:ch 12). Frame (2009) concludes therefore that the subordination of the woman is part of the image of God. God, one substance, three Persons, is a relational Being. He created man, as a relational being. And He created them male and female, destined for a relationship with each other, and with God.

The fact that God created man in His image is essential; this distinguishes him from all the other created beings. Man is created by God, from the dust of the ground, and God Himself breathed the breath of life into his nostrils (Genesis 2: 7). This is not mentioned when God created the animals. Man is different from the animals, exactly because man is able to relate to God. The fact that God created man in His image shows that there are certain characteristics or qualities that we recognize, otherwise we would not be able to communicate with Him. Although being a Spirit, God revealed Himself to us, He communicates with us and makes Himself known to us as a personal God. In this way we get to know God’s so-called communicable attributes. Berkhof (2003:part 1, ch VII) distinguished four categories of these attributes that we

somehow share with God: God's spiritual, intellectual and moral attributes and God's attributes of sovereignty.

To a certain extent and to a certain degree we possess some of these qualities. As Christians we are called to live a holy life, "exercising" such characteristics as love, creativity, intelligence, wisdom, joy and righteousness (Grudem 1999:ch 5). Man resembles God in certain things. Because God made man in this way, in His image, man has the capacity to communicate and to relate to God (Wenham 1998).

On the other hand God also has certain characteristics that show that He is very different from man, possessing so-called incommunicable attributes. He is independent, unchangeable, eternal, omnipresent, undivided (Grudem 1999:ch 4). Since God is self-sufficient, He did not need to relate to humankind (Berkhof 2003:57). However, He chose to create man, to make him in His image, and to relate to him. And God made man, as the bearer of His image, His representative on earth. God appointed man to rule over the whole creation and all other creatures, to be a steward of the rest of the creation.

Man was nominated to be God's representative on earth in a very different position than the rest of the creation, even the animals. In Psalm 8 is mentioned that God made man ruler over the works of His hands: on one hand this fact urges the Psalmist to sing God's praises (in verse 1 and 9) while on the other hand he recognizes his own humble position before God. Man is made very special: Psalm 104: "When you send your Spirit they are created" and Psalm 139 where David describes how carefully God created him and how precious he is in God's eyes. Man is made different from the animals, since he is made in the image of God, but man is also different from God. Nevertheless, the fact that man is made in God's image, made "a little lower than the heavenly beings" and "crowned with glory and honour" (Psalm 8: 5), is extraordinary and should be the point of departure for all reflection and doctrine on man. Man is destined to have a relationship with God, eternally, and it is the Spirit of God who reminds our spirit of it. This destiny and the capacity to relate to God is the essence of "being made in the image of God".

2.3.1.4 *He created them male and female*

In man-made-in-God's-image both male זָכָר and female נְקֵבָה are included (Hamilton 1990:138). There is no reason to think, as some people do, that only man (i.e. male) is made in the image of God and that the woman, as a poor copy of a copy, is made in the image of man. God made man and woman different; they are equal in value, but not indistinguishable (Boice 2002:96). Both man and woman are made in the image of God and called to be rulers over the rest of the creation as representatives of God on earth. Man and woman are equal, i.e. they have equal value-- although they are not equal in the sense of being identical.

The fact that man and woman reflect God's image should not put us on the wrong track, as if God existed in two parts-- a kind of a Christian Ying-Yang version: a female and a male part, women reflecting the female and men reflecting the male part. God is not sexually differentiated, but He represents both so-called male and female characteristics. He not only presents himself as creator, father, judge, warrior or bridegroom (representing so-called "male" characteristics) but He compares Himself also with a mother (Isaiah 66: 13), and even a hen (Matthew 23: 37), thus appropriating generally considered "female" characteristics of compassion, care and love. However, although there are differences, we cannot make such a rigid division in "female" and "male" attributes, as we believe that many of the gender roles are culturally inspired. Moreover, both men and women possess so-called male and female characteristics that we should consider as universal human characteristics. It is however meaningful that God presents Himself as Creator, Father, etc. while the female figures are only used in comparison (accompanied by "as": as a mother, as a hen). Frame (2009) also stresses that "Scripture describes God both in male and in female terms, though the overwhelming preponderance of imagery is male".

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, and when He brought him the animals to be named by him, God saw that for Adam no suitable helper was found (in Genesis 2: 18). Man, who was put as ruler over the work of God's hands, was not complete (verse 20-23). That is why God brought Adam a woman: man and woman

complement each other and are made for each other¹¹. When God made the woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, the man recognized in her something he did not find in the other created beings and that he had been lacking before (Genesis 2: 23). The fact that Eve was formed from a rib taken out of Adam and not out of the dust like Adam, confirms their unity, since they share the same origin.

The fact that they complement each other shows that God intended them to be different, man and woman are not identical. Grudem (1999:ch 12) believes that man and woman in that sense reflect the relationship within the Trinity. Within the Trinity of God there is equality, in deity, power and glory, but there is a distinction in roles: there is authority within the Godhead (the Son under the Father, and the Spirit under the Father and the Son) but there is no order of superiority or inferiority. In that sense also in the marital relationship man and wife are equal in personhood, but their roles are different. God created Adam first, which makes him the person with primary responsibility. Ortlund (1997) stresses that male headship (and not male domination) is God's design for humanity: "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".

2.3.1.5 *Woman as a suitable helper of man*

The Lord noticed that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Adam himself must have experienced the same during the name giving of the animals: no animal was apt to be his partner (Genesis 2: 20b). And God decides: "I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2: 18).

The Hebrew word for "helper" is עֵזֶר, (ezer), while the Greek gives βοηθός. The word is often used in names in combination with God's Name, the abbreviation Yah or El (Eliezer, "My father's God was my helper", Exodus 18: 4). The word is common in the OT and indicates somebody (either man or God) who gives material or spiritual

¹¹"Man and woman are made for each other" should be taken literally and exclusively, which implicates that same gender marriages are not according to God's will.

assistance (Deuteronomy 33: 29), many times also military (I Chronicles 12: 18) (Harris et al 1980). Especially the Psalms describe that God intervenes personally as a helper when His people are in need (Psalms 10: 14; Psalm 86: 17) (Thayer 1998).

At first sight the word “helper” (in the verses 18 and 20) might confuse us, as if Adam was lacking a domestic help. In a hierarchical society like Rwanda, it is not uncommon to observe people treating others of lower hierarchy in a condescending way. The word “helper” has an undertone of inequality in the Rwandan context, like “house maid”. It is however important to realize that our text does not give any cause for this interpretation. The Hebrew word here used for “helper”, *ezer*, is used in other texts in relation to God himself: God is Israel’s Helper. The word in itself does not imply anything about rank or authority of the person delivering or receiving help, it is a neutral word: “one who provides help or assistance” (Louw and Nida 1988). Piper and Grudem (2009) state that the context decides whether the person who delivers help is a strong person aiding a weaker one, or one who assists a loving leader.

From the context we understand that Adam needed a “partner” as no animal was fit to be a real mate for him. The remark about the “helper suitable for Adam” is made twice (Genesis 2: 18 and 20), and in between these remarks the story about the “name giving ceremony” of the animals is “sandwiched”. This is a common style figure in Hebrew, called “*inclusion*”, or “*inclusio*” according to Kaiser and Silva (2007:129). An idea is repeated to emphasize its importance, and using the text between the repeated phrases as clarifying context. Adam did not find (active) a helper fit for him. Eve was made purposely to be Adam’s suitable help, to support and to complement him (Frame 2009).

The fact that God mentioned that it was not good for Adam to be alone (verse 18 a) immediately after He gave him the command to abstain from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (verse 17 b), plus the fact that twice (verses 18 and 20) it was said that Adam had no helper, in the direct context of the name giving of the animals, shows once more that the Bible puts this “helper” on an elevated level. Eve was not made to be Adam’s maid but to support Adam practically, morally and spiritually in his calling and responsibilities as steward.

The verses 16 and 17 show that God made Adam first and gave him a direct command, which made him the primary responsible partner. The woman was made after him and given to him to support him in his task (Piper and Grudem 2009).

So God made a woman for Adam, and brought her to him, “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh”. Briscoe (1987:42) puts it in a very poetical way: “This beautiful, perfect woman was then presented by God to the revived Adam who immediately recognized that she was uniquely part of him. The estrangement and distance which he had felt so poignantly as he reviewed the rest of the creation was gone”. These two, both made in the image of God, complemented each other. Eve is given to Adam to help him, to support him in his responsibilities, as a companion (Wenham 1998). Adam might have the primary responsibility as “first born”, Eve was made to serve and support him. There is no hint of abuse in this pre-Fall situation. When he describes that Eve was created out of Adam’s rib, Matthew Henry (2009:20) puts it as follows: “Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved”¹².

2.3.1.6 *Man and woman as one flesh*

This binding relationship between a man and a woman is God’s plan for humanity. Adam exclaims in verse 23: “This is bone of my bones and *flesh* of my *flesh*”, and immediately after Adam’s joyous exclamation we read¹³ in verse 24: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one *flesh*”. In Hebrew the word בָּשָׂר (basar) flesh, is used, while the Greek in the LXX uses σάρξ, σαρκός.

¹²A similar statement of Thomas Aquinas is quoted by Hans de Wit (2002:75). Thomas Aquinas found the rib however for another reason significant: it was from the “rib”, the side, of Jesus on the Cross, where water and blood flooded (symbols of the two sacraments on which the church is founded).

¹³Calvin (Commentary: 2009) comments that it is not clear if Adam is still speaking, or whether God is introduced here as a speaker, or if it is the writer, Moses, commenting on the former passage and concluding its significance, but it seems to be a comment of the writer. Wenham (1998) is of the same opinion. In Matthew 19: 5 however Jesus seems to refer to the Creator as speaking. Hagner (1998) states: “In the brief introductory formula at the beginning of v. 5, καὶ εἶπεν, ‘and He said’, the subject of the verb is probably to be understood not as Jesus (as at the beginning of v. 4) but as the Creator, who is regarded as speaking through Moses”.

In Matthew 19: 5, Mark 10: 8, 1 Corinthians 6: 16 and Ephesians 5: 31 these words are used in the same context of man and wife being “one flesh”, one body.

The word “flesh” is found many times in the whole Bible. In the Old Testament “flesh” has different meanings, depending on the context: in a neutral sense it means the animal or human body (Marshall 2003:370), mankind, all living creatures (Gen 6: 19) or even life in general (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1997)¹⁴, but also more specifically the transient, created life of earthly descent, as opposed to divine life (Harris et al 1980). Sometimes “flesh” has an outspoken positive meaning: a heart of flesh instead of a stony one (Ezekiel 36: 26). Often “flesh” is used in the sense of the totality of the human personality: body, heart and soul (Harris et al 1980). When Adam cries out that his wife is “flesh of his flesh” he expresses that she, in contrast to the animals, is like him, related to him, a human creature, made in the image of God.

In the NT σάρξ has in many cases the same broad neutral meaning for “flesh” as in the OT; sometimes “flesh” means the body that is liable to afflictions and suffering (1Peter 1: 4), while at other times the word is used to differentiate between the human view and God’s intentions (John 8: 15). Especially by Paul, “flesh” is also used in an ethical sense to point out that human beings tend to be more guided by their own motives instead of by the wish to follow God’s law (Romans 7: 5) and, in an even more negative sense, to make understood that after the Fall human beings are not only naturally weak but also intentionally opposed to God (“flesh” versus Spirit, Galatians 5: 17) (Thayer 1998). It is also in the New Testament that “flesh” is used as an euphemism for sexuality or procreation (John 1: 13), in this context “flesh” is used as a neutral fact, without an explicit hint to sin (Friberg and Friberg 1994)¹⁵.

When we use the word “flesh” therefore, we should be aware of the context of the word in the Biblical text, as this defines its meaning. Confusion can be avoided by being explicitly specific about the context. Only then will we be able to understand what “flesh” in a certain passage means: mankind in general, the human physical

¹⁴The BDB Lexicon, as used in BibleWorks, no page numbers are added.

¹⁵The Friberg Analytical Lexicon, as used in BibleWorks, therefore no page numbers are added.

body, the unity of body/spirit /soul or the mortal human body or even our sinful and rebellious nature. Sometimes we as Christians give the impression that we do not want to take care of our body, that we “reject the flesh” as if all things to do with our physical body are sinful. This dualistic mindset has unfortunately influenced our churches. However, our physical body in itself is not sinful, but the source of sin is in our heart and mind, which starts when we forget that we are “flesh”, supposed to live in obedience to our Creator (Baumert 1996:273).

In Rwanda sexuality, even within marriage, is often seen as a merely physical, bodily union. In Genesis 2: 24 however, where is mentioned that man and wife become “one flesh”, this means so much more. Being one flesh is being united “with body, soul and spirit”, it demonstrates a close relationship, as if they became family, blood relations (Wenham 1998): it was after all “flesh from his flesh” with whom Adam became “one flesh”.

Although the New Testament uses the word “flesh” in many texts in a rather outspoken ethical sense, we see confirmed in Paul’s writings that “being one flesh” is not merely physical, but an intimation for a very unique and intimate state that involves the whole personality, body, mind/soul and spirit. This is a very exclusive relationship; Calvin (Commentary 2009) states: “Nothing is less accordant with the divine institution than polygamy”. Calvin considered marriage an institution for life (Witte and Kingdon 2005:225). He tolerated divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances, but polygamy was intolerable and he was of the opinion that “it is a lighter crime to dismiss a wife than to marry many wives” (Witte and Kingdon 2005:249). Paul links the exclusive relationship between husband and wife with the union of Christ and the church, which is His body of which we are the members, calling this a mystery (Ephesians 5: 30). And indeed, speaking about the union of a man and a wife that bear the image of God, and that are united in spirit with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6: 17), whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (6: 19) it is clear that it is a mistake to interpret “being one flesh” as exclusively physical.

Everything that keeps us away from the unity with Christ is sin. A sexuality that ignores or rejects an intimacy other than on purely physical level, even within

marriage, is flesh/sin, i.e. not how God intended it to be. Being “one flesh”, as seen in the right context in the set of three “leave the parents, cleave to man/wife, being one flesh”, includes a unity of body, soul and spirit, and is according to God’s Holy will.

They become one flesh (Genesis 2: 24) and this oneness has different implications. In the first place we see that man and woman form a new *social* unit, we see that man and woman are no longer considered as two different persons only, but as one, new social entity. They form a new family and operate as such in society. It is exactly this text that Jesus repeats in Matthew 19: 5 and Mark 10: 7-8: “A man shall leave his father and mother, be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”; a man leaves the authority of his father’s home and establishes his own household, independent from the parents (see also 2.3.2.3).

In the second place, this oneness has *physical* implications; we can conclude that this relationship had a sexual character, as man and woman needed each other to be able to be fruitful and increase in number (Genesis 1: 28). It is God’s blessing, the same as spoken out to the animals (i.e. on the day before, when he created the animals of the “seas and the skies”) in verse 22, to be fruitful and multiply. However, sexuality is not only meant for reproduction, as it is also a unifying tool for man and woman to express their love for each other. The Bible speaks openly about this aspect of sexuality, and shows us that God brought sexuality into being at creation.

How different is this view from how some people throughout history, until now, want to picture Christianity as if in Genesis 2 God forbade man’s sexuality, and as if in Genesis 3 man discovered sexuality as the first sin (the forbidden fruit in the story about the Fall being a symbol for sexuality)¹⁶. The truth is quite the opposite: Genesis

¹⁶Already in the early church people started to differ from the Biblical view, and postulated that with the Fall man lost his innocence, his sexual innocence, because the woman tempted the man, and they had their first, forbidden, sexual contact. Ever since women have been considered as possible temptations to sin for men. Marriage was, apart from procreation, motivated negatively, to avoid fornication, as a remedy for lust (Witte 1997:1-41). Augustine also linked sexuality and sin, although he taught that marriage was permitted, when he defended himself against two different currents, the Pelagians and the Manichees, “teaching the fundamental goodness of marriage (...) on two levels, or at two moments in marriage’s history. The first was marriage as God originally intended it, before its being damaged by the first sin. This was marriage as a kind of ideal institution, almost but not quite detached from its incarnation in real-life men and women. The second moment or level was marriage since the first sin, as it has been lived and will be lived in real life until the end of time” (Odozor 2001:170). Marriage, according to Augustine, is good for three reasons: offspring (the mere goal of sexual activity), fidelity (all sexual activity outside marriage is forbidden) and the sacrament (godly approval to avoid separation). Yet

teaches us that sexuality is given in the creation, and offers us marriage as an exclusive framework. Sexuality is a gift from God, according to the will and the plan of God. We can consider this text as the institution of marriage. In 1 Corinthians 6: 16 Paul repeats the clause “and the two will become one flesh” from Genesis 2: 24. We see how profound and serious this is when he teaches that our bodies, as temples of the Holy Spirit, are too precious to be defiled with sexual relationships outside of marriage.

In the third place we see that this relationship also had *spiritual* implications, man and woman also complement each other in this sense. In Genesis 2: 15 we read that God put man in the garden and gave him responsibility to work the garden and take care of it. At first sight we might understand that man received employment as a gardener. But from the context (Genesis 3) we understand that he received authority and this implicated also the possibility of a choice, either for obedience to God or for disobedience. Man was free to eat from any tree, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is exactly at this point that the text introduces the woman (Genesis 2: 20).

In this spiritual task, the woman is a suitable helper to support her husband in the execution of this task. Later, in Genesis 3, we see that the serpent attacks them especially in this field. We see (Genesis 2: 16-17) that God gave this command directly to the man and only indirectly to the woman. For this reason we can call the man the representative of the two, as we observe a certain order, although they were equal in value.

2.3.1.7 *Man and woman after the Fall*

Genesis chapter 2 ends in verse 25 with the remark “the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame”. They were not hindered by shame, because their

Augustine does not assert that the first sin existed in sexual activity, but in disobedience (lust, tempted by food) and this led to sexual activity (Augustine 2009). Especially in the Roman Catholic tradition a negative view on sexuality is kept in use throughout ages, and many extreme do's and don'ts have existed for years, some even until this present day. However, when today's non-Christians use this argument against the church, it could be that they use this as an excuse for not being involved in Christianity.

nakedness was not implicated with sin. The Hebrew word for “shame” does not have the notion of “guilt” like the English does: it just means that they were innocent as children. The function of this verse is therefore that it explains the background of the following, when they felt ashamed because they had sinned (Wenham 1998). After the Fall Adam and Eve notice that they are naked (Genesis 3: 7a), they cover themselves (7b) and hide from the Lord (8b). This is in sharp contrast with Genesis 2:25: “They were not ashamed” (KJV).

Reading from a chronological perspective, we believe we have to take it literally¹⁷, that first the man received the authority and responsibility to obey God and to choose life instead of death, before the woman (Genesis 2: 15-18) and in her absence. Therefore it is indeed very crafty that the serpent (in Genesis 3:1) addressed the woman and not the man. The serpent openly defied Adam’s headship (Piper and Grudem 2009). And he insinuated that God’s intentions were not fully good, that He wanted to withhold from them something good. And after considering this thought the woman started to doubt. The doubt took root. It seems that she did not consult her husband but decided to take the fruit, and gave some to her husband, who was with her physically, given the fact that the serpent uses the plural form to address both of them (Hamilton 1990:188). Personally present or not, Adam did not act out of his spiritual authority.

They had the responsibility to choose obedience for the Lord: the man should have admonished his wife for her doubt, and she, his suitable helper, should have consulted him, but she decided by herself, and on his behalf. Both decided not to deliberate, nor to rebuke each other, nor to seek God for counsel, but to decide things independently from each other and from God. They wanted to be independent from God, but became a slave of evil, since the tree of the knowledge of good and evil led to death (Genesis 2: 17).

And, as promised, their eyes were opened (verses 5 and 7), but only to discover the consequences of sin: the relationship with God and each other was blocked, they felt shame for each other, they hid from the presence of God, and started to blame each other and the serpent.

¹⁷We see this confirmed in Genesis 3: 9 that God saw Adam as representative of the two, and therefore as the primary responsible partner: “But the Lord God called to the man: ‘Where are you?’”.

God cursed the serpent, and both man and woman received their part of the punishment, as a consequence of their own disobedience, “for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2: 17), something that was contradicted by the serpent (3: 4). But death entered their life, and they had to leave the garden with the tree of life (Genesis 3: 22). Wenham (1998) observes that only the snake and the soil are cursed. The sentences for man and woman are “a disruption of their appointed roles”.

The additional punishment for the woman (Genesis 3: 16) was twofold. Firstly, while giving birth the woman would experience labour pains: “To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children’” (Genesis 3: 16a). Secondly, also in the relationship with her husband she would experience the consequence of sin: “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Genesis 3: 16b). The perfect balance in their relationship would be disrupted.

Lexical and etymological studies of the word “desire” do not clarify its meaning totally, nor does the text explain what is meant by “her desire” in verse 16b (Busenitz 1986). Interpretations of the word, therefore, vary¹⁸. Some, like Grudem and Piper, interpret “desire” as the urge of woman to rule over her husband. Grudem (1999) states that the explanation can be found in the next sentence “and he will rule over you”: both man and woman will defeat male headship, woman by desiring man’s authority, and man by ruling over her. Piper states that sin will urge woman to overpower man, while sin will urge him to react alike, by ruling over woman (Piper 1989). Some theologians interpret “desire” as negative too, but contrary to Grudem and Piper not as a desire to rule, but as the wish of women to be dominated, to be psychologically dependent on men (Busenitz 1986). They urge women to overcome this attitude and strive for

¹⁸Comparison of the word in the different contexts (Genesis 4: 7 and Song of Songs 7: 10) shows that its meaning can either have a sexual connotation or not, but not necessarily (Busenitz 1986). Whether or not “desire” has a sexual connotation, it is obvious that there are so many wrongs in the field of sexuality. On one hand is observed that women are more vulnerable, but instead of receiving protection many women are victims of sexual abuse. There is a co-relation between power and sexual abuse, which is clearly shown by rape in war situations. On the other hand we observe an obsession of both sexes with sexuality, and although maybe the deeper meaning is a longing for real contact, some women translate this desire sexually and men respond to this in the same superficial way, thus not meeting their own nor the women’s deeper need for real love. Although it is not clear whether the word “desire” in Genesis 3: 16 has a sexual connotation or not, the examples in our society show that especially women suffer the consequences of sin in the area of sexuality.

equality. Although I agree with Grudem and Piper that many men and women have difficulty accepting their own and each other's roles, the question arises if this is the right interpretation from this context. Busenitz (1986) explains that the poetical structure and immediate context of the word, i. e. the judgement in verse 16b for the woman (and not for the man), reveals the meaning of "desire". He contradicts the view of Piper and Grudem that "desire" means the desire to dominate another person. He states that Eve's sin was not primarily that she rebelled against her husband, but against God. He explained "desire" in a positive way: despite the Fall, woman will have a genuine longing for (more than sexual) intimacy with her husband, in the way God meant it to be, while he will still try to dominate her. Either way, "desire" interpreted as a genuine desire to have a deep relationship (à la Busenitz), or a negative desire to dominate (Piper and Grudem), the outcome, as the consequence of sin, is the same: he will rule over her. Sailhamer (1992:108) links the punishment of the woman with the situation before the Fall as well as with the promise in Genesis 3: 15. "What the woman once was to do as a blessing- that is, have children and to be a marriage partner, had now become tainted by the curse. In those moments of life's greatest blessing, children and marriage, the woman would now sense most clearly the painful consequences of her rebellion from God". But on the other hand even the pain of birth would remind humankind that it is through childbirth that the snake would be defeated and the same pain would remind them of God's promise (Matthew 24:8 and Romans 8 :22-24).

Genesis 3: 16 ends with the words "...and he will rule over you". The Hebrew for "rule" here is מָשַׁל (mashal) while the Greek uses κυριεύω. This word occurs many times in the OT, but the nature of "to rule" depends on the context (Harris et al 1980). It often indicates management or stewardship (Genesis 1: 26; Genesis 24: 2; Genesis 45: 26), or legal power, and in later verses it means having the dominion or rulership of nations or kingdoms (Harris et al 1980). Also in the NT "to rule" refers to (legal) power, to exercise influence upon something (Romans 6: 9) (Friberg and Friberg 1994) or somebody (2 Corinthians 1: 24) (Thayer 1998). Christ Himself is called Ruler (Lord) of both the dead and the living (Romans 14: 9). In general rulership in the Bible

presumes a morality that reflects the fact that all authority comes from God (Harris et al 1980). In our text Genesis 3: 16 the word “to rule” in itself has a strong meaning.

The question is how “rulership” in Genesis 3: 16 is related to the situation before the Fall, i.e. to what degree “rulership” of the man over the woman is a divine regulation. Some explain “rulership” in a neutral way, as the given authority structure between man and wife before the Fall, stating that Eve (and with her all women), was told that her husband had to execute leadership over his family (Harris et al 1980). Others take “rulership” as consequence of sin, as a notification of the sinful tendency of men to go beyond the boundaries that God put. Because, even though the word in itself may have a neutral meaning, from the context we understand that there is a breakage between the situations before and after the Fall. It should be observed that the very context insinuates a punishment. Therefore, although the word “to rule” in Genesis 3: 16 in itself might not have a specific negative connotation, in this very context we should interpret that there is a discontinuity concerning the ideal situation before the Fall in Genesis 1 and 2 and after the Fall in Genesis 3.

Egalitarians will argue that man and woman were equal in position and roles before the Fall, but that after the Fall the notion of authority was introduced, as punishment for sin (Pierce, Merrill Groothuis and Fee 2004). Complementarians will answer that there was equality in personhood, but that male headship was given in creation while the Fall brought distortion of the given relation and roles (Grudem 2009). My view is that indeed before the Fall there was a difference in roles, man being the representative and the head of the woman, but this situation was harmonious, “it was very good” (Genesis 1: 31). After the Fall however, men tended to rule in a negative sense, without love, and women tended to rebel against the given authority. In Christ man and wife are supposed to grow towards a new relationship with each other (see also 2.3.3).

When mentioning this punishment it is very clear that God is certainly not referring to the ideal relationship given in creation. In the same way He is obviously not prescribing a rule of life for Christians: this description of a mere negative situation after the Fall is a punishment, a consequence of sin. And therefore, the NIV reference

on Genesis 3: 16's "and he will rule over you" ¹⁹ (there referring to 1 Corinthians 11: 3 and Ephesians 5: 22) is placed there wrongfully. Man ruling over woman is not given in creation, but a result of the Fall, as punishment for their sin.

The punishment for the man (Genesis 3: 17- 19) is related to his labour. Man was put to work the Garden of Eden and to take care of it, but now this became a punishment, as it would mean hard work; life would stand for struggle and despite their efforts to survive, at the end of it man and woman would still die.

God is a God of justice, and therefore the sin of man and woman had consequences. Both had to leave the garden with the tree of life, to avoid that they as sinful beings would eat from it and live eternally (Genesis 3: 22). They were banished from the garden (verse 23), were separated from God, and lost their natural relationship with Him. This was the direct consequence of their sin, and it had implications for all human beings (Romans 5: 12). Death entered life. Nevertheless, even the punishment had a note of grace: God provided clothes to cover their shame, even after the Fall a man and a woman are still able to establish a relationship and have children, and man can still rejoice in the fruit of his work and enjoy God's creation. And most importantly: although people change and fail, God remains faithful.

Although man and woman were separated from God, He Himself provided the solution, even before pronouncing the punishment on them. In Genesis 3: 15, while cursing the snake, God gave the promise that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the snake. Since God is eternal and omniscient the question arises whether God knew that man would sin and when He decided to send His Son. Colossians 1: 16 states about Christ not only that all things were created *by* Him, but also *for* Him. During church history different opinions especially amongst Calvinists have come up on what God decreed on forehand and in what order. Although all believe that the elect were chosen before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), three different views can be distinguished: supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism and

¹⁹1 Corinthians 11: 3 speaks about a certain order in the Godhead and in creation. It is explained that Christ is the head of every man, that man is the head of the woman, and that God is the head of Christ. It is not justified that the NIV on this specific place, describing "and he will rule over you" as a punishment, refers to this text. This applies also for the reference to Ephesians 5: 22 "Wives, submit to your husband as to the Lord" because Paul does not refer to the punishment in Genesis 3: 16.

sublapsarianism²⁰. Spurgeon (1954:75) however, speaking about these and other topics, urges his students not to focus too much on these “minor doctrines”²¹.

2.3.1.8 *The promise of a Saviour*

Sin, as described in Genesis 3 had great implications for life on earth in general and the relationship between man and woman in specific. But in Genesis 3: 15, even before God describes the punishment for man and woman, we find the promise of a Saviour. This verse is also called the “Protoevangelium” or “Protevangelium”²².

Although the serpent will strike the heel of the offspring of the woman, that same offspring of the woman will finally crush the head of the serpent, a promise that is fulfilled when Jesus Christ conquered Satan on the cross. It is not sure what Adam and Eve themselves understood from this text and if they expected that they would see this promise fulfilled in their own offspring.

Commentators note that the recognition of this verse as “Protoevangelium” has been a long process. Hartley (2000:69) states that it was only in the intertestamental period

²⁰Supralapsarians believe that even before the Fall (*supra lapsum*) the Father knew (or even decreed) that man would fall and that He elected some and reprobated others. He decided to send Christ and in the same way the Son decided from eternity that He would give Himself for the elect. In this view Christ is not only “the solution” for the problem of sin, He is also the fulfilment of the creation (Pink 2009). Infralapsarians believe that God permitted the Fall, and that God chose some of the fallen and provided salvation for the elect. Sublapsarians believe that salvation is enough for all, although only the elected will be saved. All agree that God chose the elect before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1: 4). Robert Shank (1989:221-222) states that these decrees are God’s and as God is eternal and sovereign, “the decrees must be understood as concomitant rather than sequential”. In my view the discussion on this topic is little edifying and raises more questions than answers. See also Berkhof (2003:118-125) on supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism.

²¹Spurgeon (1954:75) states: “The great problems of sublapsarianism and supralapsarianism ...[and other issues, EHV] are practically of very little concern to that godly widow woman, with seven children to support by her needle, who wants far more to hear of the loving-kindness of the God of providence than of these mysteries profound; if you preach to her on the faithfulness of God to his people, she will be cheered and helped in the battle of life; but difficult questions will perplex her or send her to sleep”.

²²By the Catholic church this passage is explained as if Eve, who brought death, was promised that Mary, the mother of Jesus, would bring life: “Many Fathers and Doctors of the church have seen the woman announced in the Protoevangelium as Mary, the mother of Christ, the ‘new Eve’”. Added is that Mary was free from the stain of original sin and even without sin (Catechism 2009). Luther disagreed with the Roman Catholic view and stated that Adam and Eve interpreted this Protevangelium as a Messianic promise that God Himself would interfere. According to Luther it was significant that the *woman’s* Seed is mentioned and not the man’s, indicating the virgin birth of Christ, prophesied in Isaiah. In his Commentary Calvin appears less reactionary than Luther. He saw the collective noun “seed” as Eve’s offspring in general, thus explaining literally the fear of man for snakes. Secondly however he recognized that the curse involved Satan, meaning that there would be enmity between humankind and Satan. But since not all conquer Satan, by “experience”, not from the text itself, he concluded that Christ would be the one to conquer the devil (Schurb 1990).

that writers started to recognize the deeper messianic meaning of this verse which was elaborated further by the early church fathers. Kidner (1967:71) emphasizes that it was in the New Testament where these verses were unmasked, and the figure of Satan behind the serpent (see Romans 16: 20) and the seed as the Messiah were unveiled (see Galatians 4:4). Genesis 3: 15 shows the grace, the provision and faithfulness of God, even after the disobedience of man.

2.3.2 *Matthew 19: 1-12*

In Matthew 19: 1-12 we read that the Pharisees try to test Jesus, and want to know His opinion about the reasons for divorce. Only Matthew uses the words “for any and every reason” which shows that there was a debate going on about how to interpret the laws of Moses (Wilkins 2004:642).

Exodus 20: 14 simply reads: “You shall not commit adultery”. Deuteronomy 22 states that an adulterous woman had to be stoned to death, although the Bible does not relate any case where that sentence has ever been carried out. Deuteronomy 24 speaks about divorce, but Moses does not give plain approval for divorce. On the contrary, Moses tries to uphold the holy state of marriage and defends the case of women without rights. If a woman was sent away by her husband, other people could consider her as an adulteress. And if she was sent away without certificate she could not remarry, which could mean that she had to live as an outcast and in poverty. To avoid further humiliation and social stigma of these women, Moses recommends husbands to give their wives a certificate in case of a divorce (Wilkins 2004:643).

In Deuteronomy 24: 1-4, where this divorce certificate is mentioned, we read about a special case of divorce: husband and wife were divorced, the wife was remarried, but became widow or divorced again. In this specific case the first husband was not allowed to remarry her “after she has been defiled” (verse 4). In verse 1 and 3 we read that the divorce had taken place because of “some indecency” found in the wife, which is a rather undefined term.

Some interpreters have explained this term “indecenty” as sexual immorality while others took it as just a disliking. In Jesus’ time the school of Shammai interpreted that the husband could not divorce his wife except for sexual immorality. The opinion of the School of Hillel prevailed and these liberal Jews permitted divorce for any reason (Schlechter and Amram 2009). Keener (1997:295) states: “In practice both schools agreed that the Law at least often granted the man the right to divorce, regrettable as divorce was”.

The Talmud²³ shows different views and topics of discussion (Simon 2009). One point of discussion was, in Gittin 45, whether the husband, after he or his wife had spoken a “konan” (a curse such as “I will not do this or this if I do not divorce you”) which forced him to divorce her, could or should remarry her. In the Talmud is mentioned that when a husband finds out that his wife has a physical defect, about which he was not informed before the wedding, he can divorce her without giving her the “kethubah”. This was a prenuptial agreement in which was stated that he would give his wife a “get” (divorce document) in case of a divorce (Divorce 2009). This “get” gave her the right to remarry (Hagner 1998). It is this document Jesus referred to in Matthew 5: 31-32. Some interpreters of the law went so far as to see bad breath and perspiration as a physical defect, and therefore a reason to divorce, even without “kethubah” (Valentine 2003). Flavius Josephus, divorced himself, was also of the opinion that divorce was permitted for whatsoever reason (Moore 2007:122).

2.3.2.1 *Haven’t you heard....*

It is in this context that the Pharisees ask their question. From Jesus’ answer (Matthew 19: 4-6, Mark 10: 7-8) we understand that He considered it a serious problem of His time that people were divorcing lightly, because he mentions in verse 8 the hardness of their hearts. The reaction of the disciples in verse 10 shows also that they considered Jesus’ standpoint as very radical. They were probably influenced by their context, where men (not women) could decide to divorce for trivial reasons (Hagner 1998).

²³For example Gittin 45, 46, 79 and 90.

Jesus however does not enter in the discussion about the interpretation of the Law of Moses, but goes further back to Genesis 1 and 2 where the possibility of divorce was not even mentioned (Wilkins 2004:643). He refers to Genesis 2 verse 24, how it was from the beginning, and how it was meant to be: “Haven’t you heard that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matthew 19: 4-6). Jesus refers to Genesis, not just to show that he opposes divorce but because the “Genesis principle... opposes marital disharmony altogether” (Keener 1997:295).

The ideal remains, although Moses gave regulations for divorce. Divorce was never commanded by Moses but only allowed, “and that concession was an accommodation to human hardness of heart” (France 1985: 281). Wilkins (2004:644-645) concludes that later rabbis went further than Moses and not only allowed divorce, but even commanded divorce in case of adultery. They believed that “adultery produced a state of impurity that, as a matter of fact, dissolved the marriage”. Wilkins however believes that “Jesus does not require divorce but allows it to occur to protect the person violated. Divorce without this exception creates adultery...”.

Powers (2000:378) states on adultery that the relationship between a husband and wife “involves a joining together of the man and the woman at all levels: social, economic, emotional and physical”. He therefore considers adultery as “the violation of this one-flesh relationship, the intrusion of an outsider into the total, unique and exclusive commitment which husband and wife are to have to each other”.

Divorce for reasons other than marital unfaithfulness is regarded as adultery as it breaks a holy union. In Matthew 19: 9 Jesus says that anyone who divorces his wife, ἢ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ, except for marital unfaithfulness (NIV) and marries another woman commits adultery. KJV translates πορνείᾳ with “fornication”, sexual immorality in general, which is a broader term than adultery. Wilkins (2004:644) states that πορνείᾳ “must be something less specific than sexual infidelity, but, following the Mosaic intention, more than a frivolous excuse”.

Jesus' answer shows the seriousness of marriage and how much He esteems this godly institution. This text from Genesis 2, here quoted by Jesus and later likewise by Paul, appears to be a key text in the understanding of marriage and gives us practical guidelines.

2.3.2.2 *For this reason....*

First Jesus said (Matthew 19: 4): "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female (...)", here clearly reverting to the situation before the Fall. And then Jesus continues: "*For this reason...*" (Matthew 19: 5, Mark 10: 7). It is remarkable that these three same words (in English) appear in the NIV²⁴ in Genesis, the Gospel and in Paul's quote in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in three different contexts.

In Genesis 2 these words are used by the writer in the context of the creation of the woman from the rib of the man, who was "lacking a suitable helper". When the woman is brought to the man, he exclaims: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." And it is then that the text continues with "*For this reason...*". *Because* God created it this way, this is established as the natural and God given way to act: from then on a man shall leave his parents etc.

When the Pharisees want to test Jesus and confront Him with the daily reality of a broken and sinful world, Jesus, after referring to the situation at the creation, also uses these words: "*For this reason...*" in the same way as Genesis does. And He

²⁴Although these words are literally the same in the NIV, in the original text this is not the case. However, although not exactly the same semantic indicators are used, the significance is the same: these words indicate the motivational relation between the two parts of the text; ἕνεκεν τούτου in LXX Genesis 2: 24 ἕνεκεν τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν and ἕνεκα τούτου in Matthew 19: 5, while Ephesians uses ἀντὶ τούτου in Ephesians 5 : 31 ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ [τὴν] μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. Text used from BibleWorks.

even adds: “So they are no longer two, but one. *Therefore* what God has joined together, let man not separate”. In the rest of the passage Jesus makes it clear that it is the purpose of marriage that the two stay together (because although it is legally allowed to divorce in case of marital unfaithfulness, it is definitely not God’s intention).

In Ephesians 5: 31 this “*For this reason...*” appears in a slightly different context (see later in 2.3.3) where Paul is not only speaking about the relationship of man and wife, but also about Christ and the church, and that marriage should be a testimony, reflecting the love of Christ and the church. It is then that the text introduces the “*For this reason...*” thus even adding a significant reason to the “original design” of Genesis 2.

2.3.2.3. *A man shall...*

The text in Matthew continues in the same way as in Genesis and Ephesians: “... a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Matthew 19: 5). It is observed that there are three distinguishable stages:

- (a) firstly a *leaving* from the man of his father and mother,
- (b) subsequently a *being united* of the man to his wife, and
- (c) finally a becoming *one flesh* of man and wife.

It is clear that this is the prescribed and subsequent order. It is necessary for a man (and although the text does not mention that a woman needs to leave her parents, I presume this is implied) to leave the authority of the parents to be able to manage his own household. Wenham (1998) states that the word used for “leave”, “forsake”, is very strong, although it should be interpreted in relative sense and not in absolute sense. However, the first obligation for a man after marriage is towards his wife, and not anymore towards his parents.

The text just presumes that to be able to become “one flesh”, they have been united in marriage. The word used here, “cleave to” (KJV) shows in the first place passion, but also permanence (Wenham 1998). They are “glued together”, one flesh, which emphasizes their strong relationship, as if they were kinship. Wilkins (2004:656)

states in this context: “Thus, marriage is a mystical union and a source of grace to all who enter it under the blessing of God, and it remains a bond of peace with Christ at the centre”.

2.3.3 Ephesians 5: 22-33

While some other texts on marriage like those in 1Corinthians 5-7 are written from a negative angle, as Paul addresses sexual immorality, Paul’s exhortation about marriage in Ephesians 5 is written from a positive perspective.

2.3.3.1 Living in the light in an immoral context

The whole letter to the Ephesians talks about the testimony of Christians, and urges the readers to live a life that shows that they have gone from death to a living faith in Christ. Paul writes his Epistle to the Ephesians, but maybe the letter was also meant for other Christians in the region living in the same circumstances. From Acts 19 we learn that the Ephesian Christians consisted of Jewish and Gentile Christians, living in the city of Ephesus, a context where the goddess Artemis (Diana) was revered (Acts 19: 23- 41) in a temple dedicated to her worship. From Acts it also becomes clear how this religion had influenced the community around the Christians: they lived in an environment where materialism and sexual immorality were a day-to-day reality.

It is peculiar that Paul in Ephesians 5: 31 uses the same text from Genesis 2: 24 as our Lord Jesus does in Matthew 19: 5. The context of the letter to the Ephesians is after all very different. In chapter 5 Paul urges his readers to live as children of light (verse 8), making the most of every opportunity (verse 16) and to imitate Christ “who loved us and gave Himself up for us” (verse 1).

We see in 6: 10- 18 that Paul’s exhortations should be seen in the light of the reality that goes beyond flesh and blood; Paul speaks about the spiritual battle, and it is in this context that Paul asks his readers to submit themselves to one another out of

reverence for Christ (5: 21). He specifies this further with three groups of the household of that time: wives and husbands (5: 22-33), children and parents (6: 1-4) and slaves and masters (6: 5-9).

Paul thus opposes against the sinful environment of the Hellenistic culture on one hand, but on the other hand he finds common ground in the household rules (“Haustafeln”²⁵). We find these household rules in several places in the New Testament, especially in Colossenses 3: 18 till 4: 1 and in the Ephesians’ passage. According to Dunn (2003:667) the discussion on the origin of these household rules has come to an end: “In the past twenty years or so several scholars in quick succession have recognized that the model for the Christian household rules, insofar as there was one, was that of *oikonomia*, ‘household management’”. Dunn believes that in those days state and society were divided according to this concept of the household. It was therefore logical and necessary to treat the then “household’s basis relationships-- that is, of husband and wife, father to children and master to slave”.

2.3.3.2 *Male headship and female submission*

One of the groups addressed is men and women. Women are asked to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord” (22). The reason for this submission is that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Saviour” (23). And as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands. Verse 33 states that the wife must respect her husband.

In I Corinthians 11: 3 Paul also speaks about submission, where he mentions that God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, man is the head of the woman. In Ephesians 5: 23 however he does not mention that God is the head of Christ: “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body of which He is the Saviour”.

²⁵According to Stott (1998:214) it was Luther in his Catechism who referred for the first time to these lists as Haustafeln. Stott however believes that the similarities between the use of the Haustafeln in the Hellenistic culture and the Bible have been exaggerated.

In this text Paul uses the Greek word κεφαλή for “head”, in Hebrew the equivalent being ראש, ro’sh (Thayer 1998). In a literal sense κεφαλή means “head” as part of the body of a human being (Matthew 6: 25) or an animal (Louw and Nida 1988). Figuratively spoken it is especially used if said that Christ is the head of all (Ephesians 1: 22) or to indicate the authority (I Corinthians 11: 3) or superior status of a person in relation to others (Friberg and Friberg 1994).

Wayne Grudem defends this view that “head” means “authority over”, based on Biblical and other Greek texts (Grudem 2009). In some contexts “head” could also mean extremity, cornerstone (Matthew 21: 42) or capital (Acts 16: 12). Since with the loss of the head one loses his life the term *capital* punishment is in use (Thayer 1998).

Lately articles of evangelical feminists²⁶ came up disputing the meaning of “authority over”. According to the above mentioned article from Grudem (2009), R. S. Cervin criticized Grudem’s viewpoint, propagating that “head” should mean “pre-eminence” (or “prominence”) without the connotation of “authority over”. Others have put forward that “head”, according to a Greek text, could mean “source”, also in our text (Layman 2009). In a detailed refutation Grudem objects to Cervin’s and other critiques, convincingly defending the view that Christians should stick to the opinion that in Ephesians 5: 23 and I Corinthians 11: 3 “head” speaks about authority, as this is the linguistic meaning of this word in the context of other texts in the NT, and all these have been justly explained as such throughout church history and in Lexicons. Grudem states: “It is a prior doctrinal conviction rather than sound linguistic analysis that has led to their conclusions in these texts” (Grudem 2009). He explains that in the text in I Corinthians 11: 3 it is obvious that “authority over” means priority and not necessarily superiority, because the text speaks of God as the head of Christ, and consequently it refers to “subordination in role, but not in essence or being”. Therefore we should draw the conclusion that in the marital relationship the man being the “head” of the wife, means that the man has “authority over” the wife, while at the same time they are “one in essence and being”, one in Christ, and joint heirs of the gracious gift of life (I Peter 3: 7).

²⁶Grudem (2009) mentions specifically Gilbert Bilezikian in his article. See also Layman (2009), who shares the same view.

To speak about the headship of the man over the wife evokes strong reactions, as in many cultures “authority” is a synonym for power and inequality. In colloquial language “power” is something you can get (and abuse), while “authority” in fact is something that is earned, given by superiors, or attributed to somebody by the people that are subjected to this person. Although many men abuse their position of “authority” we should not “throw out the baby with the bath water” rejecting the notion of male headship just because often it does not work in practice (which is, for a matter of fact, logical, given Genesis 3: 16).

The Bible mentions that God is the head of Christ, while we know that Christ is fully God Himself, thus showing that “headship” is not a synonym for superiority (I Corinthians 11). Grudem (1999) states that in marriage man and woman reflect the relationship within the Trinity. Within the Trinity there is authority: there is subordination (the Son to the Father, and the Spirit to the Father and the Son). But there is at the same time equality (in personhood, importance and deity). In the same way we have to interpret “man is the head of the woman”: equality in importance, but difference in roles. The husband has authority over the wife, although both are equal in value before God.

Male headship is given in creation, though in this field the consequences of sin were seen: the curse brought a distortion of the given roles. Women would deny the headship of their husbands, while men would rule over their wives, exercising their authority in a negative sense, without love.

Through Christ’s redemption the created order is reaffirmed. Women are encouraged to submit to the authority of their husbands. Lincoln (1998) stresses that the text speaks about “submission to complete love”. He points out that after the exhortation for women to submit to their husbands (verse 22) one might expect a command for husbands to rule. Nevertheless, husbands are not summoned to exercise their authority, but they are encouraged to love their wives, and to imitate Christ’s headship, to take the example of Christ who gave His life for the church, His body, as Ephesians 5: 23 demonstrates. Christ’s headship over the church obviously indicates His authority, and shows the strong bond between Himself and the church. In the

same sense should we interpret the headship of the man over the woman. He has her well being in mind (and knows that she is one in Christ together with him, equal in value and honoured by him as such).

It is troubling how many times from the pulpit or in homes this text of female submission (the verses 22 and 23) is brought to the attention of women, while the following verses seem to demand so much more of men. It will be anything but a heavy demand, but instead an honour and joy for a woman to submit herself to a husband who imitates Christ, i.e. who loves her so much that he is willing to sacrifice himself for her. In contrast with the part meant for women, this chapter spends quantitatively far more verses on the role of the man (verse 25- 33a). The text puts also qualitatively quite a demand on the man and this part is rarely heard in the church in Rwanda, probably because this is in contrast with a culture where men want to be served.

“Love” is a keyword of what is asked of the man. Apparently it was important that in that context Paul stressed upon love from the husband, which might have been new for the men, and very liberating for the women of that time. This love is however not a selfish type of love, but sacrificial love: husbands are told to love their wives, as Christ loves the church, for which He gave His life. Baumert (1996:228) also emphasizes the role of the man when he states: “For how can ‘the war between the sexes’ be overcome, except through a greater love? Otherwise there is no end to the chain reaction produced by pressure evoking counter pressure, etc. It is clearly stated that the man as well should operate from the same principle of love”. Men cannot look down upon their wives, as might have been the tendency in that culture, or as might be a tendency of men of all times, because men and women together are members of Christ’s body, the church.

2.3.3.3 *Marriage as testimony*

It is in this context that Paul continues in verse 31, quoting Genesis 2: 24: “For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and the

two will be one flesh". The unity of Christ and the church, which Paul calls a profound mystery (verse 32) is reflected in the unity of man and wife. In that sense marriage is not merely a relationship between two persons, a man and a woman, together they also reflect the love of Christ for His church. Therefore marriage is not just a social phenomenon, or just a physical relationship, it has a very strong spiritual component. A Christian marriage, when both spouses are Christians and therefore part of the body of Christ, is therefore different than other marriages. There is a bond between the spouses, but also a vertical relationship between the couple and God. We believe that this love of God forms the basis for their marriage. It is therefore that Paul uses the word "mystery": it is only through faith that this truth can be understood. And it is only through faith in Christ that a couple can have such a marriage.

It is even more: Paul does not only point out the rules to follow because they are divine principles and therefore for the well-being of humankind. The very relationship in marriage is also a testimony, an illustration, and in that sense, looking at Ephesians 5 and I Peter 3: 1-7 marriage can also be seen as a "tool of evangelization". Others can be won for Christ by seeing the example of a Christian marriage. And at the same time the relationship of Christ with the church is an example to follow for married people. Lincoln (1998) states: "The standard and prototype for the writer's instructions about human marriage is the bond between the heavenly Bridegroom and His bride".

Marriage counsellor Eggerichs (2004) dedicates a whole book "Love and Respect" to explain his theory based on Ephesians 5: 22-33. He seems to avoid the terms "authority" and "submission" but focuses instead on the words "love" and "respect" used in the text. He stresses that Paul commands a man to love his wife, and a woman to respect her husband. He states that this is because the woman's deepest need is to be loved, while the man's deepest desire is to be respected. Eggerichs observes that in many marriages there is a vicious circle: the wife disrespects her husband because she does not experience love, while the husband reacts in an unloving way because he feels disrespected. Eggerichs calls his readers to break that vicious circle, which he calls the Crazy Circle. Instead men and women should intentionally put emphasis on love and respect to energize their marriage relationship, which he calls the Energizing Circle. This is also practicable in non-Christian

marriages. Especially in Christian marriages the couple should show unconditional love and respect to imitate Christ's love for the church. This brings a reward to their marriage, and therefore Eggerichs calls this the Rewarding Circle, while at the same time this is a testimony for others.

2.4 Summary

We looked for a Biblical basis for marriage and chose Genesis 1 and 2 and the equivalent texts in Matthew 19: 3-9 and Ephesians 5: 22-33.

When we read the first chapters of Genesis we see that the Bible offers us a very positive and high portrayal of man, as creation of God, and made in His image. Every human being, from whatever race, gender or social position, is made in the image of God, and therefore all men are equal in value. Man is called to rule the earth and is made to live in relationship with the Creator. God made human beings male and female; He made them different so that they would complement each other. The relationship between a man and a woman, and sexuality within marriage, is divinely sanctioned at creation, and God's design for mankind.

Although individually man and woman reflect God's image, they are created as relational beings, and in that sense in their marriage they reflect the relationship within the Trinity. Within the Godhead there is oneness, unity and harmony. The relationship between husband and wife reflects the perfect relationship within the Godhead, where the Son is subordinated to the Father, and the Spirit to the Son and the Father, though the three Persons are equal in deity, power and glory. In the same way, man and woman are equally human, equal in value and personhood, but with different roles.

Man and woman play their specific parts, man as a servant leader, woman as a loving helper, complementing her husband on all levels. Their specific roles can vary according to the cultural uses of the context. Although man is the leading partner, the primary responsible party, this is a question of priority and not a position of superiority.

God intended marriage to be “very good”. But after the Fall we see a distortion of all relationships, and therefore also in the relationship between man and woman. There is a confusion of roles within marriage. Lack of love and respect are evidently present in many marriages. Instead of loving servanthood and unconditional love, often abuse of authority and male domination is observed.

The increasing number of divorces shows how sin affects our marriages. Moses gave regulations for divorce, to protect the person violated. But in Matthew 19 Jesus commented: “Anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, commits adultery”. Although it is legally allowed to divorce in case of marital unfaithfulness, divorce was not God’s intention. Jesus showed this when He referred to “how it was in the beginning”.

The description in Genesis 1 and 2 portrays for us how marriage was instituted by God in the beginning and how it was meant to be lived. This needs to be our starting point. Genesis 1 starts with the power and glory of God, and from that point of departure the story of creation begins, where man, created in the image of God, finds a wonderful place in a given order, but where God’s glory is at the centre. This is how it was meant: man and woman, together for life, with everything they had, living for the glory of God.

In Christ the “old” order of Genesis 1 and 2 is reconfirmed. Although we still suffer the consequences of sin, also in our marriage, the reference point for a Christian couple should be the high ideal of Genesis 2 and not the punishment in Genesis 3.

The Bible presents the text “For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother, and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” as a key text. Thus the Bible gives us practical guidelines that seem applicable in our own cultural context. Firstly man and woman *leave* the authority of the parents. In the second place they will *be united*, they marry and form a new social entity. Even without children they already form a new family, although children are seen as an “extra” blessing. Lastly they become *one flesh*, which implicates a lifelong relationship, a unity of mind, body and soul. This intimate relationship of man and woman is of a high

order and is unique and exclusive; it involves the whole personality and has social, mental, spiritual and physical/sexual components.

Marriage, as a godly institution, shows God's love for mankind in general. More specifically the marital relationship reflects the love of Christ for the church and in that sense it is a testimony for others. Men are summoned to show sacrificial and unconditional love, just as Christ loves the church. Women are commanded to respect and to submit to their husbands, just as the church submits to Christ. And on the other hand the bond between Christ and the church is the high ideal for Christian marriages.

In a Christian marriage both spouses submit to Christ and both form part of the Body of Christ; in that sense there are not two but three parties involved, God being the first party. The love of God is the foundation of a Christian marriage, and it is only through faith that this "mystery" can be understood and experienced.

Chapter 3: Traditional Rwandan marriage customs

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter an overview of the different traditional marriage steps will be given, based on information from the available literature. However, most available books, for instance, Bourgeois (1954), Kagame (1954), Adriaenssens (1964), Bushayija (1966) and Bigirumwami (2004)²⁷ date from the fifties and sixties. Although these books contain useful information and provide us with useful historical insights, the lack of contemporary books on marriage is evident.

Many of the steps as described in this chapter are still being practiced (as will be confirmed in chapter 4). But already in the literature of the fifties and sixties was observed that the Rwandan marriage rituals were changing. Little information is available about the reasons why some Rwandan marriage customs disappeared and what the role of the Church was in this process.

Roughly 25 years ago Sylvestre Ndekezi wrote a book “Rituel du mariage coutumier au Rwanda”²⁸ on Rwandan marriage customs. His investigations showed that, although there were some minor differences, in all regions of Rwanda by all kinds of people the same marriage rituals were practiced. In his *avant-propos* of the same book Ndekezi (1984:7) stated that Rwandans followed the same rituals as they had been doing for many years in the times of their forefathers. To be able to make a description of the whole marriage process he made use of old people to trace and locate their old customs, but he did not make very clear which customs were changing by that time among the younger people. However, his book, written in 1984, is one of the few contemporary books. And even contemporary studies from for instance Musabyimana (1999) and Erny (2005) make use of the historical books mentioned above.

²⁷I found a stencilled version of the first draft of Bigirumwami's book, dated 1968, in a library in Kigali, complete with personal comments (in French) from the author.

²⁸[Ritual of customary marriage in Rwanda. EHV]

Kyakwera wrote an article (20-09-2006) in daily newspaper The New Times about Rwandan marriage “Rwandan marriage rites through the times” and some of the steps of the marriage process were described. Ndekezi (1984) made a descriptive division in three themes: engagement, the dowry and the wedding itself. The writer of the New Times article described some of the five phases of marriage: *gufata irembo* (booking a bride), *gusaba* (asking the bride), *gutebutsa* (hastening), *gukwa* (handing over of the dowry) and *gushyingirwa* (the actual wedding ceremony). Kyakwera (2006) states that the periods between the phases depend on the circumstances of the families, but the steps themselves are critically observed. A description of these possible phases, based on the information found in the above mentioned literature, will follow in 3.2, in chronological order.

First of all, however, a rough sketch of the Rwandan concepts of sexuality and marriage will be given and the role of preparations for marriage (particularly for the woman). In fact the preparations for married life started for girls in early childhood, and should be seen as the first stage in the whole process. After this the five above mentioned steps will be discussed, but other essential stages will be added: the first step *kuranga* (searching) and the last steps *gutinya* (seclusion) and *gutwikurura* (unveiling). Finally the socially accepted and less accepted ways of living together will be mentioned, where after the same will be done for the different types of divorce.

In 3.3 an attempt will be made to assess the traditional marriage customs and certain disappearing rituals. Special attention is given to the place of the *inkwano*, the dowry, as it plays an essential role in the wedding ceremonies and marriage in general. The traditional Rwandan perception of adultery will also be explained.

3.2 Different customary marriage steps

3.2.1 *Concept of sexuality and marriage; preparations during childhood*

Rwanda does not know the “rites de passage” as other countries do. In fact marriage is pre-eminently the Rwandan rite the passage that marks the transition from

childhood to adulthood. In the old Rwanda some religious customary rituals, for instance, were only accessible to adults, i.e. married people (Bourgeois 1954:246). A non-married person, although of age, would never be accepted as part of the “adult world”. In the traditional Rwanda the phenomenon of celibacy was unknown (Bushayija 1966: 193-194). By marrying, men and women received the official status of married people, and were considered as adults (Adriaenssens 1964:66). That explains why even now marriage is held in such high regard in Rwanda.

When studying the relation between civil, religious and customary marriage, I asked some women informally about the position of Jehovah Witnesses in Rwandan society (as they do not recognize “earthly powers” and therefore do not marry civilly), and whether it was true that the children that are born out of such a relationship are considered as illegitimate. They told me that was the case, and one of them exclaimed: “That’s very sad, because those women remain girls, they will never be adults!”

According to Mbiti (1975:98-100) in Africa marriage is seen as something sacred. Human beings are not only supposed to get married, it is seen as their religious obligation. Living implicates giving life to the next generation, which is the main goal of sexuality and marriage in Rwanda. Children belong to the lineage of the father’s family. Fertility is very important and it is a woman’s task to be the soil, to carry the seeds and bear the fruits and let them grow²⁹. In the past a wife could be sent back home to her parents in case of sterility, and her father would be asked to reconstitute the dowry (Bourgeois 1954:132,146). When a man became father of a son he introduced the child to the concepts of the family and life in general. Parents tried to educate their children well, and prepare them to be responsible members of society (Bushayija 1966: 112). As life was seen as a continuum, after the death of the father life continued in the life of the children (Adriaenssens 1964:101-102).

It is very important for a woman to get married, because single women are considered of a lower status than married women. When asked about their reasons to marry, all

²⁹The emphasis on fertility explains itself against the past where having children was a way of securing one's future: getting power, security and respect. Already in the sixties however Adriaenssens (1964:104) complained about the overestimation of fertility that leads to irresponsibly high birth rates thus causing poverty.

participants of a conference in a village told me that they wanted to marry to be able to *kubaka inzu* (to build a house) i.e. to establish a family and have children³⁰. It was not because of a special man or woman that they wanted to marry; in fact it was the other way around: their desire to marry made them accept any adequate candidate. The basis was not a feeling of love or an already existing relationship. When asked what kind of woman or man would be suitable for them, they answered that any strong person would fit in the description-- strong in the sense of healthy, being able to work on their land, and able to beget or produce children. This is confirmed by Bushayija (1966:28). Also Adriaenssens (1964:35) emphasizes the physical health and corporal integrity.

Sexuality played a very important role in daily life. The first goal being procreation, it also regulated day to day life by the many rituals and taboos. At all stages of life, from birth to death, there were sexual rites meant to keep evil spirits away and to strengthen the bond within the family. Although there were many taboos, other uses fomented the freedom to fully satisfy the sexual instincts of married people within or outside this marital relationship (Musabyimana 1999:192).

The literature consulted, such as Adriaenssens, Bigirumwami, Bourgeois, Bushayija, Kagame and Ndekezi, emphasize that marriage preparations did not start when already engaged parties were ready to marry. Even when there was no young man in sight the whole education of a girl was meant to prepare her for her future position as married woman (Adriaenssens 1994:ch 2). During her entire childhood her mother would teach her how to be a good wife, mother and housewife: the girl would learn how to cook, she had to follow the complicated rules how to serve the food and how to attend to visitors. Apart from that she was instructed how to please her husband physically (Gasarabwé 1997).

³⁰The reason that this discussion came up was the following. After having been explained some rules of a counselling situation, two of the participants had to perform a role play on "counselling and HIV+ people". The situation: a young woman's first boy friend had died of Aids before they got married, and now the second one also tested HIV+. She came to see the counsellor (in real life a pastor) to ask for advice. I expected a discussion about the implications of having married an HIV+ spouse. However, after having explained her problem, the counsellor said: "Don't worry, trust in the Lord, He will provide a husband for you", quoted some random Bible texts about faith and trust, and switched over to a "powerful" prayer. It was then that I asked the other participants if they would also have advised the client not to marry and to break up with their fiancé. None of them would even have considered the possibility of a marriage with an HIV+ person. It was then that I asked the question: "But why do you marry?".

The sexual preparations for marriage were a very important component of the education. The general sexual teachings started already at an early age and later the young girl would receive meticulous instructions how to prepare herself for marriage. This was done in couples in the girl's age group. Girls were pressed to stretch their *labia minora* during this practice called *gukuna*, because of the reigning belief that this was useful to prepare their genitals for marriage (Musabyimana 1999:32-47). Young women who neglected this practice were marginalized, and if the husband found out after having married her, he would express his disappointment and was believed to have an excuse for looking for another woman (Musabyimana 1999:35). Even these days there are discussions on the radio whether a Christian man is allowed to send back his wife if he finds out that she did not go through this ritual of *gukuna*.

Bigirumwami (2004:168) and Musabyimana (1999:75-76) state that more or less one month before the actual wedding day, *gushyingirwa*, the bride would start to gather with her friends at night. This visit was called *kurarira umugeni* (staying over at the bride's). After singing and dancing one of them would accompany her to the bed, and they would prepare her for her marital duties by satisfying each other sexually. This was not considered as homosexual behaviour but was meant to prepare the bride, who was not allowed to have heterosexual relationships before marriage, for the sexual relationship with her husband (Erny 2005:258-262). The sexual activities between young men in the army or among young herdsmen were neither regarded as homosexual, as they existed for lack of availability of heterosexual contacts (Musabyimana 1999:161).

Especially on the night before the wedding the mother of the bride would repeat what she had told her before, that she should never refuse to have sexual contact with her husband (except during her period), nor with his brothers, crossed cousins or his best friends (Musabyimana 1999:76-77,124). In the feudal system of Rwanda it was even unheard of to refuse the advances of the lord or patron. If a husband noticed his boss' spear in the opening of his hut, he would just wait for his departure (Musabyimana 1999:127). Apart from that women were not supposed to protest if their husbands approached their servants sexually (Musabyimana 1999:134), provided that they did

that discreetly. It is for this reason that the mother taught her daughter how to do everything to draw and keep the attention of the husband towards herself.

Although the sexual preparations were a very essential part of the education, Musabyimana (1999:55-57) emphasizes that virginity of the bride was extremely important, not only for the individual young woman but also for the honour of her entire family. It was especially the task of the mother to safeguard the virginity of her daughter³¹. Young men however were encouraged to experiment, and have sexual relationships within and outside their family because it was considered a dishonour for the future wife and her family if the groom would be inexperienced³². Bushayija (1966:33) confirmed that the strict expectations concerning virginity for young women did not apply for young men.

All those concepts make us realize that in the Rwandan context it is indeed a blow for a woman if she does not get married after her childhood, i.e. if she does not reach her destiny. Even these days, unmarried women are being nicknamed “girls”, which causes unnecessary pain and shame. If therefore the family of a young woman was approached by a suitable candidate, she and her entire family were filled with pride.

3.2.2 *Kuranga, inquiries and establishing contact*

A marriage in Rwanda was never and is still not a relationship between two persons as it is in the West, but rather a bond between two different families. The steps that

³¹According to Musabyimana (1999:57-60) in Rwanda pregnant young women were severely punished or even killed, but the child was always killed. In some cases the mother could try to save her daughter from a certain death and help her to induce an abortion. Pregnant young women could be drowned or left behind in the wilderness. There is an island in Lake Kivu which was used to send pregnant young women to: they were left to die there, or otherwise they could be picked up to be the wife of poor fishermen. This was confirmed by some fishermen in the region, who showed me some of the islands destined for that purpose. However, Bushayija (1966:33) doubted the historical value of these stories, and believed that this was a legend, probably based on one historical fact.

³²Musabyimana (1999:60) stresses that, although other African tribes knew the custom that young women needed to prove to be fertile before marriage, this idea was unfamiliar to Rwandan culture. This is surprising, because today many young women that marry happen to be pregnant before marriage. It is difficult to ascertain what the reason of this present phenomenon is. My initial thought, that this is because indeed the future husbands want to test the ability of their wives to conceive, was contradicted by some pastors. They emphasized that this idea is still strange in Rwanda. In their opinion these pregnancies are a way to force the families to accept the intertribal marriages of the couples. Since this topic is rather sensitive in today's Rwanda I have not found a way to be able to confirm nor contradict this.

were considered during the preparations of the wedding were necessary, in the first place to perceive if it was wise to take such a far-reaching decision to establish that important relationship (in the case of an unknown family), and in the second place to get to know each other and to strengthen the bond between the two families. All these preparations were an investment in the relation between the two families and consequently of the relation between the man and the wife. Therefore the inquiries from both sides, that even started before the first contact was made, were very important (Ndekezi 1984:110). Marriage was a double contract: between the two families and between the two spouses (Adriaenssens 1964:ch 3).

Even before the young man and his representatives would choose an appropriate candidate they would consider the suitability of the family. After having explained in the first chapter the complicated prohibitions and taboos concerning the choice of a spouse Adriaenssens (1964:32) claims in his book that, although there were exceptions, generally Tutsi, Hutu and Twa married in their own socio-racial group. Further on in the book Adriaenssens (1964:ch 4) states that neither Hutu nor Tutsi men would marry Twa women, because that was considered as “not done”. If a marriage took place between a Hutu and a Tutsikazi³³ in most cases it was between a rich man and a very young woman, and those marriages were not regarded positively. Bourgeois (1954:125) however states that inter-tribal marriages were quite common, especially with a Tutsikazi. A marriage between a Tutsi and a Hutukazi was rather shameful, because only a very poor Tutsi would marry a Hutu wife. More common were the cases when a rather poor Tutsi, married to a Tutsi woman, took a Hutukazi as a second wife to work on their land: the Hutu were considered to work harder than the Tutsi.

It is difficult to form an opinion on these issues in modern Rwanda. In speaking with my local contacts the belief persists that these tribal distinctions are still in force today, though more below the surface. Others might contradict this view and confirm that it is particularly a matter of social standing and not that much a tribal issue (between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa). The opinions differ, because in informal conversations it is heard that

³³-*kazi* is the suffix to indicate the female version of the word when it is necessary to distinguish it from the male version.

the choice is more determined by the fact if the spouse is a member of a certain clan; belonging to a clan is determined by birth. This was confirmed during anonymous interviews (Anonymous 1:2009). There are nineteen clans in Rwanda, divided among the three different ethnic groups. Bourgeois (1954:122-127) explains the complicated rules and restrictions concerning marriage for the clans. Endogamy was forbidden, except in the then royal clan as this clan needed to maintain the purity of the royal blood, but they were not supposed to marry women from the same family lineage. In the other clans most men are not allowed to marry young women from their own clan, and certainly not from the same lineage. Marriage was forbidden between the children of two brothers, or the children of two sisters, but allowed for crossed cousins: the child of a man with a child of his sister (Bourgeois 1954:123-126). Some clans are said to have a strong preference for certain clans and an even stronger reluctance to marry young women from a few other clans.

However, it is not easy to ask people about these issues these days, as many are not eager to talk about it. Also when asked about Hutu/Tutsi/Twa- issues people tend to give socially desired answers, just repeating the lemma “We are all Banyarwanda”, being afraid of accusations of “divisionism”³⁴.

Especially in remote areas it happened that the family of a young man that wished to get married, sent out an *umuranga*. This was a representative of the young man’s family in the capacity as mediator, to observe the availability in the neighbourhood for a young woman in marriageable age. The *umuranga* was not the father of the young man, but most of the times a good friend or an uncle, and he was accompanied by some good friends. Sometimes the young man himself would tell his father (indirectly by his uncle or aunt) to send the *umuranga* to go to look for a certain young woman, but that would be the only action on his side at that stage and the father was the one in charge to decide.

³⁴In Rwanda the term “divisionism” is used to express that people make distinction between tribes and favour some, which is a sensitive issue in a country where so many Tutsi, but also Hutu, have been killed during the genocide based on a “divisionistic” ideology. It is said that people apply self-censorship out of fear that they will be accused of “divisionism” or will be labelled “génocidaires” (perpetrators or sympathizers of the genocide ideology) when they express anything that could be considered as criticism of the government (Rwanda 2007).

The *umuranga* was supposed to find out whether the young woman would be a suitable candidate. This process was therefore called *kurambagiza*, to spy (Kagame 1954:123). The inquiries were a family matter and the young man and young woman were not necessarily involved in the deliberations. Even though in the old times the spouses officially had no free choice, they were consulted in many cases. The parents, however, made all decisions.

Adriaenssens (1964:ch 3) described negative choice criteria in the search for a spouse such as: social obstacles, illness or physical deficiency and moral flaws (as laziness and quarrelling). As positive choice criteria Adriaenssens (1964:ch 2) renders the following: local proximity (especially Hutu used to choose brides they knew from the village or a known family; Tutsi used to travel more and would make connexions with other groups), certain qualifications of the family, individual qualities of the spouses (social, physical and moral: being submissive and discreet, referring to the woman) and social virginity of the young woman (i.e. not being pregnant or having children). Along these lines, Bushayija (1966:34) wrote that in case of a premarital pregnancy an abortion would be induced, or the baby would be killed after death, which showed the high esteem of virginity.

These days, especially in the cities, there is another sense of time than some decades ago, but in former days this stage of inquiries could take several months. The first exploratory visits the intentions were not expressed openly, but everybody knew what was happening. A blunt refusal was seen as very impolite, so if the family of the young woman knew in advance that they would never give their daughter in marriage to that family they would invent excuses to postpone the meeting, and then the other party would understand.

When the eye was definitively set on a certain young woman the father of the young man would pay a special visit, called *kureshya*³⁵, to the young woman's father, and he would bring a pot of locally brewed banana beer called *urwagwa*. People used this time to chat, to share some beer, to observe each other's habits, and to judge the qualities of the possible: during this and other visits they would see how the young

³⁵Ndekezi explains that this visit is called *kureshya*, although the French-Kinyarwanda Dictionary states that this term is reserved to propose to a woman who has been married before.

woman served the beer, how well educated she was and they would try to get information whether she was already menstruating and mature. In contrast with other African cultures the fact that the bride was really mature was the *sine qua non* requirement. At present the marriageable age is set by the government at 21 years but leaves room for exceptions. But even in the old days it was not the custom to marry very young women.

3.2.3 *Gufata irembo, booking a bride*

After the visit of the young man's father another delegation would visit the young woman's house, also with a pot of *urwagwa*, to try to "book" her. During this very visit of *gufata irembo* (booking of the bride) the representative of the young man's family, the *umuranga*, would try to get information if there were other candidates, and if not, to be sure that the door (*irembo*) would be locked for other rivals, i.e. to be sure that no other family would be in the same process. If the family of the young woman considered the young man's family as possible candidates they would confirm that from that moment on their daughter was "booked".

In the past it was only after this meeting, if it had been favourable, that the news was announced to the possible future spouses. Although these had the right to accept or reject the proposal, after having made inquiries themselves (by means of their respective friends), a rejection rarely took place, as this would put both families in a difficult position (Erny 2005: 227).

This stage of the "booking" of the bride could be considered as a milestone, the first official step in the whole process; it was considered as an achievement, because although there was no official commitment yet, there was an agreement. Both parties knew that from that moment on they would go on with the following steps, although there was still a way out if one of the parties would realize that the other party was not what they expected of it. And the neighbours would know that that the family of the young woman was already "in negotiations" with the family of a certain young man.

If families had good relationships with each other it was possible to “book” a bride in advance, when she was still a baby or even an unborn one. The moment their daughter was ready to marry, a representative of the family was sent to the young man’s family “to inform them of the existence of a decent girl in a particular family” (Kyakwera 2006), meaning that the promised bride had matured and that she was prepared for marriage. But normally people looked for older candidates for the practical reason that in that way they could observe if the young woman in question was a good candidate: physically mature and well educated, fit and prepared for marriage.

In modern times, where young men and young women meet at schools and in the church, the young man chooses his girlfriend, and only after mutual consent the young man’s family approaches her family. Especially in the cities the formal phase of *gufata irembo* is actually useless when adult men and women who meet each other for example at their work place and establish the first contact themselves. In that case it is only afterwards that the family is involved. However, even these days people visit each others’ families, and it is still seen as important that the families get to know each other well before they decide to marry.

3.2.4 Gusaba, betrothal

If the bride was already mature, and the families knew each other well enough, the time from *gufata irembo* to the betrothal was short. And if the families knew about each other that they were in the material condition to go on in the process they would take the next step called *gusaba* (lit. to ask, i.e. the hand of the bride). Again a visit from the young man’s family was paid to the house of the young woman; now the father would go in company of some male members of the family. Apart from the usual *urwagwa* this time they would be carrying other presents (agricultural tools: a hoe and an *isano*, a kind of a cleaning stick). The young man himself was not present and also the bride was nowhere to be seen. All negotiations were done by the representative parties.

During this visit a whole performance took place and the representatives of both parties would pronounce a prose, called *imisango* (speeches) making use of proverbs and sayings, these days nearly too difficult to understand even for Rwandans. Making use of this drama the family of the young man would express that they were looking for a certain young woman, and the family of the bride would for example answer that the daughter they wanted to ask had died, or had already been married (or the more contemporary version: that she is still studying), but that she had a little sister of five years old, so the only thing the other party had to do was to wait another couple of years and come back...

This “game” had several meanings. In the first place it was just entertainment, because both parties expressed their gladness and made a lot of jokes. In the second place these *imisango* were a display of mere beauty. Kinyarwanda is a very complicated and beautiful language and the speakers of it consider it as an art to express themselves in very well sounding phrases. In the third place it was a kind of a mutual contest who was considered as the best speaker: good speakers were supposed to be bearers of wisdom. In the fourth place it was a test if the other party was well educated, i.e. did not show negative emotions like impatience or anger. In Rwanda a person who gets angry is looked down upon and considered as ill-mannered³⁶. During the *imisango* the representative of the bride’s family tested the family of the young man if they were patient and well behaved enough. Lastly, both families wanted to be sure that there were no existing conflicts left between the two families. At the end they would approve and accept that the young woman could be the wife of the young man.

And then the negotiations would start again, this time on the size of the *inkwano* (the dowry), after which they would come to an arrangement and make an agreement on

³⁶Some years ago, in 2005 or 2006, there was a wedding in Kigali between a German man and a Rwandan young lady. During the ceremony the representative of the bride’s family questioned the Kinyarwanda speaking representative of the bride groom about his past and his intentions to marry their daughter. After hearing the translation the groom became so angry that he walked away. His friends had to call him back and explain him that this was just a word play and part of the *gusaba* ceremony. The behaviour of the man was considered as immature and ridiculous and reached the local news paper, The New Times. Unfortunately I could not find the exact issue of the New Times edition, and the email edition had been removed from the Internet.

the date that they would meet again for the handing over of the *inkwano* (Adriaenssens 1964:ch 3).

3.2.5 *Gukwa, handing over of the dowry*

On the day of the handing over of the dowry there was a special ceremony when the *inkwano* (dowry) consisted of a cow. When the *inkwano* consisted of goats (especially in Hutu families) there was no ceremony (Adriaenssens 1964:ch 3). Bourgeois (1954:134) states that the dowry for Hutus used to consist of three pickaxes and several jars of beer. Only for royal weddings did the dowry consist of many cows, but most cattle breeders used to give two cows only: one of them was considered as the *inkwano*, the other one was meant to accompany the bride to her new place. Also Kagame (1954:182) differentiates between Hutus and Tutsis: both groups appear to have had different requirements and ceremonies. He adds that there were even nuances per region. However, the custom changed over the years and in the sixties the dowry generally consisted of one cow, also for Hutus³⁷.

The youngest young man of the family played the role of *umushumba* (pastor) and presented the cow. Again *imisango* were pronounced and the beauty of the cow was praised (indirectly also singing the bride's praises). These days people of means hire professional "actors" as *abashumba* (pastors). Especially city dwellers are not able to pronounce this complicated Kinyarwanda play on words, proverbs and sayings, although this part is very much appreciated by all guests.

The dowry sealed the unity between the two families (Ndekezi 1984:111); it was a token, a visible indication also for other people, comparable with the written signature of the bride, the groom and the witnesses during a Western wedding ceremony.

³⁷Hutu people have changed the dowry-of-pickaxes for dowry-of-cows as cows are considered as the ideal *inkwano*. Adriaenssens (1964:63) states that since many cultivators ask cows for their daughters, the cow is more generally distributed in Rwanda and not only rich cattle farmers have cows. The writer says that in this way a mixed agricultural system has emerged, which is favourable: agriculture and cattle breeding have to be interdependent. In my opinion it is also favourable that the old association of Tutsis with cows (and riches) and Hutus with goats (and poverty) is put to an end. On the other hand the growing quantity of cows in this small country seems rather disconcerting.

However, the dowry itself had a less individual character as it was not exchanged between individuals and their respective witnesses but seen as a family matter. Ndekezi (1984:106-109) quotes the Rwandan Family Code where it is explicitly mentioned that it is the obligation of the parents to provide a home for their children, to pay the dowry for the young men and to marry off their daughters. The handing over of the dowry was essential, binding and definite. It was a point of no return. The handing over of the dowry was the basis for the relation between the two families.

3.2.6 Gutebutsa

The following step, before the wedding, was when the young man's family decided that the time had arrived. In the past the young man built a house on the compound of his parents, which showed that he was responsible and ready to live independently from his parents. Although it sometimes happened that the young man moved in on the compound of the bride's parents, this was not well regarded as it only happened if the young man's family was not wealthy enough.

When he had finished building the house the same delegation that came to ask the hand of the bride then would again visit her family with "one or two jars of beer". Others speak about beer and an axe with the *umwishywa*³⁸ around it (Adriaenssens 1964). These days people bring crates of beer (in "the world") or sodas (among Christians). The meaning of the visit is to enter into an agreement about practical issues such as the date of the wedding. In the old days this was a complicated job, because the ancestors had to be consulted.

To show that the young woman was really decent and not too eager to marry her family would try not to hurry the preparations; therefore the representative of the bride's family would try to delay the negotiations and to defer the date of the wedding.

³⁸*Umwishywa*: a cord made by a certain marsh plant symbolizing the "umbilical cord" that unified the two families. This *umwishywa* plays an important role during the next step of the marriage process, the wedding ceremony.

In the course of the years things have changed in the marriage process. In the time Adriaenssens wrote his book many times *gukwa* and *gutebutsa* happened together in one meeting: the dowry was handed over and in the same meeting the families agreed on the last issues to be discussed. Nowadays *gusaba no gukwa* is often known as one ceremony, announced on invitation cards in those terms; in that case these two stages are taken together in one step. Also Ndekezi (1984) mentions that often these two phases were executed together. The families agree in advance on the issues to be negotiated, but that fact is celebrated and made official in a public ceremony³⁹.

3.2.7 Gushyingirwa or ubukwe, the actual wedding day

So far we recognize most of the steps and ceremonies during present marriage celebrations. The day of the wedding, as described by Adriaenssens, differed in many ways from the current ceremonies. But even in Adriaenssens' time these ceremonies were changing or disappearing (1965:65). However, we still recognize certain elements. These days the actual wedding day *gushyingirwa* is called *ubukwe*.

On this important day the ceremonies took place in the *urugo*, on the compound of the parents of the groom. If the bride left her parents place, she was supposed to demonstrate sadness and a certain resistance to leave their home, to show her

³⁹In October 2006 I was present at a wedding, and during the *gusaba no gukwa* ceremony explicitly the term *gufata irembo* was used. And in fact the step of *gufata irembo* was observed that very moment, as the visitors announced that they came to book the daughter of the family. The representative of the bride's family informed them that she was not available, as she was still studying, but that the young man could wait some years for her younger sister. After long and beautiful phrases and some sips of banana beer they agreed that the young man could marry the daughter they came for. Without pausing the ceremony continued in the negotiations about the cows, and only a few minutes later the dowry was already handed over (they left the compound "to inspect the cows", that were not there because the dowry consisted in paper cows, money). Then *gutebutsa*, with the negotiations about the day of the wedding followed. They agreed on the date, actually that very day, but then the bride's representative acted as if they had understood that the wedding would take place on the same date, but in one year. Of course all the family members had come from far knowing that both parties gave their permission, that the outcome of all negotiations was known to all family members and that the wedding that would take place that afternoon was well organized. On that wedding the *gusaba no gukwa* ceremony took place in the morning, and the wedding in the church in the afternoon, where after the party was celebrated with a reception. The civil wedding had taken place the week before. The negotiations during the morning ceremony were just a formality, but it is very interesting that although in a shortened form all the phases of the marriage process were observed and named as such.

appreciation for her parents and to make sure to the other people she was not too eager to marry. The bride left alone, i.e. together with a group of family members, but her parents stayed in their own house and had no part in the festivities. She was wrapped up in a mat (Adriaenssens 1964:65) to protect herself against the “evil eye” and often carried in an *ingobyi* (stretcher) to the house of the young man (Ndekezi 1984). The group was received on her father-in-law’s compound with a special ceremony and brought to the new house of the young man, usually on the compound of his parents. The female visitors entered the hut of the groom with the bride. The male visitors were together with the groom in the hut of the parents. When night fell, the party started with singing and dancing.

In the house of the father a ceremony was held, and the people chatted and drank. No food was being served, as taking food was seen as a private matter. Again *imisango* were performed (*gutonda imisango*). The high deeds of the groom, *ibyvugo*, were recited (Musabyimana 1999:79). The representative of the bride’s family (usually her paternal uncle) spoke to the family of the young man about the unity of the two families and gave recommendations about how to treat the bride should she not behave well. This rite could take place during different times during the wedding. The hosts would make an effort to entertain the people so that they would stay a long time: leaving early would mean the party was boring and that would not please the hosts.

Although the range of rites knew many variations it generally consisted of the following. First the *gushaka* (wedding) rites took place. When a young woman married for the first time a special rite called *kurongora* (to marry an unmarried woman) was performed. When a woman did not marry for the first time the marriage rite was called *gucyura*. *Gushaka* was the general term for both *gucyura* and *kurongora* (Adriaenssens 1964:66).

3.2.8 *Kurongora, imposition of the umwishywa*

At dawn, before cock-crow, the *kurongora* rite would take place (Ndekezi 1984:82-87). Kagame (1954:153) explains that one of the men would accompany the young man to

the place where the bride and her friends were. The aunt or matron that accompanied the bride would take her hand, and the four would withdraw to the inner hut. Here the handing over of the bride to the young man would take place. The young man would then take a crown, called *umwishywa* (made of marsh plants and symbolizing the conjugal union) and exclaim: “*Ndakurongoye*” (I marry you), and then he would spit a mouthful of milk and *imbazi*-juice at his bride’s body. This part of the ceremony (with or without the spitting) is the central rite of the wedding. This was actually in fact and in essence a *rite de passage*, because the young man and the young woman became adults at that very moment (Kagame 1954:154)⁴⁰. The friend of the young man, present in the hut as well, would shout for joy, while his other friends outside would also be cheering. The bride would cry, and the other young women would cry also and sing songs for the bride to comfort her, saying things as: “Do not cry, this is the way things use to happen. All of us will have that experience”. In contrast with this the groom’s mates, outside, would sing songs to honour the strength and courage of the young man. The young man would even sing songs about himself, *ibyvugo*, if he indeed had the authority to do so, that is to say if he had really some heroic deeds to his account.

After the imposition of the *umwishywa* the crown was sent to the parents of the young man and afterwards to the parents of the bride. When they received the *umwishywa* they had to accomplish a ritual copulation called *kwakira umwishywa* (lit. receiving the *umwishywa*) (Ndekezi 1984:88-91). Adriaenssens (1964:68) informs that this could be a real act or a *simulacra*, faked. The new couple would delay their first sexual intercourse until the news would reach them that their parents “received the *umwishywa*”, by which they would be sure of the approval of the parents: they recognized the marriage of the children and gave them the right to have sexual intercourse. In some regions, if the parents of the bride lived far away, they would not wait for the messenger, but calculate the time for the *umwishywa* to reach the home of the bride’s parents. Until that night a young man was sleeping between the couple. However, this depends on the region: in other cases the ritual of the first sexual

⁴⁰If a woman married for the second time, either with a man that married for the first or the second time, this rite with the *umwishywa* would be omitted. However, a man could marry different women through the *umwishywa* rite (Bushayija 1966:119).

intercourse would take place in the same night of the wedding. Sometimes first one of the milk ceremonies would take place. The couple and her brother would put milk in a calabash and stir the milk, making a simultaneous movement. This “making butter together” symbolized the unity of the couple and the families (Kagame 1954:155-156).

A young boy, usually a younger brother of the bride, would put himself between the couple (*guca hagati*, putting between) thus hindering them to have intercourse (Adriaenssens 1964:67). The boys’ behaviour as protector of her virginity was symbolical, meant to show that the bride’s family was convinced that she was decent and that they had always protected her virginity, until that very moment (Kagame 1954:159). The husband had to pay the young man (or to promise him a cow) to let him leave the place.

When the marriage was arranged by the parents without the couple knowing each other (and that was in most of the cases), this sexual contact was the first contact they ever had (Ndekezi 1984:92-95).

The first sexual contact took place after a ritual fight (Adriaenssens 1964:68) called *gukirana*. The bride was rubbed with butter, *amavuta*, so she was very slippery, and the husband had to use force to break her resistance and have their first sexual contact, therefore called *kumara amavuta* (Musabyimana 1999:88-89). He would try to have sexual intercourse but she would have to refuse him, wanting to prove her virginity. Sometimes the younger brother was still present till that time, to defend his sister and to be able to witness that she really had a virile husband. The husband had to struggle to throw his wife on the floor: the first time did not take place on the bed. Erny (2005:235-236) states that the first contact was supposed to happen by force, and was regarded as traumatizing by many women. He adds that the struggle could take two or three nights. Sometimes, when the wife was stronger than her husband, he had to ask help from his friends. In some regions the husband would offer the bride presents to accept to have sexual intercourse. When she gave up, he overpowered and possessed her, most of the time really, sometimes symbolically. His friends were present in the hut, or waiting outside. Afterwards the husband would leave the hut to tell them triumphantly that he had succeeded and they would shout for joy and sing

songs. However, Bushayija (1966:121-122) said that usually this was a playful struggle, meant to demonstrate the bride's virginity, and that it only took a few minutes, because it was regarded as essential that the consummation of marriage took place on that very day.

Ndekezi used interviews with older people to describe how marriages used to be in the old times and he emphasises (Ndekezi 1984:97) that before other customs influenced Rwandan marriage, all the steps described above were widespread, practised and seen as essential. The final phase of *gushyingirwa* is not recognized much in present weddings, while the other customs are still intact. Adriaenssens (1964:69) states about these *gushyingirwa* rituals: "Some ceremonies of the *ubukwe* are formally forbidden: everything related to the *umwishywa*, the *guca hagati*, the *kwakira umwishywa* of the parents. The resistance of the wife,-- *kumara amavuta*,-- is rebuked [EHV]"⁴¹. However, until now I have not found more written information about the restrictions and prohibitions of those marriage rituals. Only Bigirumwami (2004:168) describes some rituals and calls them "bad rituals".

3.2.9 *Gutinya*

After the wedding the bride would stay in the house for some days. This period of "seclusion" (Mbiti 1975:102) was called *gutinya* and she was supposed to drink milk and make art objects (Kyakwera 2006), to rest, or to do some light work in the house. The bride was supposed to stay at home, hidden from the eyes of strangers. *Gutinya* means "to fear", as by not observing this or other taboos she risked getting a skin disease. However, Erny (2005:235-236) quotes an informant who shares about her shame and fear during the *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta*. She explains that afterwards she hid from the eyes of others because she felt too embarrassed that she had slept with a man. This gives the name *gutinya* another connotation.

⁴¹Original text in French: "Certaines cérémonies de l'*ubukwe* sont formellement interdites: tout ce qui se rapporte à l'*umwishywa*, au *guca hagati*, au *kwakira umwishywa* des parents. La résistance de l'épouse,--*kumara amavuta*, --est blâmée".

Kyakwera (2006) mentions a custom that not all writers describe, *kubyukurutsa* (milking the cows); the morning after the wedding the neighbourhood would come together in the *urugo* (compound) where the wedding had taken place, to milk their cows together (this rite was generally performed when visitors came). It showed that the woman was a new part of the family. Kagame (1954:157) also mentions this ceremony and adds that the presents for the couple would be shown, and describes that cattle breeders would organize a cow parade, after which the carriers of the stretchers would receive presents, where after the visitors would leave. However, in contrast with what Kyakwera states, it is more likely that this *kubyukurutsa* took place during the unveiling ceremony, or that it took place in the intimacy of the family. If done on the morning after the wedding, it appears that it took place on the compound with the parents of the young man, without the couple, and with the visitors from the bride's side of the family. Erny (2005:236) confirms that this ceremony was not meant for outsiders. It was after all considered as essential for the *gutinya* period that the bride remained hidden away from strangers' eyes. This was confirmed by interviews and other conversations with individuals.

The length of the period of *gutinya* depended on the wealth of the young man's family: in a poorer family they would need her help sooner. Others call this period *kwarama*: the first days of the seclusion the new couple and the parents made bread and butter, and ate and drank together, to symbolise their new communion (Adriaenssens 1964:70). The term *kwarama* would therefore be an equivalent for "honeymoon", though spent locked up at home and with the family. The newlywed woman lived the first days or even weeks in the hut on the *urugo* of the parents. Little by little she could do some light work, but always inside the *urugo*, hidden from the looks of strangers.

This *gutinya* period was meant to grow in the family of her husband, where she was received in the circle of married women. Looking back however many married women express that they suffered during that period because of the pressure and the tension in the new family and because they missed their own family (Adriaenssens 1964:70). And of course they felt spied upon, because the whole community was highly interested in the newcomer, guessing and observing her reactions.

3.2.10 *Gutwikurura, unveiling*

After a certain number of days the time came for the newly married woman to show herself in public during the *gutwikurura* ceremony (Kagame 1954:173-176). Before that day she was not allowed to touch certain kitchen utensils. This ceremony to finish the period of seclusion was a party where also her mother and other visitors would come. Food, drinks (for the groom) and presents would be offered, therefore called *ibitwikurura* and *ibihembo*⁴² (Adriaenssens 1964:71).

Mbiti (1975:102) explains that both “seclusion” and “exposure” are symbolic for the “birth” into a new, i.e. married life. On the day she left the house for the first time she was considered a woman and not a bride anymore. This ritual of going public as a married woman was called the “unveiling”. Kagame (1954:176) states that this word is used because during *gutinya* the bride would often hide in the inner hut, and even cover her face with a mat. During *gutwikurura* however, she would come out, and throw the mat away. The transition to the world of the women would be made visible by trimming her hair: girls used to cut some parts of their hair, while wearing longer parts on other sides, but married women had their hair at one length on their whole head (Kyakwera 2006). The essential rite was when the woman presented herself in public and danced with her husband. She was from then on socially accepted as a married woman and welcomed as an adult woman in the society. Adriaenssens (1964) says that Christians these days do not practice *gutwikurura*. However, there are many examples of this custom in Kigali⁴³.

Apart from the *gutwikurura* other prescribed mutual visits with corresponding presents would follow. A few days after the *gutwikurura* ceremony, for instance, the woman would visit her parents and bring them milk or beer. However, depending on the

⁴²The *ibihembo*, the presents offered to the bride by her mother, were considered as an equivalent of the dowry offered to the parents of the bride by the parents of the groom.

⁴³One current version is the following. After the wedding ceremony family and some special guests withdraw to the house of the bridegroom’s parents, or a representative of the young man’s family, to chat about the things of the day and to see if there are unresolved things left. Hereafter the bride and groom retire to the bedroom of the parents, with the “matron” and the “best man”, where they sit on the bed and drink milk. This ceremony is also called the “unveiling ceremony”. However, this unveiling ceremony might be an accepted modern version of all three ceremonies *gushyingirwa*, *gutinya* and *gutwikurura* together. Although this ceremony takes place in the bedroom, and there is a milk ceremony, its function is that of an unveiling ceremony, meant to show that the couple can now live openly and officially as a married couple.

customs of the region, there are lots of variations on the moment of the visit and the content of the presents. Adriaenssens, Bigirumwami and Kagame describe some of them. Also later in their marriage, for example after having given birth, there are customary visits and presents, but the ceremonies as described above are the most important customs concerning the wedding process.

3.2.11 *Ways to start and end living together*

Although this customary marriage was the common way to start a life together, there were many exceptions, some socially accepted, others deviating from the existing practices. There were also socially accepted ways to end a marriage, while other ways were considered as shameful. The concept of adultery in the old Rwandan context is unusual and will be explained further.

3.2.11.1 *Regular and irregular ways to start living together*

Adriaenssens (1964:ch 4) describes different ways to start a life together and differentiates between regular and irregular ways. The regular and socially accepted forms are according to Adriaenssens (1964:73-79):

- (1) The above described *kurongora*, the normal process of a wedding
- (2) Second marriage, with a divorced wife⁴⁴
- (3) *Gucyura*: when a widow is “taken over” by the brother of the deceased with the approval of the family. This was called *guhungura* by others (Anonymous 2:2009)⁴⁵.

⁴⁴Kagame (1954:164) calls this *gusambakaza*, and he explains that this term was also used when a widow was remarried to a man from another family. This was considered as “remarriage after divorce”, as she broke with the family of the defunct. She was after all *umugore wacu*: our wife (Bourgeois 1954:147-148).

⁴⁵Adriaenssens, Bigirumwami and Van ‘t Spijker call this *gucyura*: the widow just stayed with the family of the deceased husband and was considered as the wife of a brother of the deceased, who might have had another wife and was therefore committing factual polygamy. The opinions differ as there was another term *guhungura* which is often confused with *gucyura*. The Rwandan people I interviewed stressed that only *guhungura* was considered as a legal relationship, comparable to the Biblical Levirate marriage, a permanent relationship meant to protect the status of the woman. This is also the definition of Musabyimana (1999:224) and Kagame (1954:164). According to the people I spoke the term *gucyura* is used when one or more brothers or other family members of the deceased just slept with the widow, without having the legal approval of the family. Others define *gucyura*

- (4) *Gushumbusha*, when a woman dies (or when she is sterile or ill), her parents, if they have a good relationship with their son-in-law, can give him another daughter in marriage.

Kyakwera (2006) adds another possibility, *gutenda*, when a young man asked permission to work with the young men of the family of his richer bride and live at the place of that same family; this form was accepted but looked down upon as it was a sign of poverty⁴⁶.

The irregular and non-accepted forms to start a marriage were:

- (1) Abduction (in case when the parents refuse to marry their daughter)⁴⁷.
- (2) Marriage by “ritual sleight”, on a visit, with witnesses; the young man throws the *umwishywa* and takes the young woman to live some days with him, after which the parents see themselves forced to hurry the wedding preparations.
- (3) *Kwinjira*, concubinage, when a man decides to live with a divorced woman, a non-married wife or a widow in the house of the latter. This is especially regarded as shameful because the man shows that he is not able to maintain this family⁴⁸.

Although in Rwanda the above mentioned irregular ways of living together were looked down upon, they were and are quite current. The Consitution de la République Rwandaise only recognizes monogamous marriage (art 28) and forbids polygamous marriage (art 29). Bourgeois (1954:131) put forward that from 1952 on in Rwanda no

even broader as “bringing a widow or divorced woman to one’s own compound to live with her”, the woman *in casu* being a family member or not. *Guhungura* nor *gucyura* should be confused with the rite called *kwera*, to finish the mourning period during which people live in sexual abstinence. Van ‘t Spijker (1990) describes that during this *kwera* ceremony the widow and a brother of her deceased husband, as well as other married family members, have a ritual sexual contact. This ritual was considered as important as it permitted the widow to marry again.

⁴⁶Kagame (1954:186) however states that *gutenda* was a legal way to pay the *inkwano* through labour.

⁴⁷Abduction is also called *kwiba* (to steal), or *guterura* (Kagame 1954:164-165). This can be with or without the consent of the young woman. Kagame (1954:166) explains that especially *kwishyingira* (to get oneself married) when a young woman decided to go and live with a young man, was considered as shameful for parents of both sides. Both parties would see themselves obliged to arrange the relationship officially. An online article from 2003 confirms the actual existence of marriage by abduction in Rwanda. Although it is punishable by law and treated as rape, poor people sometimes resort to this method of obtaining a wife instead of going through the normal procedures of having to pay a dowry and a wedding. Some women get beaten up and raped by the friends of the husband during the process of abduction. After having lived with the husband for several days he can offer a “dowry” to her parents. Knowing that their daughter will not find another husband easily most of them accept the fact, although the marriage will not be official and the children therefore illegitimate. Some women however prefer to be abducted than to remain single (Ruremesha 2003).

⁴⁸These days people call *kwinjira* the custom of “husband sharing” between women, for sexual pleasure or procreation, if there are no men available. So the man might be married to one woman, but has other women “in the street”.

new polygamous marriages could be consecrated. However, legal polygamy sometimes is substituted by factual polygamy: concubinage.

Mgr Aloys Bigirumwami (2004) raised the dilemma of culture versus Christianity years ago in his book “Imihango n’imigenzo n’imiziririzo mu Rwanda⁴⁹”. He stated that by forbidding polygamy concubinage was stimulated. Although he observed that polygamy was not well regarded in Rwanda, in practice the “petite polygamy” (within the family) was tolerated. Rwandans find it very embarrassing to speak about all these customs, although different websites confirm the existence of them. And just by observing one notices that there are many modern examples.

3.2.11.2 Regular and irregular ways to end marriage

Ndekezi (1984:112-113) believes that divorce was rare, although it happened. The writer states that it was not more common because of the meticulous inquiries before the wedding. These inquiries strengthened the ties with both families and in case of discord especially the old people would counsel the couple.

Nevertheless, Kagame and Adriaenssens claim that divorce in the old days was a widespread habit and that it was socially accepted, i.e. there was no stigma for divorced people. Also Bushayija (1966:148,184) confirms that, although a monogamic and unbreakable marriage bond was the ideal, the traditional culture allowed divorce (and polygamy). Bushayija (1966:146-151) mentions that there were many varied lawful reasons for divorce from both spouses and even the husband’s parents, for minor and mayor issues--from complaints about the wife’s food, or not clothing the wife according to her status⁵⁰, to ill treatment and physical violence. Adriaenssens (1964:ch8) mentions three types of divorce. *Kwahukana* was a temporary type of divorce, separation: the wife left the house to live with her family. The husband had to take the initiative, and the parents would intervene to reconcile them. The second type, *gutana* was the regular form of divorce. Sterility was an accepted reason,

⁴⁹[Rituals, customs, and taboos in Rwanda. EHV]

⁵⁰It was considered the husband’s duty to provide clothing for his wife.

because procreation was the essential goal of marriage. Infidelity of the wife (not of the husband) was also a common reason. From the perspective of the wife is mentioned that too many demands from the brothers and father of the husband could bring her to a divorce. The third type of divorce is *gusenda*, where the wife is chased away. This happened only when there were very strong reasons to do so and was therefore rare and shameful. In case of a divorce the woman was sent back to her parents, and the father was supposed to pay back the *inkwano*. Her children would “move back” to the lineage of her family (Kagame 1954:180). The church has always been opposed to divorce and therefore to the wish of husbands to the restitution of the *inkwano*. Adriaenssens (1964:91) writes that in the period from '57 to '59 some judges forced the father of a wife to reimburse the *inkwano* to the husband, and claims that this was to show their hostility towards Christianity and colonialism.

3.3 Assessment

3.3.1 Introduction

Since the *inkwano* fulfils such an important role in the wedding process and in marriage in general, the essence of the concept of the *inkwano* in Rwanda will be explained in 3.3.2. Because in the old Rwanda the view on adultery was different from the Christian concepts, this topic will be elaborated in 3.3.3. In 3.3.4 will be described why, according to the literature, some customs changed, while others remained intact, and if the Church played a role in these changes.

3.3.2 The role of the *inkwano* (dowry)

The concept of the dowry is unknown to many people, but even among people that live in cultures where dowries are exchanged the concepts and opinions differ. Many people call the *inkwano* (offered to the father of the bride by the father of the young man) the “bride price” but that is a very inconvenient expression (Kagame 1954:177-178). In the booklet of the “All-Africa Seminar on the Christian home and family life”

the writer defines the topic of the dowry calling it the “bride price”. This already hints that the writer does not agree with what has become of this practice. Indeed he states that a bride price is incompatible with Christianity as it hinders the woman or man to make their independent choice and action: “The word of God teaches us that every human being, whether male or female, is an autonomous and complete person before God, created in His Image, and redeemed by the blood of Christ” (Oikumene 1963:16-17).

Mulago (1991:14) emphasizes that originally the dowry is not a payment nor a compensation but part of a process of exchanging gifts (pickaxes or cattle), giving the family of the young woman the possibility of obtaining a bride for one of their young men in due course. Also Adriaenssens (1964:56) emphasizes that there was a range of due gifts exchanged on different occasions. Even on the day of the wedding the father of the bride gave the *indongoranyo*, an equivalent of the *inkwano* to the father of the groom, who in turn gave it to the son. In poor families the *indongoranyo* could be given later, for example a calf of the *inkwano*-cow (Bourgeois 1954:142). This shows that in the old Rwanda the handing over of the *inkwano* is not merely the purchase of a wife⁵¹. Different presents were exchanged to equip the young couple to start their own life together⁵² and to recompense the families for expenses incurred during the process. These gifts formed a counterbalance with the other presents. At present many people want to substitute the *inkwano* for the different presents for the new couple.

Nevertheless, different writers underline the fact that originally the dowry was a token (Oikumene 1963:16-17) and that marriage is based on a covenant. Since Christianity is a covenant religion the token of the dowry can be useful in the mission of the church if it is well explained in Christian marriages. An effort is made by Karanja Mutua and Chinchén (2006) who believe that the dowry (they prefer the term

⁵¹The question should be asked whether people today are aware of this. Recently a young man from Kigali married a woman from a certain village. Asked why he did not marry a bride from his native village but from the neighbouring village, he answered that in his own village “a wife cost 30.000 frw (60 USD) while the price in the other village was only 20.000 frw”.

⁵²Adriaenssens (1964:57-60) mentions amongst others: the *ibirongoranywa*, given by the father or the family of the bride to their daughter; the *ibitwikurura*, given by the mother of the bride to the new couple, during the *gutwikurura* ceremony; the *umunani*: a pre-heritage gift (land or an animal) from the father to his son, after the wedding; the *izimano*: a present given to the family of the bride at the end of the wedding.

“marriage gift”) can be used not only to build strong marriages and families, but also to spread the Gospel. Through the dowry the value of a woman is made visible, marriage is honoured and the family ties are strengthened because the dowry is exchanged in a range of gifts. Through the mediator in the process the young couple is assured of Christian advice and counselling. The writers believe that in this process the dowry, seen as a gift of love, can be used to spread the Gospel.

However, the *inkwano* is not just another gift in the wedding process. Adriaenssens (1964:63) states that the *inkwano* has a unique and different character from the other gifts and that it belongs to the father. Of old the *inkwano* is not a payment for the bride, nor a compensation for the economic loss when she leaves her father’s house (Adriaenssens 1964:47). When the father accepts the *inkwano* he accepts that from the moment she marries, his daughter belongs to the family of her husband and that their children will be recognized as legal descendants of the husband, members of his lineage. Therefore the *inkwano* is the symbol of “transfert de fécondité” [handing over of fecundity, EHV] (Adriaenssens 1964:47). Also Ntamhaka (1979) confirms the importance of the payment of the dowry, as it determines the legal status of a child. If, in case of a marriage, the dowry had not been paid, the child belonged to the mother’s family, and to the clan, totem and tribe of her father. It was therefore considered as shameful for a man not to pay the dowry, and positively the payment of the dowry was considered a sign of respect and honour for the woman.

Inkwano is usually translated as “dowry” (in French *dot*), which is actually rendered wrongfully. The word “dowry” is used for the household items the young bride brings with her to her new home, the *ibirongoranywa* (Kagame 1954:178) or *indongoranyo* (Bourgeois 1954:133,141). The dowry is the pendant of the “bridewealth” (Shorter 2001:90), the price the young man’s family would pay, or the gifts the young man would bring to equip their household (French: *trousseau*). Since the *inkwano* is neither of the two, and because its character is so unique, different writers have suggested another translation. Kagame (1954:177) advocates the French term *gages d’alliance*, while Bourgeois (1954:132) proposes *gages matrimoniaux*. Thus, *inkwano* could be

rendered as “marriage pawn”⁵³. However, although this term expresses the meaning of the word well, it would be confusing to introduce a new term, since most writers use the word “dowry” while they mean *inkwano*. In this thesis therefore both terms dowry and *inkwano* are used.

It is very important to hold on to the symbolic character of the *inkwano*. These days in many cases the *inkwano* consists of money, *amafaranga* (Adriaenssens 1964:55). Kagame (1954:178) blames the European culture with its notion of individualism and the introduction of the monetary system into Rwanda, though he adds that Christianity has moderated this effect. Counting the dowry in money makes people lose the real meaning of the dowry, which is already eroding the old customs. A rather worrisome development is that the size of the dowry rises, whether it is in the number of cows or in the amount of money. This shows that the original idea of a symbolic dowry is being abandoned. Kagame (1954:179-181) explains that in the old Rwanda good friends could even give a daughter in marriage for free: the *umugeni w'ubuntu* (French: *la fiancée cadeau*). *Ubuntu* means “grace”, but this *inkwano* had in general the same juridical implications as a “paid” *inkwano*. The fact that the prices of the *inkwano* rise (i.e. the number of cows or the amount of money) insinuates that the value of a woman is measurable in money. When the value of a woman is measurable in money the future husband will “possess” his wife. This idea will obstruct a healthy relationship between two people of the same value. That is the most important reason to preserve the symbolism of the *inkwano* and to keep a “fixed bride price”. Adriaenssens (1964:63) indeed suggests the idea of a fixed price of the dowry, so that the price, if the dowry is paid in money, cannot go beyond the price of a cow.

At the same time this idea of symbolism of the dowry should be expressed and taught explicitly because traditions do not change always intentionally but tend to decay very slowly, without people realizing it. At the end it is possible to have adopted customs that were foreign and even opposed to their own culture. Traditions that are kept in this way, that are not reflecting the deeper concepts and thoughts of their own culture, are hollow. And they can even be harmful, gradually changing the concepts of the

⁵³This description proves to be valuable when considered that in case of sterility or a divorce the parents of the wife had to pay back the *inkwano*.

people who adopted them. When people opt for the dowry out of habit, without knowing the underlying reasons for it, further decay of this custom will be inevitable.

Further research on the reasons of the rising prices of the *inkwano* is needed. It would seem to me that one possible explanation could be the growing influence of Islam in Rwanda, as the Muslim view on women is fundamentally different from the Christian view by which the Rwandan society currently is influenced. In the Muslim culture we see that the bride prices rise according to the beauty or the status of the wife.

Conversely for Christians the value of a woman in particular, and men in general cannot be expressed in money, as they are principally equal, of the same value, as human beings made in the image of God. A second reason for this phenomenon could possibly be the adoption of a Western, capitalistic lifestyle, where people tend to bid against each other, causing the “prices” to rise with the social status and education of the bride. In that view a young woman with a University degree deserves a dowry of a more substantial size than a young woman who sells bananas in the street. And if the father of one young man is able to give a dowry of five cows for the bride of his son, his friend will try to surpass him by handing over six cows when his son is marrying. It happens on weddings that the guests do not discuss the beauty or happiness of the couple, but that the number of cows of the dowry is the subject of conversation (and of course everybody knows examples of other weddings where the young man’s father even paid more). The *inkwano* is not a way to be paid back for the investment the parents made in their daughter’s education. It is not possible for the father to claim by means of the dowry to be refunded because his daughter has a university degree and a driving licence. Parents should raise and educate their daughters out of love and to the best of their ability.

Ndekezi (1984:111) expresses his concern about the rising prices, as for many young men a marriage seems to be impossible. Bigirumwami (2004:147) however is of the opinion that normally the two families, if they consider the well-being of their children as important, will come to an agreement on the *inkwano*. He believes that not being able to provide the *inkwano* is a question of lack of will and dedication rather than of incapacity. Nevertheless, these days we observe a tendency that young women marry with older (richer) men: unhealthy relationships between young women and

experienced older men are formed. Young men see themselves forced to extramarital affairs because they are not able to pay the high costs of the dowry and the wedding.

Although for some people an advantage of the *inkwano* might be that the young man has to make an effort for it (to get his wife the man has to work hard and save money), thus hindering a hasty marriage, the other extreme is not favourable at all either. For many young people the high price of a dowry is a stumbling block and many young couples start to cohabit at different stages of the wedding process. Nevertheless, in Rwanda the dowry is essential in the process of the wedding and in the whole structure of the family and therefore of the society. Abolishing the dowry without considering the consequences would be disastrous because this custom is so rooted in the society. In the Rwandan culture the *inkwano* gives the new wife formal status and authority; she owes her respect, also that of her husband, to the dowry. And thanks to the *inkwano* the children of the new formed family belong to the family of the husband (Ndekezi 1984:111). Without a formal wedding ceremony, the *inkwano* being an essential component of it, the children would be illegitimate.

3.3.3 The view on adultery

In the old Rwanda marital fidelity was not the absolute rule: neither the husband nor the wife committed him or herself to an absolute faithfulness. Spouses were obliged to cohabitation and to “a certain faithfulness” but absolute marital fidelity was introduced in Rwanda as a Christian concept (Adriaenssens 1964:111). Sexual relationships with privileged family members were permitted and not considered as adulterous⁵⁴. A man, for instance, could have sexual intercourse with the sisters and cousins of his wife, who was allowed to have intercourse with his brothers or parallel cousins of the same

⁵⁴It cannot be stressed upon enough how difficult it is to get information in such a secretive society as Rwanda. All literature confirms these views on adultery and certain accepted or less accepted relationships. However, in my interviews and in other conversations with people they become very uneasy and embarrassed when explicitly asked about this topic. Most people deny the facts in the literature, and answer that it has never been like that, not even in the past, and if it happened, this was only in the North of Rwanda. A few people however admit, even openly, the current existence of certain customs. In case of a conflict of concepts, in their view the culture should prevail as it is too precious and important to be changed by Christian concepts. On the other hand, some people state that the old concepts on sexual relationships and adultery are still prevalent, that it is a widespread problem, and that Rwanda needs to be re-evangelized, i.e. the Christian values need to penetrate the culture.

generation. An exception was the relationship between a woman and her father in law, which was seen as lack of respect, although it was rather common (Adriaenssens 1964:114). These relationships were tolerated, but happened secretly, discreetly and had their strict limits (Adriaenssens 1964:111-113). On the other hand, there was a complicated system of taboos and prohibitions of illegal relationships that were called incestuous (Adriaenssens 1964:114-116).

In general the view was (and is) held that women are seen as responsible for adultery. In Kinyarwanda there is but one word for the English words fornication and adultery: *gusambana*. For men adultery (i.e. adultery outside the permitted family relations) was tolerated, provided that it did not happen too openly, while women were just supposed to bow to it (Adriaenssens 1964:116). As was mentioned in 3.2.1 women were not supposed to protest if their husbands approached their servants sexually (Musabyimana 1999:134), provided that they did that discreetly. Even in these times in informal conversations with Christian women it happens that they complain about the tendency of their husbands to seduce their secretaries or house helps. It is remarkable that these women do not urge each other to protest or to look for ways to change the situation, but instead they encourage each other to *kwihangana* (lit. “to be patient”, but meaning “to endure” or “to put up with” a certain situation, such as an unfaithful husband). They tell each other literally that resigning themselves to it is their godly duty in the first place⁵⁵, but in the second place it is their only option, as “they [i.e men, EHV] are all the same”.

Adultery of a man with the wife of a superior, however, was severely punished. But on the other hand, sometimes a daughter or wife was offered to a respected guest as an act of hospitality and appreciation (Adriaenssens 1964:116). When men travelled they used to have other women. Polygamous women often had other relations. But a woman that had relations with a strange man was sent back to her family (Adriaenssens 1964:117) and could be divorced officially.

⁵⁵Several times I have heard that the Biblical example of Esther was used to establish this opinion: “God Himself punished Vashti because she was not obedient to her husband, thus she was dethroned. Esther however was rewarded by God because she was a good woman”. No comment was made on the historical notion of the exile, nor that the king was a pagan (and drunk), nor on the reason why God put Esther in that place: to save the Jews.

In some cases adultery happened with mutual consent; in case of sterility it was tolerated. Adriaenssens (1964:117) states that also in other cases it happened rather openly: sharing the wife of one's brother (especially among Hutus) or exchanging of wives to express mutual sympathy among friends (especially among Tutsis).

3.3.4 *Changes in the Rwandan marriage customs*

Already in the literature of the fifties and sixties was observed that the Rwandan marriage rituals were changing. It has been put forward previously (in 3.1) that there is little literature available about the reasons why some Rwandan marriage customs disappeared and what the role of the Church was in this process. Some customs might have been abolished by the Church, or might have disappeared because people themselves considered them as immoral. Another reason could be that people considered these customs as incompatible with a modern lifestyle, due to the influence of Western cultures. Other customs might have disappeared more unnoticed, because they grew into oblivion, or maybe because they moved from the public sphere to the more hidden sphere of the family.

It is remarkable that modern people are reluctant to talk about traditions, even those that have no connotation with immoral practices or pagan beliefs. It is possible that the mere association with tradition (versus development) makes people feel embarrassed. One of the observations during the earlier mentioned All-Africa Seminar was: "It is still a widely held view that everything that belongs to African tradition is pagan and therefore evil" (Oikumene 1963:24).

However, it is not very clear from the literature what the attitude of the Church has been towards certain marriage rituals. In his book about Rwandan funeral customs Van 't Spijker (1990:§5.2) explains that Protestant missionaries had different attitudes towards the Rwandan culture and traditional religion. Firstly the German missionary Johanssen propagated dialogue: he regarded every religion as a response to the living God, and believed that Christian faith would purify pagan faith. A second position was put into words during a missionary conference in Kirinda in 1912: the

Church should study traditional beliefs to be able to defeat them, while some traditional beliefs should be forbidden. A third group, influenced by the Enlightenment, drastically ignored the traditional beliefs, as they considered that in the end every Christian would prove their falsehood. In general, according to Van 't Spijker, missionaries have ignored the traditional customs and failed to understand their importance for the Rwandan people.

During his research⁵⁶ Van 't Spijker (1990) noticed that people contradicted each other when asked whether old funeral customs were still being practiced. He observed that many modern Church members still practice certain funeral rituals that are rejected by the Church. He believes that the Church can be a threat to the family and observed that sometimes people fear the opinion of the Church and that certain rituals privatized, i.e. moved to the intimacy of the family. It is possible that the same happened with the marriage rituals of the traditional *gushyingirwa* ceremonies, as people are reluctant to talk about them.

Compared with modern weddings, it is observed that especially rites during the actual wedding ceremony called *gushyingirwa* have disappeared, at least from the public sphere. As mentioned earlier Adriaenssens (1964:69) stated that the Church admonished people about some of the traditional wedding rituals. Bigirumwami (2004) described some rituals and wrote how difficult it was to penetrate the culture with the Gospel. Roman Catholic missionaries wrote about certain rituals, but did not mention explicitly why they were regarded as improper. It is however understandable that some rituals disappeared. For instance the rites *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta* have a strong association with (sexual) violence; the literature uses terms as “taking possession of her” and “overpowering her”. These rites and others like *kwakira umwishywa* have most probably been considered as immoral because of their open sexual character. Erny (2005:262) informs that the practice of *gukuna* was condemned by Catholic missionaries. It is probable that this happened for the same reason.

⁵⁶Done in the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, in Kirinda (West Rwanda), from 1977 till 1982.

Seeing that there is not much written information about the restrictions and prohibitions of those marriage rituals, the question arises what has been communicated to the Church and what has been understood by the Christians. It must have been confusing for people to be confronted with the Christian religion brought by Western missionaries. On one hand the Church forbade certain cultural practices while on the other hand the Church propagated a Book where the same cultural practices were described.

Especially in the past, the culture of Israel was easier to associate with for Rwandans than the Western culture. Since Rwandans love stories, they connect smoothly with the Old Testament. It is observed that even modern people read the Bible without much historical understanding. The Old Testament is more appealing to many people than the New Testament with for instance the more abstract epistles of Paul. Different aspects of the Rwandan culture can be recognized in the Old Testament culture of Israel. The view on life as a continuum, the emphasis on family life and marriage, the accent on fertility, the position of women, these are all concepts that people recognize in their daily life (Getui, Holter and Zinkurature 2001). It might be for that reason that people still cling to polygamy and Levirate marriage, concepts that are strange to the Western culture (and by now even illegal in Rwanda). In personal conversations, even with senior Church leaders, people sometimes defend cultural practices (for instance the sexual relationship of a widow with the brothers of her deceased husband) and they found their opinion on these Biblical examples.

Martey (1991) observed that the traditional interpretation of the Bible has been humiliating for women. The writer even believes that the Biblical texts themselves can be oppressive for women, and that missionaries brought an androcentric Christianity to Africa. I agree with the writer insofar as the conclusion that Biblical texts have been abused and are still being interpreted in an oppressive way. However, this is not only done by missionaries, but also by Rwandan people that want to justify their own cultural practices.

The view of Van 't Spijker (1990) is that Christians cannot accept to be humiliated nor abused, and nobody should be slave of a ritual or a ceremony. Every ritual should

breathe out the freedom we have in Christ. Martey (1991) explains that the African view on marriage and the strong accent on child bearing is humiliating for women, and that the Church should review her position on women⁵⁷. Against this condition, that every ritual should express the freedom in Christ, we understand why certain *gushyingirwa* rituals disappeared. In the same way would we understand why for instance the custom of *gutinya* would be abolished, as it symbolizes shame. The Church should formulate her opinion on the different marriage rituals, but also on concepts such as marital faithfulness and the concept of the dowry.

Van 't Spijker observed that on funerals there are many discussions between confessing and more nominal Christians. He noted that people believe that they evoke evil over their lives and marriage by not observing the rituals. His conclusion is that the Church especially should extend the positive message of hope against fear and shame. He believes that Christian faith and traditional customs should be integrated, and that it is better to be proactive and “evangelize” the existing rites, thus disposing them of their illegal and hidden character (Van 't Spijker 1990:§6.4).

The conclusion of the All-Africa Seminar was: “There are many things of great value that could be introduced or adapted into Christian marriage without conflict with the Gospel” (Oikumene 1963:24). The book “Marriage and Family in African Christianity” (Kyomo and Selvan 2004) is also written from this perspective. The different writers observe that Christian families are in a crisis, but state that every crisis comprehends a challenge and an opportunity.

It is my opinion that the Church should have a positive point of view and underline the cultural Rwandan values that can help to build a stronger marriage, while at the same time the Church should have a prophetic message, and speak out against humiliating customs. However, it is evident that, although in the literature of the fifties and sixties is mentioned that the Rwandan marriage rituals were changing (see 3.1), there is a lack of actual literature on Rwandan marriage. More specifically there is a lack of modern literature on the attitude of the Church towards marriage in general and

⁵⁷He treats two customs that are very humiliating for women: polygamy and female circumcision. These examples are not immediately applicable in Rwanda, but I believe the Church should be proactive. In Rwanda polygamy is illegal, but the influence of Muslims is growing. And although Rwanda does not know female circumcision, I believe the Church should research the motives behind and the implications of the *gukuna* rituals.

towards Rwandan marriage customs. Therefore the following chapter makes use of information obtained from interviews with senior leaders, pastors and married couples within the Anglican Church of Rwanda.

Chapter 4: Marriage in the Anglican Church of Rwanda, teachings and practices.

4.1 Introduction

Little literature is available on marriage, its practice and its teachings, within the Anglican Church of Rwanda. Therefore this chapter makes use of information gathered during three different interview projects. In chapter 5 will be explained why these three kinds of interviews were chosen.

First, in December 2006 questionnaires were given to the pastors and “catechists” of the Diocese of Kigali, during a conference where 35 of the then 53 pastors were present. The participants answered *inter alia* questions on the occurrence of the different traditional marriage customs and the role of the pastors in the different wedding steps. Second, in March 2008 in-depth interviews were held with four couples about their experience with traditional wedding ceremonies, preparation for marriage, the wedding, and counselling within the church. Third, in October 2009 interviews were held with: Rt. Rev. Archbishop Emmanuel Musaba Kolini of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (also bishop of the Diocese of Kigali), Rev. Emmanuel Gatera (General Secretary of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (PEAR) and Canon Rev. Petero Twahirwa of the Diocese of Kigali, who is in charge of the teachings on marriage during the training of the priests to be ordained.

The information gathered in the third set of interviews will be used in 4.2. The information gathered during the interviews with the pastors and catechists in connection with the questionnaires will follow in 4.3, where a description will be given of the different stages in marriage, the involvement of the pastors in these ceremonies, their teaching and their own preparation. In 4.4 four case studies will be provided by making use of the information gathered during the interviews with the four couples.

4.2 The Anglican Church of Rwanda and its view on marriage.

For this section, the information gathered during the three interviews held in Kigali in October 2009 has been used. Since all three interviewees had lived abroad for years, the interviews could be held in English. All interviews were recorded (see appendix 2 for a list of questions used during these interviews). The first interviewed person was the Archbishop of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda, Rt. Rev.

Archbishop Emmanuel Musaba Kolini of the Anglican Church of Rwanda, also bishop of the Diocese of Kigali. The second person was the General Secretary of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (PEAR), Rev. Emmanuel Gatera. The last person was Canon Rev. Petero Twahirwa, Parish Priest, working for the Diocese of Kigali, who is in charge of the teachings on marriage during the trainings of the priests to be ordained. When quoted, their names will be used without honorary titles, and after the first time their names will be mentioned without further reference.

4.2.1 History and organization of the PEAR and the Diocese of Kigali

The Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (PEAR: Province de l'Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda, formerly Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda), has a long history in Rwanda. It is however difficult to find information about the history of the Church, as there is little written material available in Rwanda itself. Although the Roman Catholic Church in Rwanda comprehensively documented its Church history, the Anglican Church did not do so. According to Archbishop Kolini (3 Oct. 2009, Kigali), the little research that has been done was done in English, by and for British missionaries⁵⁸, and has not been published in Rwanda. The general secretary of the PEAR, Rev. Gatera (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali), states that the Anglican Church itself never had a culture of gathering written information, as there has always been a strong emphasis on the oral tradition. And if there was material available, it has been lost over the course of the time, or it was destroyed during the genocide.

⁵⁸Here most probably referring to missionaries from the Church Missionary Society.

It is evident that the church has more of an oral than a written culture: even simple written information on the organization of the Church is difficult to acquire. The information on the official web site of the PEAR, www.pear-hq.org.rw (accessed on 06-11-2009) is outdated and sometimes names, even that of the Church, are misspelt. However, based on the information from the web site, together with the information gathered during the interviews with the Church leaders, it is possible to produce the following description.

The Anglican Church in Rwanda started in 1925 with a mission station in Gahini. Two missionary doctors of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) had been evangelizing the region since 1914. The first converts were baptized in 1926 by Reverend Harold Guillebaud, the same person who later, together with others, translated the Bible into Kinyarwanda. The work expanded, mainly due to the East African Revival that started in Gahini. The Revival had a huge impact on the individual and church life of the believers. Ethnic issues disappeared as people started to truly worship and fellowship together. Also women got involved, and this meant a change in the view on women for both men and women (Weeks Millard 2008:163-165).

Nevertheless, Gatwa states that the Revival did not have the lasting impact that was expected. He believes that the Church should have gone further, tackling feudal, social and political injustice. As it was, the accent on holiness created a distance between those who were saved and the mundane affairs of the “unsaved”, thus hindering the social and political engagement of Christians. The missionaries wanted to keep the change within the more individual context of the believers (Gatwa 1998:85-89). Christians were not encouraged to engage in political or public affairs. This could be one of the reasons why the Church was not able to prevent the genocide.

Another reason for the fading impact of the Revival could be the constant tension within the leadership of the Church. This period between the Revival and the genocide, as described by Weeks Millard (2008:167-170), is a very painful part of the history of the Anglican Church. The first Rwandan bishop was appointed in 1965 and the Church changed the name from CMS to Anglican Church of Rwanda (Eglise

Anglicane du Rwanda). In 1979 the name changed to Episcopal Church of Rwanda (Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda). It is notable that in these years the Church never opposed the injustice and violence in society. The Church was too occupied with internal conflicts and quarrels between bishops, to such an extent that on one occasion the State had to intervene. The Church tried to overcome the problems, and in 1992 the Church became an independent Province of Rwanda within the Anglican Communion. The first Archbishop was appointed in this new structure; until then Rwanda had been part of the Province of Rwanda, Burundi and Boga- Zaïre.

The same Church that had seen such a positive change during the Revival had fallen back during the long years between the Revival and the genocide. And the Church was still in this state of internal turmoil when the genocide started. During the genocide in 1994 the Church suffered many losses. Apart from the fact that people from within the Church killed and were killed, the Church also lost her credibility due to the attitude of the bishops and other senior leaders. Some of the leaders were involved or at least did not openly protest against what happened. Thus, the genocide left the Anglican Church in a terrible state of pain, guilt and shame.

In 1998 Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini, who had been living in Congo, was appointed as Primate of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. In the years after the genocide the Church played an important role in the field of reconciliation, trauma healing, medical and social work. In 2007 the name of the Church changed again and is now officially called the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (Province de l'Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda).

Much has happened in the worldwide Anglican Communion lately. Since the Lambeth Conference in 1998 different theological opinions have caused divisions, roughly between the churches from the Northern hemisphere and the churches from Africa and Asia. In 1998 a ten years moratorium was agreed upon, and it was stated that no decision would be taken by individual churches without having studied the authority of Scripture related to those theological and ethical questions, to be able to emerge from Lambeth 2008 with a shared vision. However, it happened that certain liberal

churches did not want to respect the moratorium⁵⁹. One of the results was that several churches from the US looked for shelter amongst the different provinces of churches in the so-called “Global South”. The Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMiA), a missionary outreach in the United States and in Canada, is an outcome of that very process. The AMiA falls under the authority of the Province of Rwanda (Our Story 2010).

The Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda exists in ten Dioceses: Kigali, Byumba, Kibungo, Butare, Shyira, Shogwe, Gahini, Cyangugu, Kigeme and the recently formed Diocese Kivu. Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini is the bishop of the Diocese of Kigali which consists of four archdeaconries: Ruhanga, Bugesera, Remera and Kigali. These archdeaconries are divided into a total of ten deaneries. The Diocese of Kigali consists of 37 parishes. There are more or less 55 pastors; especially in the city of Kigali there are many part-time pastors sharing responsibility in one church. On the other hand some of the pastors do not have their own parish. There are 187 *abakatekisiti* (catechists), also called *abarimu* (plural of *umwarimu*: teacher), leading the *amakanisa* (small churches) or daughter churches. On an average Sunday approximately 30.000 people visit the church in Kigali Diocese, but the total number of members on paper is three or four times this figure.

4.2.2 The church wedding in relation to the civil wedding

In contrast to the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church does not view marriage as a sacrament. Marriage however fulfils a very important role in the life of the Church. Kolini emphasizes the importance of the three possible legal ways to marry: customary marriage, civil marriage and church wedding. Certain ceremonies of the customary marriage are necessary to ensure the social component, and the

⁵⁹In 2008 the Global Anglican Future Conference (Gafcon) was held in Jerusalem with leaders and lay members of the Anglican Church from Africa and Asia. Often is stated that their discontent with the worldwide Anglican Communion was based on differing opinions on homosexuality within the leadership of the Church. However, it is first of all a rejection of the liberal view on authority of Scripture and a liberal theology--which often results in a liberal view on homosexual relationships. After Gafcon 2008 a commentary on the Jerusalem Declaration was published. This book gives a view on human sexuality in general (Okoh, Vinay and Sugden 2009:50-55).

involvement of the family. The civil wedding is needed, because in the vision of the Anglican Church it is important to recognize the authority of the government. The state allows a couple to contract marriage if the future spouses have reached the age of 21 years, and if the wedding is with mutual consent, and if two witnesses have been secured. In the presence of these witnesses the candidates make their vows in front of the government officials.

The Church requires couples to go through the civil wedding before the “church wedding,” which is a service where God’s blessing is invoked over the newlyweds. A marriage without a church wedding is therefore considered a legal marriage, although it is considered as normal to have the church wedding. It is not possible in the Anglican Church of Rwanda to skip the civil wedding, nor does the Church have the authority to celebrate official weddings on behalf of the government. Jehovah Witnesses, who do not recognize the authority of the state in this sense, do not marry civilly. They therefore choose deliberately that their women and children do not fall under the legal protection of the government.

Kolini states that the Anglican Church puts three conditions for people to be married in the church. First, the civil wedding must take place before people can be married in the church. Twahirwa (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) states that some churches even ask people to show proof (i.e. the official document) of the civil wedding. In the second place the consent of both partners is needed. Third, people need to meet the laws of the Church, for instance that people who are related to each other cannot marry.

The priest is the only person who can officiate at church weddings and authorized to give the blessing. Lay preachers, catechists or *abarimu* are not allowed to do so, and even deacons⁶⁰ are not allowed to officiate at church weddings. The Church uses the Book of Common Prayer as is done in every Anglican Church. There is however freedom to have variations in the church service, according to local customs or culture, although there are some essentials such as the vows, the blessing and the exchange of the rings.

⁶⁰Before a person is ordained as a priest he is ordained as a deacon, and serves as such, normally for a period of at least one year.

4.2.3 *The church wedding in relation to traditional wedding customs*

Little literature is available on customary marriage. Most of the information is passed on orally, but a lot of this information has been lost, since so many people have lived abroad and have only come back after the genocide. Many Rwandans do not even know the different ceremonies of customary marriage. As far as the interviewees know, there is no historical information available about the view of the Church on customary marriage, nor why certain rituals were abolished, nor why other ceremonies disappeared spontaneously.

Kolini believes that the missionaries labelled customary marriage as paganism. In fact, according to Kolini, the Church itself never thought the traditional customs through. When such issues were discussed pastors and teachers simply never went deep enough, and so the deeper meaning of culture in family and marriage was never understood. The big challenge of the Church, in his opinion, is to understand the relation between Gospel and culture.

In the old marriage ceremonies everybody (parents, family, extended family and friends) was involved in all stages of the preparations. Today, issues are resolved within a circle of intimate friends. Kolini stresses that since the Church ignored certain valuable customs such as extended family and community involvement in the preparations, they simply disappeared. “This makes marriages vulnerable, which makes society vulnerable,” says Kolini.

Twahirwa recalls remarks that the Church considered some of these customary rituals as satanic, and believes that Christians therefore abstained from those meetings. Another obvious reason for their non-participation in customary activities for the marriage was the use of alcohol during such rituals, as many Protestant Christians in Rwanda do not consume alcoholic drinks. However, neither Twahirwa nor Gatera (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) have knowledge about which ceremonies were abolished and for what reasons. Twahirwa supposes that some rituals disappeared because Christians themselves considered them as incompatible with their Christian lifestyle. For example, Gatera says that the practice of marriage by abduction has explicitly been discouraged by the Church.

Both Twahirwa and Gatera mention the ceremonies of *gufata irembo*, *gusaba* and *gukwa* (see 3.2.3, 3.2.4 and 3.2.5 where these customs are described) as still practiced remnants of customary marriage. These ceremonies are considered important, because they strengthen the bond between the two families, in the preparation of a wedding between two individuals in a society that is being influenced by individualism.

Kolini believes that the Church should support values from Scripture and gives several examples. Instead of the modern day practice where the couple announces the upcoming wedding to the parents, people should learn from the Bible and the tradition. He explains that in Rwanda there is a saying: “A father gives you good wealth, but God gives you a good wife”. Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to look for a wife, and stressed that she should be a God-fearing young woman. Young people these days should rely more on what God wants them to do, and at the same time involve their family in that decision. The wedding today is a more individual happening. The spouses do not feel that they belong to each other's family, and the family does not recognize the new woman as a blessing in the same way as was done in the old days.

Kolini gives examples of certain meaningful customs that got lost because the culture changed. Before the wedding the couple received lots of advice (by family as well as the diviners). Modern people tend to make individual decisions without consulting the families. During the traditional wedding *gushyingirwa* the bride had to sit down on the lap of her father in law, which symbolized the birth into a new family. Another of the old customs that could be revived is the use of the *umwishywa*, (a crown made of a marsh plant) which symbolized the permanence of marriage, “you cannot cut it and it remains green forever: it never dies”. Kolini would encourage the use of the *umwishywa*, in combination with the rings.

Kolini observes that in recent times foreign customs have also been adopted in the church. When the customary ceremonies take place, the bride mostly wears a Kinyarwanda dress (the husband wears either a suit or a Kinyarwanda garment). During the church ceremony however the bride wears a Western wedding dress,

usually with a veil. Even if the *gusaba no gukwa* ceremony takes place in the morning, the spouses change garb between the different ceremonies. After the vows in the church the bridegroom “unveils” the bride. When asked if this part of the ceremony has something to do with the customary *gutwikurura* (the unveiling ceremony a few days after the wedding) Kolini stresses that this is not the case. Twahirwa agrees that the unveiling is not a reminder of customary marriage. He however values the veil as it symbolizes virginity, although the concept is imported from the West⁶¹.

All interviewed believe in the importance of Church involvement, but consider that the Church should not take the place of the family (i.e. of the family representatives and the elders), as is the case with some Pentecostal pastors. They seem to take the role of representative of the family, not only during these three ceremonies, but even in the choice of a spouse for their members. Twahirwa remembers that the same happened in some churches after the East-African Revival that started in Gahini in Rwanda in the 30's. In those days some of the so-called *abarokore* (saved ones) were called “reawakened ones”, and were considered as more spiritual than others. They were granted more authority, and even entitled themselves to choose marriage partners for their young members. However, very soon the church members themselves rejected this practice. These days the assistance of the Church during the customary rituals is highly recommended, as through their presence pastors and other Christians can be a channel of grace to the family. Kolini believes that this is an authentic way to evangelize. Gatera stresses that during these traditional ceremonies, the couple will experience a sense of belonging, towards the Church and towards the family.

Although the Anglican Church therefore supports involvement, it does not prescribe the role of their leaders in these customary ceremonies. This is considered as the individual responsibility of the pastors who are free to work out their own involvement.

There is a wide variation in the way people carry out the various parts of the marriage ceremony. Some people these days marry civilly a few days before the wedding day, and on the day of the wedding different ceremonies of the traditional Rwandan marriage take place (mostly “*gusaba no gukwa*” while sometimes even *gufata irembo*

⁶¹Mulago (1991) explains that for instance the white dress and the crown in Western weddings originate from Greek and Roman influence in Christian marriage during the first centuries.

is included). This happens at home and before the church wedding. However, in other cases some of the traditional marriage customs like *gufata irembo* and *gusaba* take place before the civil wedding, while on the day of the church wedding the dowry is handed over (*gukwa*) during a ceremony. And in even other cases all traditional ceremonies take place before the civil wedding, while on the day of the church wedding only the church service is celebrated.

There are certain connections between the government's role in marriage and that of the church. Twahirwa states that the government sanctioned the concept of the dowry, because during the civil wedding the couple is asked to state the contents of the dowry. However, people can also render "*ubuntu*" (grace) or "freely given" when they are financially stressed. During the civil ceremony the government mentions rights and responsibilities of the spouses, and explains the legal reasons for divorce. Both church and state have the responsibility to announce the coming wedding during the 21 days preceding the wedding. In the Church therefore the "bans" are announced during three consecutive Sundays before the wedding.

4.2.4 *The role of the church in marriage preparation and counselling*

It depends on the individual pastors how the couple is prepared for marriage and for the wedding. All interviewed people recognize that the pastors are not fully equipped for this task. According to Twahirwa, when they become pastors they are simply asked to do their best when preparing people for marriage.

Some of the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali received a degree in Theology from a Bible School (either diploma or certificate level) or Seminary (bachelor's or master's degree). Most of the pastors with higher education, especially in the city of Kigali, work only as part-time pastor: they do not have a parish at all, or share a parish with other pastors. They mostly work in either the organization of the Church, at Diocesan or Provincial level, or in a Non-Governmental Organization. Some pastors either teach or study at the Kigali Anglican Theological College, which started in 2006 in Kabuga.

Most pastors, however, were only lay people before they were ordained without proper theological formation. Before these people are ordained as priests they receive a short training, depending on their availability (mostly one or two weeks), on various topics according to the interest and availability of the teachers. During this period a short time is designated for the teaching on marriage, its preparation and the officiating of wedding ceremonies. Twahirwa has been responsible for this part of the preparation course for a long time.

The lack of training has long been considered as worrisome, and therefore it is now compulsory for uneducated pastors to go through the training of the Department of Mission and Training of the Diocese of Kigali. This Department gives regular training to its pastors and other church leaders. The Department of Mission and Training is also responsible for the coordination of the program of Theological Education by Extension in which many pastors participate.

When asked about the Anglican view on marriage and its place in the church, all three interviewed persons answered that in Rwanda marriage is considered as very important. All three mentioned that marriage is a permanent relationship, between one man and one woman⁶². Gatera stated that husband and wife are equal, though the husband is the leader of the two. There is however nothing written down about the view on marriage within the Anglican Church of Rwanda.

Similarly, there is no written material available to teach the pastors, nor is there such a thing as a code of conduct, nor prescribed rules for marriage preparation or marital counselling, nor material the pastors can use to teach their flock. Of course the pastors have their Bible, and apart from that they are free to use any material they want, including books or their own insights.

Twahirwa's main task during the pre-ordination course is to go through the liturgy of the wedding ceremony in the Church, and the procession. They even practice from

⁶²This last explicit statement could have two possible reasons. First, they presumed that I was prejudiced about their culture, and wanted to communicate that they do not support traditional cultural customs such as polygamy or "husband sharing". Second, more probably, they wanted to assert to me, as a Westerner, that they did not agree with the, what they consider as "Western" point of view, and that they reject homosexual relationships.

the Book of Common Prayer. But as for questions about premarital or marital counselling, these issues are dealt with only if the participants of this short course bring them up.

Twahirwa himself has a real concern for marriage. He has gathered much experience in his practice as parish priest, and is well aware of the difficulties and problems. He shares with the pastors about God's intention for marriage, which many times collides with the reality, as pastors will observe during their work in the parish. Although Twahirwa shares his insights with the pastors to be ordained, he believes that it depends on the pastors to find out things in practice. He recognizes that this is often a hard lesson, and that pastors are not well prepared for their job. Bishop Kolini stresses that the Church is working on the training of the pastors through seminars and training sessions, but that there is still a lot to do.

Problems that come up in marriage were also addressed in these interviews. Adultery is regarded as sin, and treated as such, but the procedure for dealing with it when it occurs is not always clear, though there is a process to go through. When confronted with a case of adultery in the congregation Twahirwa calls the adulterer, and until the issue is resolved the person cannot partake in the Holy Communion, nor execute any activities or responsibilities within the church. Also Gatera stressed that in the Church adultery is not accepted, as the couple is one, while adultery breaks the unity of marriage. When adultery is found out, a process starts: the case is submitted to the church and proof is needed. Kolini believes that a pastoral attitude toward both parties is very important, and that love can overcome even adultery.

In the case of adultery of a pastor, however, the procedure is clear. The pastor has to appear before a disciplinary committee of canons. Kolini explained that the following steps are followed: 1. Counselling (with focus on the person, the spouse, the family, the church, and the impact in society), 2. Discipline (depending on what and why it happened, whether or not it was habitual), 3. Dismissal, temporarily or forever (excommunication).

Regarding the Anglican view on divorce there is no consensus among those interviewed. Kolini states that the Anglican Church offers "seven reasons for divorce",

but he acknowledges that in practice the pastors are not aware of them⁶³. Twahirwa declares that he has no knowledge of these reasons for divorce the Anglican Church is said to give. He believes and teaches “till death doth us part”, and he recognizes that this teaching is unique for the Church. He explains that during the civil wedding people are taught about the rights and responsibilities of the spouses and the legal reasons the state offers for a divorce. But the Christian way differs from that of the state, and he finds it difficult to put the Christian way into practice, when in counselling he is faced with difficult pastoral situations. He believes that sometimes the Church consents to the fact, when a marriage is dissolved legally. He mentions one case where the Church itself agreed to the divorce of a couple: the husband happened to be impotent (before the consummation of marriage). He stresses that all pastors normally teach that marriage is for life, that divorce is not allowed, and that they are not aware of the legal reasons for divorce. They simply accept the hard reality that sometimes people do divorce.

It is also not clear to those interviewed what the view of the Church is on the many cases of premarital pregnancies. All agree that in the tradition of the Church pregnancy before marriage is not well regarded, but the reality is that many brides appear pregnant at the church wedding. The pastors hear different reasons as they engage in informal conversations with such couples. First, the influence of the West is mentioned: people tend to have sex before marriage because it is not regarded as shameful anymore (in that sense they imitate a Western lifestyle), while at the same time they are reluctant to use contraceptives (and in that sense they do not copy the Western lifestyle). Second, some mention that this custom has been adopted by other

⁶³Unfortunately I was not able to find any Anglican source to confirm this statement. However, it is possible that in theory the Anglican Church of Rwanda is supposed to follow the same guidelines as those that are drafted by the Episcopal Church, although I was not able to verify this due to the lack of printed sources of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. The Episcopal Church formulated grounds, upon which a former marriage annulled by a civil court could be declared “null and void” by a bishop. The non-inclusive list of impediments, according to the website of the Canon Law Institute (North 2010) consisted of: 1. Consanguinity, 2. Lack of free consent of either party, 3. Mistake as to the identity of either party, 4. Mental deficiency sufficient to prevent intelligent choice, 5. Insanity of either party, 6. Failure of either party to have reached the age of puberty, 7. Impotence or sexual perversion undisclosed to the other, 8. Venereal disease in either party, and 9. Facts which would make the marriage bigamous. Yet there are examples of other cultural practices, for instance in ancient Asian literature, where these “seven reasons for divorce” are explicitly mentioned: “Childlessness, wanton conduct, neglect of husband’s parents, loquacity, thievishness, jealousy, malignant disease” (Divorce in China: 1890). Contemporary authors from Chinese and Japanese background, such as Victoria Chang (2006) and Gina Collia-Suzuki (2010) have referred to these seven reasons as well.

African tribes: in the old Rwanda it was “not done” to become pregnant before marriage, while in other African countries it was an accepted way to prove the fertility of the woman. Third, it was mentioned that pregnancies can be a way to force the family to accept the marriage, mostly in the case of an intertribal relationship. When asked openly, however, people tend to be vague on this issue.

In Twahirwa’s view, the pregnancies can be attributed to the emerging sense of individualism in Rwanda. The couple takes its own decisions and involves the family only at the end. He is not promoting the Church’s return to the customs of the old days, where parents and families could plainly refuse the choice of the possible spouse of the children. But at least people should realize that the family needs to be involved in this decision.

Along the same lines, Gatera emphasized that these days future spouses can meet easily, which was not the case in the old days, and this opens the way for premarital pregnancies. In such a case, he believes that a pregnant couple should postpone the wedding till after the delivery. Gatera repeats that the Church has an oral tradition, and that even these rules are not written down, but he remembers that this issue was discussed ten years ago during a House of Bishops meeting in Burundi. Although he is not sure if there are minutes from that meeting, according to Gatera it was agreed at that time that the couple should confess the pregnancy in the Church, that the bride should be unveiled, and the wedding must take place at night. But since this was not clearly communicated to the pastors, nobody is aware of the rules of the Church. For his part, Twahirwa has heard about the rule that in such a case the priest is supposed to wear a black cassock (i.e. without the white toga) during the wedding service, and that this ceremony has to take place in the evening. But at the same time he recognizes that most pastors celebrate the wedding, whether the couple is pregnant or not, as if nothing had happened.

Neither premarital nor marital counselling takes place in an organized way. Bishop Kolini stresses that good premarital counselling would avoid future problems in marriage. He states that there is a lack of knowledge, for example about the differences between men and women. He therefore believes that premarital

counselling should be taken more seriously. Gatera notes that in the past bride and bridegroom were prepared respectively by their aunt and uncle. After Christianity came this tradition disappeared as to a certain degree the Church replaced the family, but the Church did not fulfil its role in practice. As a result, many couples marry without any preparation.

As for marital counselling, Kolini states that the Church should be pro-active and offer marriage courses, at various stages in the marriage. The first course could be offered after one year, when the spouses are adjusted to their new state. A second course could be offered for the people that have been married for three to five years, when they will have experienced how children or in-laws can affect their marriage. A third course would be possible after five to ten years of marriage, when a couple may be struggling with the combination of a career and family life. It should be the task of the Church to guide people in these processes.

All interviewees mention that pastors encounter a variety of problems as they counsel and teach church members about marriage. Gatera mentions different areas where married Rwandans face problems. In the first place he points to the system of extended family in Rwandan culture. Marriage is a bond not only between two individuals, but especially between two families, which submits husband and wife to many forces. The whole family has a say in daily issues, which makes life difficult especially for the women. Because of the interdependency within the family many members ask for financial support. Gatera states that often the wife's relatives are favoured, which causes friction between the two families as well as trouble between the spouses, as the relatives of the husband accuse him that he permits his wife to dominate him. Gatera believes that especially this issue of the extended family should be treated during premarital counselling.

In the second place Gatera observes that especially in urban situations men are economically stronger, and tend to spend their own money the way they want. He believes this brings an imbalance in marriage since most women depend financially on their husband. Gatera believes that in this sense the Rwandan culture does not favour the women. In general, in the traditional way, men are used to making

decisions without involving their wives. As tradition undervalues women, the government is making an effort to address gender imbalance, as it promotes the value of women in society.

Beyond the financial stresses, many women are fearful of their husbands, and some are even beaten, but the culture teaches them to “*kwihangana*” (to be patient, to put up with). Some men who have made it financially look down on their wives who live in a more traditional way. Some have extramarital relationships, with all the financial consequences, and neglect their own wives.

Kolini believes that there are different reasons for problems within marriage and that the Church should discuss them more deeply. In the first place he believes that there is a lack of understanding of marriage. People are confused: while they are abandoning their own Rwandan culture, and adopting a *muzungu* culture, they are not fully aware of what it means to live according to a Scriptural and Biblical culture. They are not aware of the implications of a Christian way of thinking. Second, Kolini blames many problems on the changes in the modern world, where TV and the other media provide the norm for many people. Thirdly he believes that since there is no teaching there is therefore no insight into why God gave marriage, or how Rwandans understand marriage, or how the devil tries to play a role in the destruction of marriage.

In this section the history and organization of the Anglican Church of Rwanda and the Diocese of Kigali have been described briefly, as well as the policies and the view on marriage within the Diocese of Kigali of the Anglican Church, mostly based on the interviews with three senior leaders of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. The following section (4.3) will present the information gathered from interviews with pastors in the Diocese of Kigali in order to describe their teachings and experience with marriage customs and marriage counselling.

4.3 The pastors, teaching and practice on marriage

4.3.1 Introduction

In December 2006, questionnaires were handed out to the pastors during a training session of the Department of Mission and Training in Kigali, and one morning was spent explaining and answering the questions. There were 35 pastors and catechists present, representing the then 35 different parishes of the Diocese of Kigali⁶⁴.

Originally the idea was to present trilingual lists of questions (French, English and Kinyarwanda). However, it was decided to present questionnaires in Kinyarwanda, with English translation for pastors who preferred to have the English translation in case they would not understand certain Kinyarwanda terms. Although some of the pastors speak a second language (either French or English) all of them speak Kinyarwanda, most of them fluently. In the introduction it was explained that they could answer in their preferred language, any one of the three official languages, but all of them answered in Kinyarwanda. The questionnaires were later translated into English by a translator (see appendix 3 for the questionnaire that was used).

The questionnaires had closed and open questions to invite the pastors to share their knowledge and thoughts. The questionnaires first presented general questions about the pastors' work and the teaching they received themselves (see figure 1). Second they were asked about their own concepts of marriage (see figure 2 to 7), and about premarital counselling. Next there were questions about their knowledge of and involvement in customary marriage rituals (see figure 9 to 11). And finally they were asked about marital counselling, including their involvement after the wedding and in the case of problems. Their experience was diverse, as some of them had been ordained for only two weeks, while others had been pastors for 26 years (with a maximum of 320 weddings celebrated in the Church by one pastor). Four of them were not ordained as priests (one of them was a deacon, and three were *abarimu*) and therefore not allowed to "bless" weddings. For the sake of convenience, however, they are all referred to as "pastors", as all of them are leaders of a church or *ikanisa*

⁶⁴Some pastors sent an *umwarimu* as representative. As was mentioned in 4.2.4 different pastors (mostly with higher education) have other responsibilities-- during the week they cannot participate in the training sessions of the Department of Mission and Training.

(daughter church), and supposed to give premarital and marital counselling. There were three female pastors; two of them had recently been ordained, and had not yet officiated at Church weddings. Another pastor, the deacon and one *umwarimu* were also recently installed as such. Most of the pastors came from the different villages in the Diocese of Kigali; only seven of them came from the city of Kigali.

A description will be given of their various answers. In case a graph has been included to tabulate the data presented, percentages have been added to the numbers, but otherwise the numbers of the respondents are mentioned without percentages.

The pastors received their teaching in different ways. The question was focussed on marriage and how the pastors were prepared to officiate at church weddings, which might have been the reason why the three *abarimu* (9%) did not answer these questions. However, they answered other questions, and they received at least some preparation, and some of them are even involved in marital counselling. The other 32 respondents (1 deacon and 31 priests) gave the following results (see figure 1). Sixteen of them (46%) were taught by another pastor during a short course as preparation for ordination (the name of Canon Rev. Petero Twahirwa was specifically mentioned in most of the cases). Nine others (26%) received their knowledge during one of the courses offered by the Department of Mission and Training of the Diocese of Kigali. Therefore most of the pastors (25, or 71%) received non-formal training. Six others (17%) studied at certificate level and went to a Bible School in Gahini, a village in Rwanda, or in Burundi. One pastor (3%) earned a diploma in Theology.

The pastors were not asked about their educational level in general, but according to Rev. Adriaan Verwijs (19 March 2010, Kigali), the head of the Department of Mission and Training of the Diocese of Kigali (who happens to be my husband), their level of education is quite low. The situation in the capital of Kigali differs from the country side, as most pastors of Kigali have finished their secondary education, and a significant number of them have even received higher education, but in another field than Theology (for instance Education, Business Administration, Accountancy, etc.). Some of these Kigali pastors have a bachelor's degree, a few others have finished a

master's, but none of them has a Ph.D. so far. The educational level of the pastors in the country side, where most of the pastors are working, is lamentable from a professional perspective. Most of them have not even started secondary education, and only a few of them managed to finish a certificate, a diploma or a bachelor's degree, meaning that most pastors in the villages only have a certain level of primary education.

Figure 1. Demographics and basic training of the questionnaire respondents (n=35).

	Priest, Deacon or Umwarimu	Male or Female	Age	Years of ministry (or months, or weeks)	Village or city	Number of members	Number of weddings	Training: A: short course before ordination B: short course, non-formal education by Diocese C: Bible School Gahini or Burundi, certificate level D: Diploma level
1	P	M	39	13	V	491	172	C
2	P	M	28	1	C	490	2	A
3	P	M	44	6	V	977	17	B
4	P	M	47	6	V	409	20	A
5	D	M	28	1m	V	/	/	B
6	P	M	44	6	V	2289	108	A
7	P	M	43	6	V	2864	30	A
8	P	M	62	26	V	500	150	C
9	P	F	38	2w	V	180	/	A
10	P	M	50	3	V	683	6	B
11	U	M	25	4m	C	200	/	/
12	P	M	37	11	V	2030	300	A
13	P	M	48	10	V	431	54	A
14	P	M	48	4	V	2648	16	B
15	P	M	38	11	C	250	25	B
16	P	M	48	10	V	840	110	A
17	P	M	44	3	V	796	78	A
18	P	M	35	3	V	1679	18	B
19	P	M	34	2w	C	260	/	A
20	P	M	69	26	C	400	104	C
21	P	M	46	10	V	4500	320	B
22	P	F	31	2w	V	195	/	A
23	P	M	52	6	V	1850	40	C
24	P	M	33	15	V	400	/	A
25	P	M	43	10	V	2000	250	A
26	P	F	36	10	V	1233	60	C
27	P	M	39	3	V	1233	66	B
28	P	M	33	/	V	1621	30	A
29	P	M	43	5	V	1600	54	A

30	P	M	47	14	V	2307	255	C
31	P	M	40	3	V	1621	18	B
32	U	M	50	10	C	200	/	/
33	P	M	47	10	C	400	120	D
34	U	M	53	19	V	167	/	/
35	P	M	39	10	V	1200	70	A

4.3.2 Teaching by the pastors and the preparation concerning marriage

The pastors were asked what they teach about certain Biblical concepts of marriage, and which Bible texts they use. The answers on these questions were often either very vague, or so varied and nuanced that tabulation turned out impractical. In these cases descriptions of the pastor's answers were given, with numbers, but without percentages, as graphs were not included. Two of the interviewed *abarimu* and one pastor did not answer these questions. Many pastors only quoted some Bible texts. When referring to the fact that God instituted marriage (Questionnaire, section B, question 1a) only two pastors from the 32 who responded did not give a Bible text. One of them just stated that Eve was made as a helper for Adam. The other pastor mentioned God's intention in the beginning, the impact of sin and its consequence for marriage. Most of the pastors (29), however, mentioned Genesis 2: 18 or Genesis 2:18-24. Four pastors gave a very general explanation that God made Eve as a helper for Adam, and some added a general statement such as that husband and wife should form a unity. One pastor referred to Hebrews 13: 4 and twice I Corinthians 7 was mentioned.

Asked about the role and position of husband and wife (Questionnaire, section B, question 1b), again most pastors gave a Bible text: Ephesians 5: 22-33; eleven of these pastors only mentioned the text without explaining it. Five pastors also gave the text of I Peter 3: 17, and one pastor added Colossians 3: 18. In the explanation of the pastors there were certain nuances. One pastor wrote only "love". Six pastors emphasised mutuality, either in terms of respect or because people complement one another in marriage. Another pastor emphasised that husband and wife help each other: "The wife helps her husband to love God more and the husband helps her [sic] wife, since women have weaknesses". Two pastors wrote that a wife should submit to

her husband, while a husband should love his wife⁶⁵. Two other pastors wrote the same, but one added that both husband and wife should take Jesus' love as an example, and the other specified that Jesus' love for the Church should be an example to the spouses. One pastor stated: "Both husband and wife must respect one another. The wife ought to submit to her husband, because he is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the Church". He did, however, not mention the husband's love for his wife or Christ's love for the Church. Also the metaphor of "head" was used in other ways. Two pastors mentioned that the man is the head, and the woman the heart of the family. Two pastors wrote that the husband is the head of the family, and one of them added: "but the head cannot accomplish anything without the other body members". One pastor stated that the husband is the head, and that therefore the wife has to obey the husband. Another pastor only mentioned that women should fulfil their duties. And again another pastor just wrote that a wife is made as helper. One pastor explained Ephesians 5 by (using the words from 1 Corinthians 7: 5): "They should not deprive one another".

The pastors were asked (Questionnaire, section B, question 1c) what they teach about the Biblical concept of sexuality, and which Bible texts they use⁶⁶. Most of the 32 pastors who responded gave a Bible text, many with explanation, but some (9) only gave a Bible text. Most (23) pastors wrote 1 Corinthians 7, some of these emphasised verses 1-5 or just verses 4 and 5, but several pastors only explained these texts as: "They should not deprive one another". Seven pastors gave only, or apart from the text of I Corinthians 7, the text of Hebrews 13: 4. Nine pastors stated, without mentioning a Bible text: "I teach them that they should not deprive one another". Eight pastors just wrote: "They have to obey sexuality," and one pastor said: "Sexuality has to be obeyed as it is God's commandment, and it is essential for them to be reproductive". Three other pastors wrote: "A husband must be given what he deserves from his wife, unless there are some reasons". Several pastors had a more positive approach: one pastor stated that sexuality is not a sin, another emphasised

⁶⁵When there is no personal pronoun it is not clear from the Kinyarwanda whether pastors mean "woman and man" or "husband and wife", as Kinyarwanda does not use articles.

⁶⁶Later (Questionnaire, section B, question 8) pastors were asked what they teach about sexuality in marriage, where it was taken up as a separate topic, amidst the topics of communication, conflicts, relation with parents and extended family, and spirituality.

love, and two others stated that they believe that couples should communicate and agree about the sexual relationship.

One pastor skipped all questions about the Biblical concepts (Questionnaire, B1 and B2) but answered the general question B3 about which Bible texts he uses and whether he uses texts from the Old or the New Testament. He did not render any Bible text, but his answer was: “Both: I teach love, perseverance and self-protection”. One pastor wrote: “OT: the way God loved his people is the way we love the people we marry. NT: Jesus shed His blood because of the love He had for His people, even so we give the dowry for the people we love”. Another pastor wrote: “I give them some Bible based and some cultural based teaching”. Apart from the texts mentioned earlier, three pastors mentioned that they use the examples of Adam and Eve, and of Abraham and Sarah.

The pastors were also asked (Questionnaire, questions B4-B9) to specify what, if anything, they taught the couples about certain topics. To be able to draw percentages to present graphs, their answers were labelled as either “Culturally oriented”, “Biblically oriented” (or “Bible based”), or “General” (in case the answer was superficial, general or a repetition from the question). A total of 33 pastors answered: two *abarimu* (6 %) did not answer these questions. Both non-respondents and respondents that answered negatively were rendered in the graphs as “Negative”. Concerning communication within marriage (Questionnaire, question B4) most (32, or 91%) pastors responded in a general, superficial way, neither Biblical nor cultural, simply repeating the question: “Yes, I do teach about communication, and that the couple should take the time to talk”. Three of these pastors mentioned either discussion, sharing of ideas and respect. No answers (0 %) were labelled as “Bible based”. One pastor (3%) made a very cultural remark: “In case they did not know each other before they married, I teach them to talk together to get to know each other”.

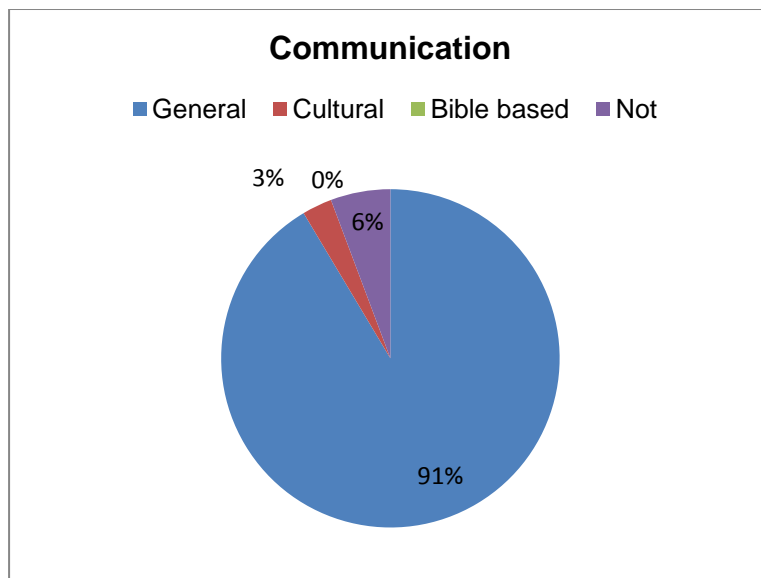


Figure 2. The pastors' responses on the topic of communication within marriage (n=35).

The next question, concerning what pastors may teach about conflicts within the family (Questionnaire, question B5), gave a different picture. Apart from the two pastors that did not answer the question (6 %), 21 pastors (60 %) responded in a general way-- neither Biblically nor culturally oriented-- and one pastor only answered with "yes". Although many of these pastors just rephrased the question, some (4) gave a more profound answer, emphasising communication, honesty and trust. Several pastors (10, or 28 %) gave an answer inspired by the cultural context, such as: "I tell them to bear one another and to avoid conflicts, not to implicate others and to be patient". One of these pastors stated that jealousy of others causes many conflicts between the spouses. Another pastor wrote that mostly the husband's family cause conflicts, and therefore he advises the women especially on how to deal with conflicts. One pastor said that he teaches people "on money management and unfaithfulness". And another pastor emphasised the importance of the respective families as mediators in times of conflicts. Only one-- one of the oldest pastors-- mentioned physical violence. He stated that some men "mistreat and even beat their wives, undervalue their ideas and give them hard works [sic]", which he strongly condemns. He added also that "there are women who neglect themselves and who never dare to speak to their husbands when their husbands are wrong", thus critiquing the uncomplaining submission of many women. All these ten answers were labelled as "culturally oriented" since the pastors

reasoned from their own cultural perspective. Two pastors (6 %) gave a Biblically oriented answer: they stated that apart from teaching people to focus on love to avoid conflicts, they underline the importance of dealing with conflicts in a Christian way, inspired by the Bible/faith, and the need of trust and forgiveness.

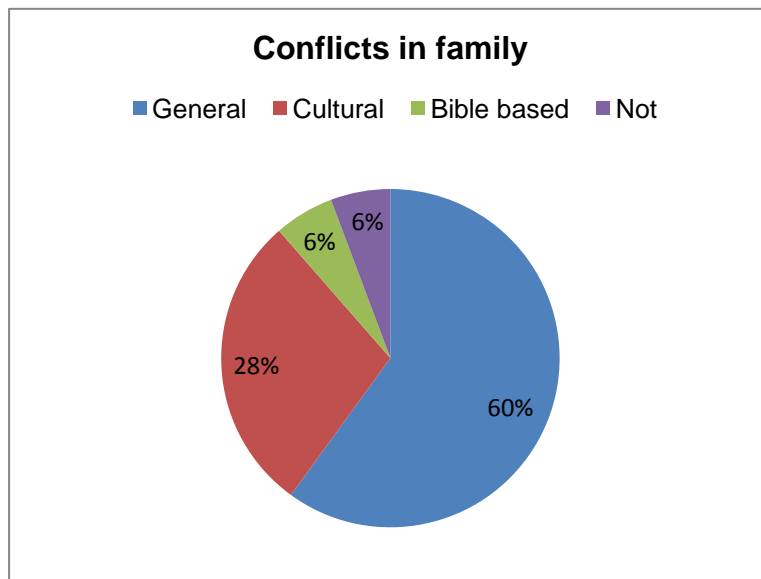


Figure 3. The pastors' responses on the topic of conflicts within the family (n=35).

When asked whether the pastors teach couples about the relationship with their parents (Questionnaire, question B6), one pastor stated that he did “not yet” teach about this topic and two others (the two *abarimu*) did not answer the question (9 %). Three pastors (8 %) gave a general or superficial answer, repeating the question, and one of them answered in the affirmative but did not explain what he teaches. All other pastors (29, or 83 %) gave a very culturally oriented answer. Most pastors were rather neutral and wrote that they advise the couples to treat their respective parents equally, thus avoiding jealousy, and that they should consider parents-in-law as their own parents. Some of these pastors (7), however, were more outspoken: “I tell them that they have to obey their parents even after marriage”. One pastor used a Bible text: “I use the example of Ruth 1: 1-22 to explain that she refused to leave her mother-in-law”. On the other hand some of these pastors (6) were more critical towards their own culture: “I tell people to still love and respect their parents, but emphasise that parents should not be too involved in the life of the new couple”. There were no Biblically oriented answers (0 %).

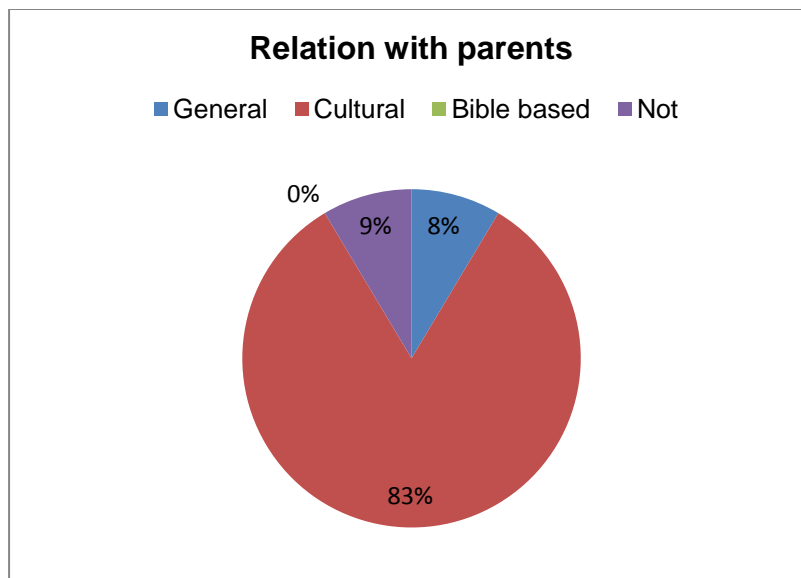


Figure 4. The pastors' responses on the topic of the relation with the parents (n=35).

When asked whether they teach about the extended family (Questionnaire, question B7), two pastors did not answer, one pastor did not seem to understand the question, one pastor stated that he did “not yet” teach about this topic, while another pastor answered negatively (5 pastors, or 14 %). All others (30) responded to the question. One pastor (3 %) had a more or less Biblical perspective and emphasised that the love within the own family can serve as testimony within the extended family. Some pastors (4, or 11 %) gave a general answer, merely repeating that they teach about the extended family. Most of the answers of the pastors (25, or 72 %) were culturally oriented. One pastor mentioned that this Rwandan concept of the extended family is disappearing, and that he teaches people to revalue their extended family and recognize their responsibilities. Many pastors emphasised that couples should try to love and help the extended family, and to treat both sides of the family equally. Some pastors went further: “I teach them that they should welcome all extended family members and help them if they are able to”. Another pastor went as far as to recommend the couple to consider their personal belongings as collective possessions, belonging to the whole family. Other pastors underlined the solidarity within the family: one pastor mentioned keeping family secrets, and another mentioned equality of family members. One pastor touched another cultural issue: “I teach them that they have to collaborate with their extended family, but also they have to avoid

sexual relationships with other family members because this destroys true love”. Again there were pastors that were more critical of their own culture; certain pastors (5) stated that there are limits: a couples' first responsibility is to their own family, and extended family members should be more considerate in their demands.

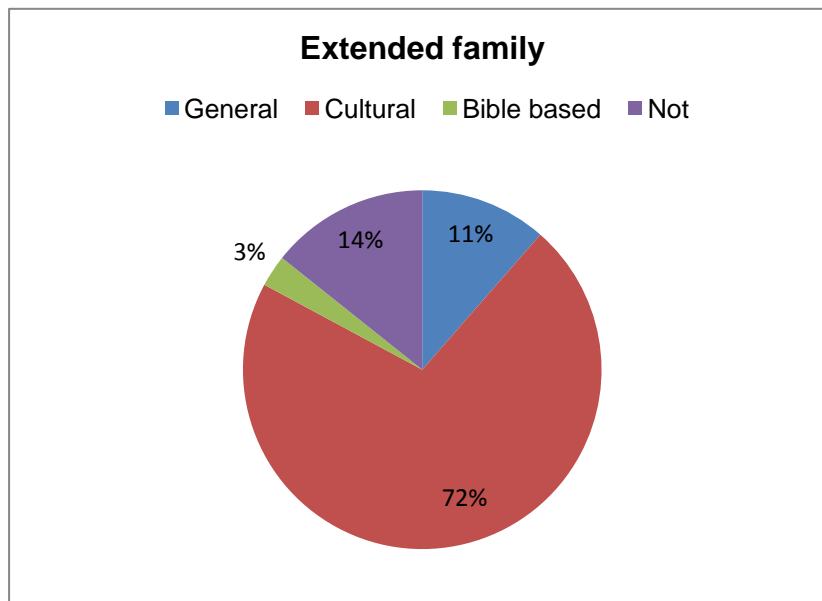


Figure 5. The pastors' responses on the topic of the relation with the extended family (n=35).

Asked about the topic of sexuality in marriage (Questionnaire, question B8), one pastor stated that he did not teach about this subject and two pastors did not answer this question (8 %). From the 32 remaining pastors half of them (16, i.e. 46 % of the 35 respondents) answered in a rather general way, neither very culturally nor Biblically oriented. Ten of the sixteen pastors that answered in a general way had a rather positive approach. Three of them said that they teach people that husband and wife have to communicate about sexuality, while six of them mentioned that they have to “prepare one another” and two of them said that sexuality is meant to show affection and to please one another. The other sixteen pastors (46 %) had a cultural (rather than a Biblical) approach, although four pastors again quoted Bible texts from I Corinthians 7, but these texts were explained in a cultural, androcentric way and therefore labelled as “culturally oriented”. Three of these pastors stated: “A husband must be given what he deserves from his wife”, and one of them added: “...and a wife has to fulfil her duties”. One pastor stated that husband and wife should bear one

another, and another stated that a husband should not force his wife. Another pastor stated: “I teach that a husband should not force his wife, nor should a wife deprive her husband”. Two pastors answered that they teach couples “that sexuality is not a sin”. One pastor added to his answer that sometimes he notices that people have little knowledge about sexuality, and in that case he teaches them “using the Word of God and his own thoughts”. One pastor wrote: “Sexual relationship among the married is necessary, since God ordered them to do it, and even the Apostles testify to that since they say: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the world’”. There were no answers (0 %) to this question that were labelled as “Bible based”.

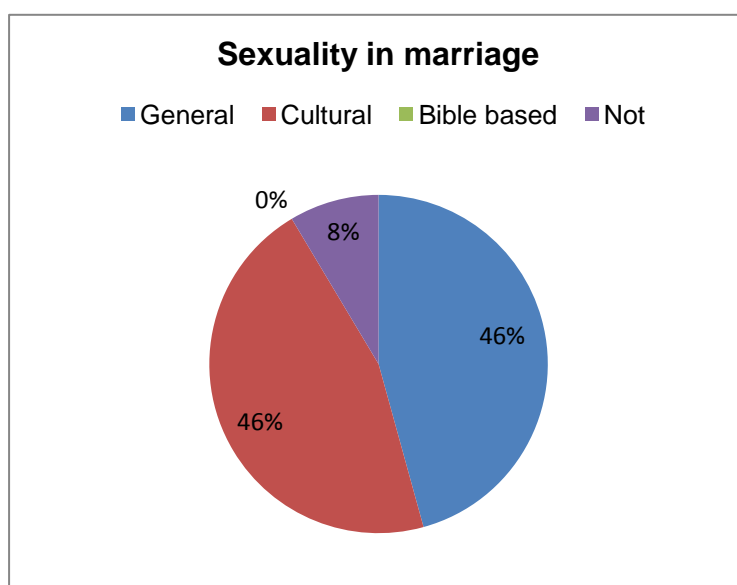


Figure 6. The pastors' responses on the topic of sexuality in marriage (n=35).

Asked about the spiritual life of the couple and the family (Questionnaire, question B9), three pastors (9 %) did not respond at all. It was difficult to label the remaining 32 answers to this question, because many answers seemed Biblically oriented at first sight because of the use of Christian terms. However, the answers from 24 of these respondents (68 %) were labelled as general answers, while six other pastors gave Biblically oriented answers, and two pastors answered in a culturally oriented way.

The answers of the pastors who answered in a general way (24) could be divided into three, sometimes overlapping, groups. One group of these “general respondents” consisted of pastors that did not seem to understand the question, while some of

them spoke about spirituality, although this had little to do with the question. Examples of the answers of this group were: “I teach them that nothing should separate them”; “Yes, about the spiritual life of the wife and the husband, it is very important to know each other well”, and “I teach them that after the life on earth there is another life”. Again here a pastor made reference to the body metaphor: “I teach them that a wife and a husband are one body and every one is a member of the body of his fellow”. A second group of pastors responded in a superficial way, sometimes merely repeating the question: “Yes, I teach them to love God, to read the Bible, to live in peace with everyone” and “Yes, I teach them about spiritual life because God wants them to be pure”. A third group of respondents used Biblical terms, but their answers were very legalistic and did not touch the core of the Biblical message or spirituality. One pastor stated: “I teach them that they will give account of everything they did before God whether good or bad and that they will be rewarded for good acts and punished for evil acts (...)”. Others emphasised what is expected from Christian couples: they should obey God, go to Church, pray regularly, contribute towards the church and teach these things to their children. All answers of these three groups were labelled as general answers.

In contrast with the pastors who gave answers referred to above as “legalistic”-- other pastors (6, or 17%) also used Biblical terms, but did so while reasoning from a reference frame of either fellowship with God, or the testimony of Christian families in society. These six answers were labelled as Biblically oriented, however “clumsily” some of these answers were rendered: “A good family with a good reputation is a good model of the kingdom of God, therefore it is good for the couple to prepare how to stay together even in eternal life⁶⁷, so they have to study together the Word of God and to pray together for their family”.

The remaining pastors (2, or 6%) put emphasis on the wife as the responsible person for the spiritual life of the family. These answers were labelled as “culturally oriented” answers: “I teach them that a saved wife must be her family’s model by educating her children and welcoming visitors because the church begins in the family” and “I teach

⁶⁷Throughout the questionnaire several times pastors mentioned being together “for eternity”. A few times this was a mistake of the translator, when the Kinyarwanda term meant “forever”. Other times the term was rightly translated.

them that the man is the head of the family and the wife is the heart of the family and the counsellor of her husband”.

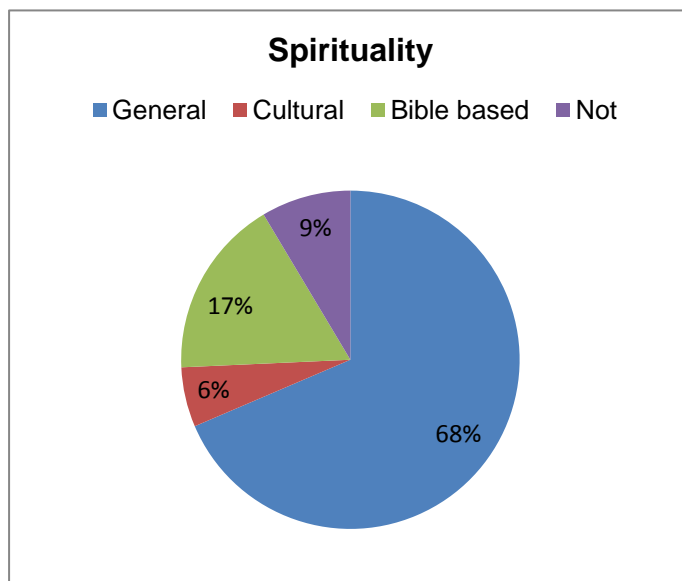


Figure 7. The pastors' responses on the topic of spiritual life as couple and family (n=35).

In summary the following graph can be presented (see figure 8).

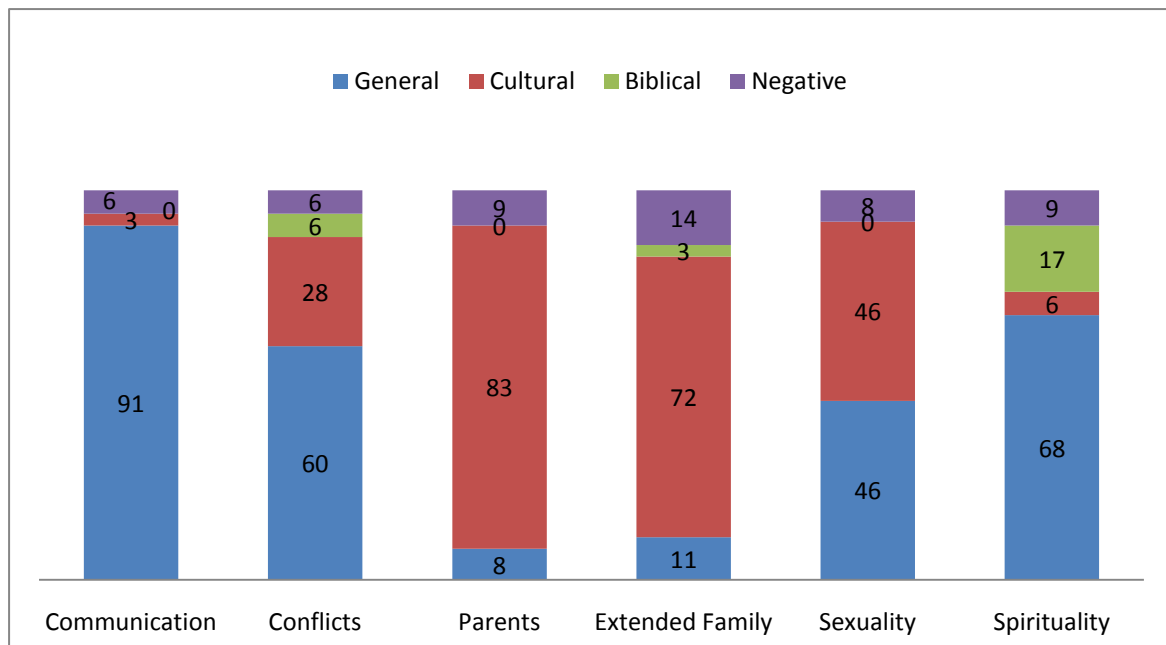


Figure 8. The teachings of the respondents on certain topics in percentages (n=35).

This graph depicts the opinions of the pastors on certain subjects, it does not necessarily prove that the pastors indeed do teach, and neither does it reflect the content of the teachings the pastors are said to give to their couples. But whether they do teach about these topics or not, it does seem from the research that the content of their teaching is not Biblically founded.

The pastors were asked how they prepare couples for their wedding (Questionnaire section D). Although many pastors answered these questions, they did so in a very limited and general way, and therefore no graphs were included to present the responses to these questions. An oversight of the responses will be given, but the numbers of responses will not be accompanied by percentages.

Asked in what the preparation before the wedding consists (Questionnaire, question D1), five pastors did not answer the question, three of them answered that they either talk with the couple or give advice, four pastors answered “I teach”, six pastors wrote that they teach about marriage, three about the family, two about the Christian family, nine about social welfare, and two answers were related to sexuality (one of them said he gives information about the sexual aspect of marriage, while another pastor mentioned: “I teach them that they should not deprive one another”). Three of the above mentioned pastors added that they try to assure themselves that the couples are not too closely related.

When asked about the materials they use to teach couples (Questionnaire, question D2), five pastors did not answer, and one wrote that he did not use any material. From the remaining 29 pastors different things were listed: many pastors (17) said that they use “books”, without specification; many mentioned the Bible (27) and the Book of Common Prayer (7). Some pastors mentioned several titles of booklets about family life that have been written or translated into Kinyarwanda, including “How to build a peaceful home” and “What we need at our home”. None of the pastors mentioned specifically the book “Imibereho ya Gikristo yo mu muryango” [The Christian way of living at home.EHV], used in the TEE program of the Department of Mission and Training. General daily experience, the pastors' own marriage, and the experience of other couples is also mentioned by ten pastors as a source of teaching.

Asked what they teach about the place of God in the relationship of the spouses (Questionnaire, question D3), six pastors did not answer. Many pastors answered again in a very general way: “God is the first in their marriage”, “God ordered marriage” or “I teach them to obey God”, and others said that they teach couples that God promises to bless them if they obey God. One pastor stated that Christ loved the Church and that therefore husband and wife should love each other. Another pastor mentioned that God gave Eve to Adam, and that therefore husbands should treat their wife well. One pastor wrote here: “I teach them that the husband is the head and the wife is the bone of his bones”. It is remarkable that here, as well as in other instances, one pastor mentioned that wife and husband are joined by God for eternity (and not till death).

The pastors were asked how often they meet and whether they meet in groups or with individual couples (Questionnaire, questions D4-5). To prepare couples in their church for the wedding and for marriage, some pastors appeared to take their task really seriously and to go a long way with the couple. Nevertheless, this depends also on the individuals: for instance, soldiers cannot meet regularly. One pastor said that the type of preparation also depends on whether the couple is already living together, without being married, or whether they are “young singles” (i.e. people who do not live together before marriage). Some pastors (8) answered that they meet couples individually, others (5) meet with couples in groups, but most pastors wrote that it depends on the number, when there are several couples planning to get married in the same period. Some pastors (4) did not answer these questions, but the other pastors stated that they either meet sometimes (1), three (2), four (5), six (4), eight (15), ten (1), twelve (2) or many (1) times before the wedding takes place.

Pastors were also asked about the conditions for couples to be married in the Church (Questionnaire, questions D6-8). The pastors gave many different conditions, and one pastor explained that this differs per parish. Five pastors only stated that the couples have to meet the church requirements. The other answers often included the necessity of carrying out the civil wedding at the sector or district office before the church wedding. All but two of the pastors confirmed that the civil wedding is a condition to be married in the church; these two pastors stated that the execution of

the civil wedding was a mere suggestion, not a church requirement. It is mentioned twice that the couples have to give proof that the *inkwano* is handed over. Several other requirements were mentioned: that the future spouses need to be either church members, baptized, “true Christians”, “active members” or “saved”, and that the individuals be adults, not related and unmarried (which is one of the reasons why the wedding is announced for three consecutive Sundays). Further, the future spouses have to agree to go through premarital counselling and to submit to HIV/AIDS testing. Several respondents mentioned that the couple have to agree to help in the preparation of the church wedding. Most pastors mentioned various material requirements, including the rings and a specific financial fee (one pastor wrote: “I charge 5.000 frw”), but most pastors mentioned a prescribed or free thanksgiving offering to the church (money or “in kind” such as mats from the women, or chairs from the men).

The pastors answered various questions about the wedding service in the church (Questionnaire, questions D11-13). None of the pastors mentioned much about the church wedding when they answered these questions. Asked about which liturgy, books and Bible texts they use, most pastors answered that they use the Book of Common Prayer (21), the hymn book (8) and the Bible (19). One pastor answered that he does not remember which Bible texts he uses during the wedding service, but added that he also uses “elements of the culture of the region”. Another pastor stated: “I use some texts that relate to weddings”. Several pastors (8) mentioned that they preach or teach; some of them mentioned specifically the vows (2) or social welfare (1), and five times (the teaching about) the ring is mentioned. Not all pastors seemed to understand this question about the liturgy. One of these pastors answered: “The Bible, the prayer book, the marriage certificate and the church seal”, one pastor mentioned the choir, and another mentioned the flowers and the consent of the spouses.

When asked what exactly makes a wedding a Christian wedding (Question D13), two pastors did not answer the question, but the other pastors mentioned many different things. Some mentioned essential sections of the service that make a wedding a Christian wedding: the exchange of the rings (3), the blessing of the church (5), the

prayers (14), the songs (6), the preaching (8), the use of the Bible (6), the church wedding certificate (1), the fact that the couple are presented to the church during the ceremony (2) and that the wedding takes place before God and the congregation (1). Two pastors (2) highlighted the importance of the announcement of the wedding (three consecutive Sundays before the wedding) in the church. One pastor answered that the fact that they first went through the civil wedding makes it a Christian wedding. Two stated that having a church wedding makes it a Christian wedding, and others (8) stated that the church building itself makes it a Christian wedding. Two others said that weddings that take place during the day are Christian weddings. Also mentioned were the importance of the presence of the choir (1) and the mutual families (1) during the ceremony. Some pastors emphasised the church leaders: 4 stated that the church ceremony should be led by church leaders, while 4 others wrote that they should be present in all wedding ceremonies. One pastor wrote that carrying out all ceremonies in the church makes a wedding a Christian wedding, while 3 others mentioned that these ceremonies should be led by Christians. Other things mentioned were the faith of the couple (1), their obedience to the church rules (1), the fact that they are known to the church (1), and to what extent they give honour to God in the activities during their wedding (1). Several mentioned that the lack of alcohol (3), cigarettes (1) or “squabbles” (1) makes a wedding a Christian wedding. Not one pastor mentioned the vows in the church, although in other questions the vows before the civil authorities were mentioned, and in the answer on the question about the liturgy (Question D12) the teaching about the vows was mentioned.

The pastors were asked what the place of the church wedding is in the whole wedding process (Questionnaire, question D11). In this answer and in other answers the pastors explained that the role of the Church depends on the commitment of the couple. If they are committed Christians the Church is involved in the whole process, and not only during the wedding day. Often it was explicitly mentioned that the Church should have a leading role during the different ceremonies and celebrations: in advising the couple, helping to organize the different ceremonies, and leading these through either prayer and preaching, or representing the families in negotiations and speeches.

4.3.3 Traditional rites and the involvement of the pastors

The pastors were asked what their knowledge was of the occurrence of traditional wedding ceremonies, and whether they were involved in those ceremonies (Questionnaire section C). They recognized several of the listed ceremonies of the traditional wedding process⁶⁸ in their own community. Some ceremonies are carried out in the same way as in the old Rwanda, while other steps are performed in a different way from the past. Some pastors added ceremonies that were not listed in the questionnaire, stating that these steps are still observed. For instance many pastors (20) added the step of *kurambagiza* between *kuranga* and *gufata irembo*. From their explanation however it became clear that *kuranga* and *kurambagiza* are carried out in a different way from the past, that the traditional Kinyarwanda terms do not always reflect what is meant these days, and that the translation into English is not always correct⁶⁹. Other ceremonies that were added were the “night watch” before the wedding⁷⁰, and the different visits from both sides of the families plus corresponding presents after the wedding, after child birth and at the child’s name giving ceremony. One pastor even mentioned *kwahukana* (separation or temporary divorce) and *gucyura uwahukanye* (bringing back home the temporarily divorced wife). Some pastors did not fill in some of the answers, maybe because they were not familiar with the term or the ceremony. Whether they participate in the customs or not, practically all pastors confirmed the present day existence, in one way or another of *kuranga*, *gufata irembo*, *gusaba*, *gukwa*, *gutebutsa*, *gushyingirwa* and *gutwikurura*.

⁶⁸See 3.2 for an explanation of the ceremonies that are mentioned in this section.

⁶⁹In the past the term *kuranga* was used for the process of searching, when an *umuranga* was sent out as representative of the family of the young man, to look for a young woman of marriageable age. The term *kurambagiza* (to spy) was used to indicate the process when the young woman and her family were being observed and tested through inquiries and through visits. Some pastors stated that they still help young men in the process of searching, but it is clear that this is not done in the same way as in the past. Three pastors used the term *kuranga* for the period before the wedding, when three times the couple is presented to the church, and their wedding announced. The term *kurambagiza* is also not used as it was in the past: *kurambagiza* was translated as “betrothal” which does not cover the original meaning. But most pastors used the term for the period of “courtship”, after which the future couple would announce their wish to get married to their families. See also 5.2.3 for a note on the difficulties in the translation of these words.

⁷⁰Two pastors mention the customs *kurara umuhuro* and *kurarira*, although one of them states that it is done in a Christian way (by presence of the Church and singing Christian songs). One pastor mentioned *umuhuro* to indicate a night watch before the wedding, at the bride’s place. Originally *kurara umuhuro* was the night watch at the young man’s house before the wedding. *Kurarira*, labelled as a “bad custom” by Bigirimwami (2004:168), was a continuation of the *gukuna* rituals. During the month before the wedding other young women used to accompany the bride at nights, and they would dance and sing. The bride would then share the bed with her best friends, to prepare her for her future sexual matrimonial responsibilities.

One pastor stated that *kuranga* does not happen anymore: “The boy himself does the searching”. Others wrote indeed that the young man himself chooses whom he wants to marry, but although *kuranga* is carried out differently from the past, 34 of the 35 pastors confirmed that *kuranga* is still a common practice. Only one pastor stated that *gufata irembo* does not happen anymore, while one pastor did not answer. All pastors answered that *gusaba* is still being practiced, and the same applied for *gukwa*. Three pastors stated that *gutebutsa* is not observed these days, while two pastors did not answer. Although most pastors (30) stated that *gushyingirwa* is still a common practice, from later questions it became clear that they interpreted *gushyingirwa* as the present day *ubukwe* (the wedding day). One pastor however wrote that the traditional *gushyingirwa* is replaced by the civil wedding, while two pastors stated correctly that *ubukwe* has supplanted *gushyingirwa*. Two pastors did not answer this question. Many of the pastors (13) wrote that *gutinya* is not celebrated anymore, while the majority (20) asserted that it is still celebrated; two pastors (2) did not answer. On the contrary about *gutwikurura* most (32) pastors wrote that it is still celebrated in their community; one pastor denied its present day existence while two pastors did not respond. Overall, regarding the practice of these customs, it is remarkable that, as in most issues addressed, there is no difference between the opinions of pastors from the city and those from the village.

	Kuranga	Gufata Irembo	Gusaba	Gukwa	Gutebutsa	Gushyingirwa	Gutinya	Gutwikurura
Positive	34	33	35	35	30	30	20	32
Negative	1	1	-	-	3	3	13	1
Blank	-	1	-	-	2	2	2	2

Figure 9. Occurrence of wedding ceremonies according to the pastors (n=35).

Concerning these traditional customs, the pastors were asked whether they assisted and what their role was during the ceremonies. A few pastors wrote that they are regarded as important men in their community and that it is considered an honour for the family if the pastor assists in their ceremonies. One pastor did not answer the question. Although many pastors (22) answered affirmatively that they are actively involved in *kuranga*, from their explanation it became clear that some were not

familiar with the term and concept of *kuranga* as described in 3.2.2, nor of its place as a separate step in the process of marriage. It is evident that in most cases the first contact is established by the couple itself. Some pastors mentioned specifically that they participate in *kurambagiza*; it is not clear whether they meant acquainting the families with each other in a first visit, or whether they referred to the meeting of the two families to announce the wish of the couple to get married, or an engagement party before the actual wedding process starts. However, whether they answered affirmatively (22) or negatively (12) that they actively participated in *kuranga* most pastors (33, i.e. all except one of the last group) explained that during the whole marriage process they serve as an advisor for the couple. They even explained that they are available when asked to give advice or to mediate in case there are conflicts between the two families (for instance about the choice of the young man or about the dowry).

In general the pastors are very involved in the ceremonies indicated below, either assisting as a mere visitor, or actively present as representative of the Church-- and therefore asked to preach or pray-- or even as representative of one of the two families, where they assist in all ceremonies. Most of the pastors (27), if invited, assist at *gufata irembo*. One pastor answered that there is no ceremony at all, and two stated that they are not invited, as this is a family activity. Five pastors did not answer this question. Twelve pastors stated that they fulfil an active role-- whenever they are asked to do so, but many pastors did not specify which role. The other 15 pastors specified their role. Several pastors (7) mentioned that they say a prayer or preach the Word, if they are asked to do so as a representative of the Church. Some pastors (10) stated that they either lead the whole ceremony or they act as representatives of the family.

The role of the pastors is very active during *gusaba*, to which, if invited, all pastors who answered the question (34) assist; one pastor did not answer. Two pastors only mentioned that they play an active role, but did not specify which role. During this ceremony the majority of the pastors are asked to pray or preach (25). At the same time many pastors (15) answered that, if invited, they act either as leader of the ceremony and/or as representative of either one of the two families (13 pastors

specified this role). Those who act as representative of either the young man's or of the bride's family⁷¹, play a very active role not only in *gusaba*, but in the whole process, mingling in the negotiations about the dowry and the wedding preparations. The 13 pastors who answered that they sometimes act as representative of the family during *gusaba* will for instance fulfil the same role at *gukwa*, i.e. when the *inkwano* (dowry) is handed over.

When asked about the involvement during *gukwa*, one pastor (1) did not answer the question. Two pastors (2) answered that they are not involved in this ceremony, and one of them wrote that the *gukwa* ceremony is a family matter, and that the dowry is handed over without ceremony, with a few representatives of both families. All other pastors (32) wrote that, when invited, they assist at *gukwa*. Two pastors answered affirmatively but did not specify, two other pastors just mentioned that they play an active role and another pastor mentioned that he only assists as visitor. However, most pastors (27) said that they assist mostly as either Church representative (19), and are therefore asked to pray or preach, and/or as representative of the families (13).

When asked about their involvement in *gutebutsa*, two (2) pastors did not answer this question. Many pastors (12) stated that they are not invited to *gutebutsa*; some stated that this is a family matter, and that the Church is not invited as such, or that this ceremony is not celebrated anymore. The majority of the pastors (21) stated that they are invited to *gutebutsa*, but several of them (6) added that it does not happen often. Even some (7) of the pastors that actively participated as church representatives during *gusaba* and *gukwa* answered that they are not invited for *gutebutsa*. If the pastor was acting as family representative during the other ceremonies, it is possible that he will play this role during this ceremony. In that case the pastor will participate in the discussions-- about the date of the wedding, or to urge the families to fulfil the pledges for contributions made during earlier sessions. However, even some of the pastors who answered that they act as family representative during *gusaba* and *gukwa* answered that they are not invited to *gutebutsa*, or when invited they play a less important role, as mere visitor or they are asked to pray or preach. Other pastors

⁷¹They "ask the bride or are asked the bride" as the translator put it literally.

contradict this and state: “If I am asked to represent the family during *gusaba* I will play a major role during the other ceremonies”. Apparently not all families invite their pastors for *gutebutsa* and if they invite them they decide which role they assign the pastors during this ceremony.

When asked about the occurrence in their community of certain traditional ceremonies (see figure 9) most pastors appeared to have interpreted the traditional *gushyingirwa* as the present day *ubukwe*, the actual wedding day. These terms are apparently used interchangeably. When asked about the involvement of the pastors in the traditional rites of *gushyingirwa*: *gutonda imisango*, *kurongora*, *kwakira umwishywa*, *guca hagati* and *gukirana* (*kumara amavuta*), many of them did not recognize these rites in the present day weddings. And if practiced at all most of these traditional rites are generally considered as “pagan”. One of these pastors stated that the traditional rites of *gushyingirwa* were celebrated by the ancestors, but that Christians these days celebrate the *ubukwe*. Another pastor explained that the traditional rites were replaced by Christian rites: the *umwishywa* is replaced by the ring, and *guca hagati* is replaced by the handing over of the bride to the groom in the church. Most pastors (28) answered that *gutonda imisango* is still practiced, during *gushyingirwa* or other ceremonies, when speeches and discourses are given by the representatives of the two families. One of these pastors, however, added that this custom is not common, and that it only happens in “some places”. Another of these pastors added that it is only done outside the church. Four pastors said that this custom is not celebrated these days, and three pastors did not write anything.

About the rest of the rites of *gushyingirwa*, one pastor stated that he has never heard of the ceremonies of imposition of *umwishywa* and *kwakira umwishywa*, *guca hagati*, *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta*. Another pastor wrote that he has no idea whether these rituals are still celebrated. About the traditional marriage rite *kurongora* (with the ritual of the imposition of the *umwishywa* and the spitting of the *imbazi*) many pastors (21) stated that this rite is not celebrated these days. Other pastors (6) stated that this rite is still celebrated, and four of them add that it is done “outside the church”. The remaining pastors (8) did not answer the question, some of them because they were not familiar with this rite.

The custom of *kwakira umwishywa* is even less common, according to the pastors: many of them (26) answered that this custom is not celebrated anymore, and five of them add that the present day wedding with the ring has replaced the rites of the *umwishywa*. Some pastors (3) did not answer, or wrote that they do not know. On the other hand, another pastor wrote that all these rituals are still celebrated. The remaining pastors (6) stated that this ritual is still observed, but five of these pastors added that it is done in the villages, and outside the church.

About *guca hagati* most pastors (27) stated that it is not observed anymore, while some pastors (4) answered that it is still observed, but three of them added that this is done outside the church. The remaining pastors (4) did not answer the question, or did not recognize this custom.

About *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta* some pastors (7) wrote that it is still being practiced. However, one of them added: “It depends on who counselled them”, while the others added that it happens in some places, but in the villages and only outside the church. Most pastors (25) stated that this ritual is not celebrated anymore. The remaining pastors (3) did not answer the question, or did not recognize this ritual.

	Gutonda imisango	Kurongora	Kwakira umwishywa	Guca hagati	Gukirana/ kumara amavuta
Positive	28	6	6	4	7
Negative	4	21	26	27	25
Blank	3	8	3	4	3

Figure 10. Occurrence of the traditional rites during *gushyingirwa* (n=35).

Many pastors confirmed that the rituals of *gushyingirwa* are replaced by the Church wedding. One pastor stated: “The Christian culture has replaced the traditional wedding and now people celebrate the wedding in a modern way”. And another pastor wrote: “We replaced some and changed other rituals: we now bring the Word of God into some traditional ceremonies”. Another pastor stated that the Church has also “adopted Christian customs such as exchanging rings, the wedding gown, the flowers”. Different pastors mentioned that the actual wedding rite, *kurongora*, with the

imposition of the *umwishywa*, is substituted by the exchange of the rings during the ceremony in the Church. Several pastors stated that *guca hagati* is replaced by the Church ceremony where the bride is handed over to the bridegroom⁷².

The pastors noted that today various ceremonies can be celebrated during one single day (Questionnaire, questions D9-10). One pastor mentioned *gusaba*, *gukwa* and *gutebutsa*, while another pastor wrote of *gusaba*, *gukwa*, *gutebutsa* and *gushyingirwa* being carried out in one day. In the cities sometimes all these ceremonies--*gusaba*, *gukwa* and *gutebutsa*--are celebrated in one single day before the church wedding, and sometimes even *gufata irembo* is included. Normally however these steps are celebrated first, followed by the civil wedding and then the church wedding. Some pastors explained that the actual day of the Church wedding starts these days at home, dressing and preparing the bride, the groom and the guests for the wedding. During the Church wedding the Word of God is preached, prayers are said, and the vows and the rings are exchanged.

Many pastors (26) do not play a role in *gutinya*. Most of them (17) stated that in their church the custom of *gutinya* is not celebrated anymore. Two other pastors stated that these days the “unveiling” often takes place on the day of the wedding, which annuls the need for *gutinya*. One pastor stated that *gutinya* is only observed outside the church. However, another pastor explicitly mentioned that it is observed by “both Christians and pagans”. Some pastors explained that *gutinya* happens more in the villages⁷³. Many pastors (15) stated that *gutinya* is still celebrated in their church, although many of the pastors themselves (7) do not play a role in it. This custom is often considered as a family issue. The length of the seclusion has changed due to modernization. One pastor wrote that in these times *gutinya* lasts “only” 15 days; however most others mentioned a time frame of a week or a few days. The circumstances play a role: some pastors explained that employers require that people return to work, while in other cases the financial situation of the couple, especially if they are orphans, constrains them to shorten this period. Several pastors (8)

⁷²This does not seem logical, as *guca hagati* took place after the imposition of the *umwishywa*. Most probably these pastors meant the moment before the imposition of the *umwishywa*, when the bride is handed over to the young man by the aunt and a representative of the young man.

⁷³This is not confirmed by the facts of the questionnaire.

mentioned that they played a role during *gutinya*. One pastor did not specify which role he played, while two others just mentioned that they visit their couples, but several mentioned that they advise the couple during their seclusion. Some noted that they urge people to shorten this period, and others give advice on family life. These remarks show that the character of *gutinya* has changed, compared to the original custom. One pastor did not answer the question.

Although *gutinya* is not celebrated as often as in the past and when celebrated it is considered as a family matter, *gutwikurura* is still celebrated in most cases, but its appearance has changed. Some pastors stated that these days *gutwikurura* is often done on the wedding day itself, after the other festivities, and at home. However, several pastors said that *gutwikurura* takes place a few days after the wedding, that they are present at this ceremony and that it is organized and led by the Church. One pastor from Kigali even stated: “They still cut the hair in a traditional way”. Many pastors (29) answered that the church is involved in this ceremony when they are invited. It is not entirely clear if they mean that they are also involved if the unveiling takes place on the day of the wedding. Many of these pastors (15), however, stated that they play an active role in *gutwikurura* (leading the ceremony, or through prayer, a speech, a blessing or the gifts). This depends also on which role the pastors played during earlier ceremonies. Other pastors stated that they are present, as visitors. Several pastors (5) stated that the church is not involved in *gutwikurura*, as this is considered as a family matter. One pastor did not answer the question.

	Kuranga	Gufata Irembo	Gusaba	Gukwa	Gutebutsa	Gushyingirwa	Gutinya	Gutwikurura
Positive	22	27	34	32	21	See fig. 9	8	29
Negative	12	3	-	2	12	“	26	5
Blank	1	5	1	1	2	“	1	1

Figure 11. Involvement of the pastors in the traditional wedding ceremonies (n=35).

When the data of the occurrence of traditional ceremonies, according to the pastors (figure 9), and the involvement of the pastors (figure 11) are combined it is possible to draw the following figure (see below).

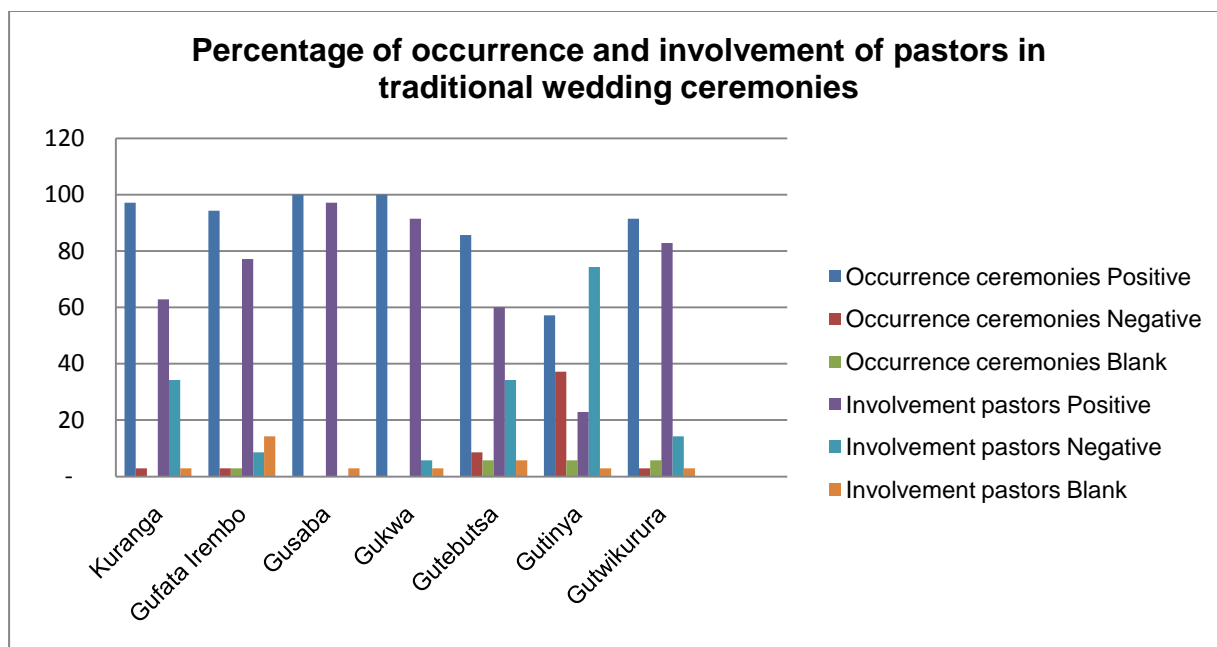


Figure 12. Occurrence against involvement in the traditional wedding ceremonies (n=35).

4.3.4 Marital counselling and involvement of the pastors after the wedding

The pastors were asked (Questionnaire section E) what happens after the wedding and how they view their own role in the whole wedding process. Three pastors did not answer the questions of this section. Many pastors answered these questions in a general way. Most pastors answered the first question (question E1) with “yes”, confirming that they counsel people after the wedding, but do not give specifics. Only one pastor answered with “no”. One young pastor wrote that he once served as counsellor and mediator in the problems between two families. Two other pastors mentioned that their church offers special services for married people. And another pastor stated that he visits people after the wedding. Two others explained that they only counsel when needed, i.e. in case of problems, and one pastor added that in practice this happens especially in case of problems concerning the sexual life of the couple.

The pastors were asked whether they advise people beforehand, during the marriage preparations, about what to do in time of real problems in their marriage

(Questionnaire, question E2). Apart from the three pastors that did not answer, three others stated that they do not do so. Most pastors (24) wrote simply “yes”. Others (5) added an explanation: one pastor explained that he teaches people to talk about their problems; two others mentioned that they teach people to *kwihangana*, and one of them added that they should pray, and eventually talk with an elderly couple from the church; two pastors emphasised that they advise people to go to church and stay in touch with fellow believers to avoid problems.

Asked whether they have marriage counsellors (Questionnaire, question E3) apart from the three pastors that did not answer, many pastors (13) confirmed with only “yes” that they have marriage counsellors, but gave no specifics, and some pastors (5) just wrote “no”. One other pastor wrote: “No, but I am planning to try to find one after this”. Another said: “No, except the Mothers’ Union”, while seven pastors answered with “yes” before they mentioned Mothers’ Union (and the men’s association St. Andrew’s), but one of these pastors stated that they are not equipped to do the work of counselling. One pastor wrote that he has no counsellors, and that he as a pastor is supposed to do this work; another pastor stated that he uses mature Christian couples in his church to refer people with problems to; and a third pastor informed that he connects people with their family members in case of marital problems. One pastor wrote that his wife is the counsellor of his church. Only one pastor said that he has trained counsellors in his church and that “they do it well”.

When the pastors were asked to reflect on the significance of their role and upon their feelings concerning their own involvement in the celebration of the Church wedding (Questionnaire, question E4), at first sight their answers were not related to the questions. One could assume that the question was not well translated, but apparently many pastors found it difficult to reflect on their own role, probably because the words “how do you feel” were used in the question. Six pastors did not answer these questions. Nevertheless, the answers that were given proved to be interesting because most of them were very positive about their own role and recognized the importance of it. Three pastors mentioned that they feel as the servant of God, one of them adding “...and I am proud of that”. Seven others said that they feel as the representative of God, and one of them explained: “I feel I am an important

man before God, as I am doing a work that God Himself would do". Five pastors explained that they feel either like the parent, the counsellor, the connector, the prophet or the pastor of the couple. Four pastors only stated that they either feel very good, happy or comfortable about their own role. One pastor added to "feeling happy" that it reminded him of his own wedding. One explained that it was because he unified people. And three pastors added that the church grows through marriage as the couples will give birth to children. One pastor mentioned the importance of his role in the spiritual growth of the church, as Christian couples will have Christian families. Another pastor stated as well: "I feel like a person with responsibility to teach how to build a Christian family". Another pastor recognized the importance of his work: "I wish they could be blessed and separated only by death". One pastor recognized his responsibility and dependence of God: "I ask God to help me in my ministry and to always remind me that I also have been married and what I promised". And, finally, the last pastor wrote: "I feel that I have to magnify the glory of God, and I wish that I could see the fruits of the teachings we teach in the church".

When asked whether there are things they can improve (Questionnaire, question E5), many pastors stated that there are things they can improve, though many of them did not specify in what ways. And when asked in what area the Church could help pastors to improve the marriage preparation (question E6), nearly all who answered wrote that they need books and teaching material about marriage. Others stated that they need training to learn more about marriage and to improve their skills as marriage counsellors. Several pastors asked for help as many of them did not receive proper training for what they are doing. Some added that at this moment they do not have the knowledge or the skills to help people with marriage problems but have to cope with the situation.

Some pastors mentioned that the Church needs to provide material on marriage so that not only the pastors but also couples, and the whole congregation can learn about marriage. Most pastors stated that "the Church" should provide things for them, while one pastor wrote: "We should prepare teaching materials, we need to give training, we need to organize follow-up visits after the wedding". One pastor stated specifically that not only the ordained pastors but also the *abayobozi b'amakanisa* (the

abarimu, the leaders of the small churches) should receive training. Though they do not officiate at Church weddings, they are supposed to give premarital and marital counselling but they lack the proper means and training.

Several pastors had questions and remarks about the church policies. Some said that they are not sure what is expected from them and that they want to know what “the Church” is required to do in the whole wedding process. One pastor asked for “specific and clear guidelines how to celebrate a Church wedding in case the people live together before the wedding”. Another asked if a pastor should set conditions concerning the Christian life style of a couple who want to get married in the Church. The same pastor asked for a pastoral dress code, as he is not sure what a pastor should wear during the Church wedding. One pastor asked himself at what time the wedding celebration in the Church should take place⁷⁴. One pastor suggested that some expressions in the Kinyarwanda version of the Book of Common Prayer should be reviewed as they do not make sense in Kinyarwanda (for example “I marry you with this marriage ring”).

Although several pastors struggled with the whole questionnaire, many of them expressed their gratitude verbally for the fact that this particular topic was chosen for this thesis. They repeated that they urgently need teaching and materials on the topic of marriage.

In the next section the experience of four couples, married within the Anglican Church, will be described. The information was gathered during interviews to learn in which way the traditional customs are still celebrated, how these couples were prepared for marriage by the Church, what teachings on marriage they received and what counselling they received.

⁷⁴The traditional wedding rite, which is considered as pagan, took place at night. These days the Church wedding takes place during the day. “Daylight stands for transparency and openness”, as one pastor stated. An evening wedding has the connotation of “punishment for indecency”, as sometimes pregnant young women were wedded during the evening. This pastor apparently wants to know if this is a cultural or Biblical issue.

4.4 The experience of four couples within the Anglican Church/DK

4.4.1 *Introduction*

This section is based on interviews with four couples, all members of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Kigali. Their names will not be mentioned, to safeguard their privacy. After the first time that they are mentioned, no reference will be made to date and venue of the interview. The interviews were held in March 2008 in Kinyarwanda, and were translated into English by an interpreter. The interviews have been recorded and transcribed (see appendix 4 for an overview of the questions that were used).

Couples A and B were from different churches in the city of Kigali, and couples C and D lived in two villages within the Diocese of Kigali. Although couple A (8 March 2008, Kigali) worked and lived in Kigali they married in their home village. Couple A have lived in Uganda for some years and informed me that their knowledge about the occurrence of traditional marriage ceremonies is limited, but said that they were eager to share what they knew. However, they seemed to know more about certain customs than the other couples; at least they talked about it more easily. They were married in the seventies, as were couple B. Husband B (11 March 2008, Kigali) knew a lot about the traditional customs, from his own experience and because the subject had his interest. Couple C (17 March 2008, Village 1) were the youngest couple: they were married in this new millennium. Since both of them were orphans, and the church replaced the family in many steps of the preparations, their situation was different from the other couples. However, it is the sad reality of post-1994 Rwanda that they are typical of many young people of their age. Couple D (17 March 2008, Village 2) were married in the late eighties. All interviewed couples married civilly and in the Anglican Church, after having gone through some traditional ceremonies at their homes.

4.4.2 *The couples' preparation for marriage and teaching of the church*

In this section the role of the Church in the preparation for marriage of the four interviewed couples, and the teaching on marriage in general, will be discussed.

Couple A lived in Kigali, but returned to their native village to get married there. They did not receive any premarital counselling from the church. They were prepared for their wedding and marriage by aunts, mother and friends. They explained that the teaching consisted in advising the bride to obey her future husband and to take good care of him, but also to obey her future mother-in-law. Couple A spoke once with the pastor about the wedding ceremony in the church, after which he announced their upcoming wedding in the church over three Sundays. They never spoke with any pastor about marriage in general. They did not remember any sermon on marriage, and nobody taught them about Biblical marriage. However, they remembered that during conferences the youth were taught about how to choose a marriage partner. And at school the teachers tried to raise the subject of marriage and other social issues in Primary 6 (knowing that many students would drop out after that grade).

Couple B said that in their time the involvement of the church and premarital counselling started when people were already in the process of getting married, after the *gusaba* ceremony. The pastor spoke about tolerance, hospitality, care for relatives, social welfare, how to raise children, and about love. When asked what Bible passages or texts were used, husband B answered that he remembers the lessons on “how husband and wife should live from the books of Timothy and Peter”.

In the case of couple C the pastor started counselling three weeks before the wedding, and during these Sundays the wedding was announced in church. The pastor used his own experience and Bible texts to teach them.

When couple D married there were many other couples, so the pastor called them all together and taught them once a week for two months. The topics discussed were how to respect one another, and how to avoid and resolve conflicts. The pastor put emphasis on the fact that spouses need to resolve conflicts between themselves,

instead of involving others immediately, and that they have to stay together for better or for worse.

All four couples were asked what the Church taught them about certain topics which cause problems for many married people: the dowry, the extended family, communication and sexuality.

Couple A and B did not receive any teaching on the dowry. This was considered a cultural issue, and the Church did not even raise the subject. However, in the case of couple C and D the pastor taught them that the dowry was not a bride price and that people should not overcharge. The Church encouraged the people to accept grace instead of cows.

Couple A stated that teaching on the extended family was the responsibility of the civil administration, and that the Church did not cover the subject. Couples B and D did not remember any particular teaching on the extended family or on communication, but stated that the Church taught more in general about respect, care for family members and conflicts.

When asked if the Church taught them about sexuality, wife A was very explicit: "The pastor considered talking about sex as sin". Nobody in the Church talked about sexuality, and even as spouses together they were afraid to raise this subject. What is meant by "one flesh" was not taught by the Church. Couple B stated however that the Church taught Christians "not to deprive one another except for a special reason, and that sexuality was needed in order to be reproductive". Husband C mentioned that the pastor taught them the twofold purpose of sexuality: "to show affection and to have children". According to couple D however, the Church taught them that the primary goal of sex was to beget children.

When asked about cultural practices that have been abolished by the Church all four raised certain topics. According to couple C the Church taught them that marriage was meant for one man with one woman. Therefore, they learned that practices such as polygamy and wife-sharing were not well regarded by the Church, nor by the state. Couple A agreed that in general these practices were not allowed, but that they were

already less common in the seventies than for example in the thirties. Nevertheless, the Church did not talk about these problems directly. Husband B however stated that practices like “a wife belongs to the family”, although disappearing, still happen in the North. Husband D added that their Church also taught that a Christian husband should not hate nor send away his newly married wife after finding out that she did not go through the *gukuna*. When asked directly what the Church taught them about the custom of *gukuna* husband D stated that “this is the choice of the individual people, but whatever they choose, this should not be a reason for divorce”.

None of the couples was able to mention Bible texts to explain what a Christian marriage is. Couple A did not recall any Bible texts that were used to teach about marriage. Husband C stated that the pastor used the example of Adam and Eve to explain what it means to be “one flesh”: closeness and being joined together. Husband D remembered that the pastor talked about Abraham and Sarah to explain that in case of infertility a husband should not chase away his wife or look for another one, but wait upon the Lord. He also mentioned Psalm 23, “God is my Shepherd, I shall not want”, which the pastor used to explain that God is above all human desires. When asked in what a Christian marriage consists, answers differed from: “a marriage of people that grew up in the Church” to “having good communication” or “knowing what the role of faith is in a family”.

4.4.3 The experience of the four couples with the traditional customs

All couples arranged the relationship themselves and did not make use of a connector, nor did a representative of their family go out to look for a bride (*kuranga*, searching). Couple A and B knew each other from the village, couple C met at church and couple D met at work. Husband D mentioned specifically that, after having finished his degree, he decided that he was ready to get married, and his eye fell on his colleague, whose family he knew from the village. He made inquiries about his wife and her family through his family and friends (*kurambagiza*) and based on that information he decided that she would be a good candidate.

In all four cases the couple themselves agreed to get married. In the case of the couples A, B and D, the young man informed his family, after which the representatives of his family went to visit the family of the young woman to announce that they were interested in marriage. Since both bride and young man C were orphans, they expressed their wish to get married to the leaders of the church. The members then stepped in to advise them how to proceed from that point.

During the ceremony of *gufata irembo* the families sat together for the first time, openly and officially, and after this meeting other people knew that the bride was booked. At this stage the church was not involved, except in the case of couple C, where the church acted as their family. All couples did the *gufata irembo* ceremony as a separate step.

During the *gusaba* ceremony in all four cases the hand of the bride was asked officially and during the same ceremony the *inkwano* (dowry) was agreed upon. Only in the case of couple A, were people from the church present during the *gusaba* ceremony, although they had no active role. It was explained that this depends on the relationship with the church representatives (whether these are family, friends or colleagues). Young man C went to ask for the hand of young lady C at the house of one of her relatives in a remote village, although she did not live with them. He asked for *ubuntu* (grace), since he did not have the money to get his dowry. It was agreed that the dowry could be paid later⁷⁵. It was not mentioned what the dowry should consist of, and during the interview, five years after the wedding, the dowry had still not been paid.

All couples emphasized the symbolic value of the *inkwano*. In the old days the dowry consisted of one cow, although some cattle breeders could give more cows. All couples stressed that the dowry is not a price. Couple A and D mentioned the word “thanksgiving” (for having raised and educated the bride well), and all of them mentioned that the *inkwano* was part of a range of gifts and contra-gifts. Husband D mentioned that they did not negotiate, it was a common thing to ask for one cow, as

⁷⁵Which seems somehow contradictory. Apparently “grace” is meant in the sense of: grant of delay of payment of the *inkwano*, and not in the Biblical sense grace (exemption). Maybe what is called *ubuntu* these days stands for both traditional customs: either the real *ubuntu* (freely given) or the postponement of payment.

already “many brides were given”, i.e. many marriages had taken place, between his and her family.

In three of the four cases therefore the dowry consisted of one cow, and in the case of couple B also of a hoe, and they were handed over during the *gukwa* ceremony. Husband B declared that all steps mentioned here could easily take a year, as there were several other visits (with lots of beer), meant to get to know each others’ families and to negotiate all details.

All four couples celebrated the ceremony of *gutebutsa*, when the bride’s family gave a date for the wedding, or when the date was negotiated between the two families and the last arrangements were made. Couple C had a meeting in the church, where church members pledged their contributions for the wedding, as family members usually do during the wedding preparations.

All couples went through the civil wedding, and registered the dowry’s contents, whether money, cows or grace. The civil wedding took place together with other couples. They shared that normally a small party takes place at the house of the bride afterwards.

According to the couples, most of the parts of the traditional *gushyingirwa*, the actual wedding, do not take place anymore. They informed that the present day *ubukwe* (wedding day) is considered as the central ceremony, the wedding; it is during that day that the church wedding takes place. When asked what the couples knew about the traditional steps during *gushyingirwa* (*gutonda imisango*, *gushaka/kurongora*, *kwakira umwishywa*, *guca hagati*, *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta*) none of couples B, C and D were very eager to talk. Only couple A shared openly about certain ceremonies, although they recognized that their knowledge on certain cultural practices was limited because they have lived abroad. Since in Rwanda traditions are handed over within the family, couple C ascribed their unfamiliarity with the subject to the fact that their family members died. All couples assured that these ceremonies took place in the past only, and when they still take place this is in other places of Rwanda and/or done by backsliders or non-Christians.

When asked about *gushyingirwa* and the day of the church wedding, husband D shared that his parents, who married in the fifties, went through all rituals, but that the traditional wedding was abolished in 1959 or 1960 and people stopped celebrating it. He stated that these were the people “living near the church and the local administration” but that “the people living far away in the villages kept on doing that and still do it”. However, when asked to confirm which rituals are still celebrated, he denied his earlier statement, and stated that these ceremonies took place in the past only. When asked about his personal experience during the wedding day husband D replied a bit irritated that a wedding in their days did not differ from a modern wedding: “We were dressed in costume and ties as people do in a nowadays’ church wedding”. Husband C was also not very explicit about those ceremonies: “they are something from the past but might still be practiced by backsliders and non-Christians, although they are disappearing”.

When asked, by means of an open question, why these rituals disappeared, all couples mentioned both “evangelization and civilization”. Husband B stated that the Christians stopped practicing these ceremonies because of the teachings of the church, and that other Rwandans followed the example of the Christians.

Couple A stated that *gutonda imisango* consists in a cultural discourse exchanged by the two representatives of the families. It was done during the *gushyingirwa* as well as during the other ceremonies. According to husband A this is a very important custom, still observed, meant to strengthen the bond between the two families and to show the bride that she is not given away carelessly. The parents of couple A, B and D married through the *kurongora* rite, with *kwakira umwishywa*, *gukirana*, *kumara amavuta* and *guca hagati*, but the couples said that in their time people stopped doing it. Husband A shared that in earlier days people did not marry civilly nor in the church, but it was during this ceremony with the *umwishywa* and the milk, in presence of the *umuranga* etc. that the actual wedding ceremony took place. A young man could even marry a young woman by abduction, by throwing her the *umwishywa*. Couple A explained why they think the church explicitly forbade the *gukirana*, the ritual fight, after which the *kumara amavuta*, the first sexual contact, enforced by the husband, took place. The *gukirana* was a symbolic fight, to prove the virginity and decency of the bride. Pastors

realized that in many cases people got injured because some women took this resistance very seriously and fought back. And since as a result they were virtually raped, some young women decided to go back to their parents' home immediately. The other reason why the church forbade this ritual, according to husband A, was that the *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta* had the "public character of a soccer game". People used to gather on the compound behind the hut and listen and comment on what happened inside. This was called *kwumviriza* (Bigirumwami 2004:168) and was very humiliating for the couple⁷⁶. Husband B explained that he thinks that Christians stopped the practice of *gukirana* because the church taught that it was normal for a woman to leave her parents and marry, so there was no need to resist, or to "deprive one another".

Although all of the couples celebrated the church wedding instead of the traditional wedding, none of the couples gave many details on the church ceremony. The interviewed couples commented more on the wedding day in general, which was mostly seen as a happy day, with family and friends, that started at the house of the bridegroom's parents, after which they went to church, while a party was organized afterwards. Some family members came a few days before the wedding, brought food and presents and helped to organize the wedding, the party and the new home of the couple. The couples shared that usually a party takes place in the house of the bridegroom's parents, in the young man's new home or, especially in the cities, in another setting (a church venue or a restaurant).

After the wedding traditionally the *gutinya* (seclusion) took place. It depended on the financial means of the family how long this period was, but also on the demands of employers. Couple A explained that usually the bride would go to the house of the parents in law during the day, to weave a basket. But husbands C and D mentioned that their wives did not do anything during that period. However, since couple A were

⁷⁶Based on the sounds, they would conclude whether the young man succeeded or not. This brought humiliating situations, as sometimes the young man had to ask the help of his friends. Husband A mentioned an example of a very strong bride (a shepherdess) who resisted her husband for five nights. Another young man could not overcome his bride and bit her in the back. Her cry was misinterpreted, and the people outside wrongfully shouted victory. These stories were of course passed on, and elaborated upon in great detail, and would follow the couple their entire life.

employed as teachers in Kigali, they both had to return to work and the *gutwikurura* (unveiling) took place the next day. Couple B explained that their *gutinya* took two weeks, and that normally in that time an *umutinyisha* (seclusion officer, a matron) would accompany the bride. In the case of couple C the *gutinya* took two or three days. But husband D said that his wife stayed hidden for one month; she even covered her face, refused to talk to people, and did not go out, even to the kitchen.

After the seclusion period the *gutwikurura* took place. In the case of couple A this took place after one day, though the three other couples had a longer seclusion period. However, husband C stated that these days the unveiling even takes place in the evening, immediately after the wedding, which was confirmed by the pastors and other people. To participate in *gutwikurura* some of the bride's family members came to visit the couple, and brought presents. Couple B and D explicitly mentioned that during that ceremony the hair of their new wives was cut off by the *umuranga*. Couple B and C mentioned the *gutekesha* ceremony (to cause someone to cook), after which the wife could enter the kitchen and prepare meals. Couple C mentioned the *gutekesha* as a separate ceremony, in their case ten days after the wedding, while husband B mentioned that this was part of their *gutwikurura*. Husband D remembered that his sisters tried to persuade his wife to finish the seclusion period, and encouraged her to go into the kitchen. He mentioned a milk ceremony during the *gutwikurura*, where both he and his wife drank milk, which symbolized their new shared life together.

Husband B mentioned that afterwards other visits took place, like the *kuramukanya*, the first visit of the couple to the parents of the bride. Couple B and C mentioned as well the *guca mu irembo* as a closure of the wedding process. Relatives of the man, together with some guests that participated in the wedding, visited the bride's family, to show that they did not take it for granted that they had received a bride. It was also to assure the bride that she was not simply given away but that the relationship with her family was maintained. The couple received a hoe from the bride's family, to symbolize that from that day on they were free to start their normal life. In the case of couple B, people of the church were present, the *umuranga* was a Christian, and they had a Christian ceremony with songs and prayers.

4.4.4. Marital counselling and the role of the Church, according to the couples

Although the couples received little or no premarital counselling, nor Biblical teachings on how to face certain problems in their marriage, it is understood from individual conversations that people face many problems. Often four areas of problems are mentioned: dowry, extended family, communication and sexuality. The four couples were therefore also asked about these issues, and they themselves also mentioned other problems.

All four couples agreed that for many couples these days the dowry is a huge problem. As mentioned above, all couples emphasized the symbolic value of the *inkwano*. The *inkwano* was meant to strengthen the bond between the two families and was one gift in a whole range of gifts exchanged between the two families, each gift counterbalanced with other gifts. Husbands A and B mentioned the example of the *indongoranyo*, the first calf of the dowry-cow that would be given back by the parents of the bride to the couple. In the old days the dowry consisted of one cow, although some cattle breeders could give two cows. The couples stated that these days the dowry is often considered as a purchase price by many, especially in the cities, and the prices have risen. The word “greed” was mentioned spontaneously by two of the couples, when they remarked that people these days tend to ask for money instead of for cows. Couples A and B emphasized that in their days *ubuntu* was a common and honoured practice. Husband C observed that the symbolic price of one cow is not in use anymore, because the dowry depends on the financial situation of the couple: as some people live in extreme poverty they have to ask for grace, while other, very rich people, give as many cows as they want. Husband D stated that in their small village one cow is still common.

Couple A said that the Church should teach explicitly about the concept and meaning of the *inkwano*, since they observed that more and more people start to live together because they cannot pay the dowry. According to couple A the Church should in the first place convince parents not to overcharge and in the second place teach the members of the Church to help orphans.

Concerning the extended family, couple A observed that many modern couples face problems with their families. They stated that they believe that in their time this did not happen that much, because the families knew each other very well. However, they added that they believe that most problems between spouses are caused by relatives of one of the spouses living at the couple's home. Wife A explained that pastors often act as mediators between parties before the wedding and during marriage. Husband B stated that it also works the other way round: problems between the spouses have their impact on the relations between the two families, as their members intervene in conflicts. Though couple C did not have many family members they believed that spouses should solve their problems within their own relationship.

Couple A mentioned that often the mother of the husband is jealous. This is confirmed during many informal conversations: the mother-in-law tries to defame her daughter-in-law by speaking ill of her to her son. This is more common when the son lives on the compound or in the same house as his parents, but even when the couple live separately this seems to happen a lot.

When asked about the communication between the spouses, husband B said that in the old Rwanda it was not that common to communicate freely, as women were supposed to obey their husbands. He observed that this is changing today, but "still many men talk to their friends first". Husband D also stated that at present educated spouses communicate with each other, "although most men talk with people they trust". In the past, according to couple A, the *umuranga* would enforce communication in case of problems. Couple A stated that they also believe that things are changing, as the society is changing; couples live apart from their families, so they are obliged to talk together. They observed that lack of communication is a reason for the breakdown of many marriages.

When asked if people face problems in the field of sexuality, couple A stated that there is a lack of knowledge, which causes unhappiness in many marriages. Couple C believed that many backsliders from the Church have extra-marital affairs. Couple A stated, along with husband B, that especially in the North polygamy and wife-sharing are still happening, although the custom is disappearing.

None of the interviewed couples believed that divorce is allowed: even when one of the two commits adultery the couple should stay together, as marriage is “till death”. Husband B explained that after a divorce a Christian couple is considered as pagans. In the case of adultery the betrayed partner should “be patient”, *kwihangana*. Couple C shared this opinion, and husband C even added: “When he believes that it is enough, he will come back”. However, husband D adjusted his former opinion and stated that a couple should be able to divorce “if the adulterer is caught in the very act”.

Spontaneously all four couples rendered “poverty” as one of the main problems, when asked which other marital problems they observed around them. All husbands explained that Rwandan people are not used to being open about their salary, nor do they make an agreement on how to spend their money, in case one of the spouses or both earn a salary. According to all four of them the different views on how to spend the shared or individual money causes problems within the family, especially when the family is poor. This brings many conflicts and causes divorce. Poverty causes problems anyway, stated husband C, especially if the couple has to work hard for a meagre living, and more if one of the spouses was brought up in different circumstances. When visitors or family members arrive (and stay), the lack of finances collides with the duty of hospitality, and this also causes problems and arguments between the spouses.

Among the other problems they observed, the couples mentioned infertility. Both husband C and D stated that infertility is a reason for men to have extramarital relationships, or even, as husband D mentioned, a second marriage. Husband D mentioned other very cultural problems like extreme jealousy and witchcraft. He stated that especially women use witchcraft to manipulate their husbands. According to husband D, some are even witches themselves, which would be another ground for divorce. Another local problem of post-genocide Rwanda is inter-tribal relationships. Husband B stated that sometimes couples decide to marry against the will of the family, which causes problems afterwards. Husband C mentioned another problem, which is confirmed by informal conversations: different views on hygiene. The latter

has to be explained against the background of the rapidly changing and developing society of Rwanda⁷⁷.

Although the couples were aware of many problems in their own marriages or around them, they stated that the Church offers little guidance. Only couple D answered that in their Church there is a person who follows up after the wedding. When asked what solution this person offers in case of problems, it is mentioned that “in all problems the person should be patient and endure, *kwihangana*, and wait upon God”. Couple A explained that this is Rwandan culture, as it is believed that people will take advantage of you and pass on confidential information if you share your problems with others.

All four couples said that there is no proper marriage counselling available in their churches. All couples agreed that there is a huge need for marital counselling, because there are many couples with problems. However, according to the four couples, there is no manpower, nor time nor vision either to counsel people or to visit them at their homes. Both husbands A and B observed that the pastors are not able to provide counselling, as many of them face problems within their own families.

Based on their own experience and observations the couples would like to advise new couples regarding many things. Couples A and B underlined the need to know each other and the mutual families well before marriage. Young couples should focus on love and mutual understanding, and not on materialism. Husband A stated that many young people, but especially young men, hide things from their past, which can have bad consequences for a healthy relationship within marriage. Wife A stressed that good communication, even before marriage, is important, and that people should learn to share their problems and hurt. Husband B added that couples should keep their virginity till the wedding day. Couples C and D emphasized the difference a

⁷⁷It is not clear whether husband C meant different views on corporal hygiene (for instance one of the two not washing well) or different standards on domestic cleanliness. The topic of hygiene was also mentioned in another context by Gatera in the interviews with the senior church leaders (in 4.2.4). He specifically mentioned the example of a husband, working in the city, while his wife, financially dependent on him and still living in rural circumstances. It is observed that sometimes these women are living without any luxury, working in their house and on their land, raising the children, and this all without access to water and electricity. The husband sometimes works in the city in a totally different situation, where these last few years standards are changing, also due to access to relatively new products as deodorant and perfume.

Christian marriage makes compared to non-Christian couples around them (drunkenness, extra-marital affairs etc.). It is therefore necessary to persevere in prayer and faith, and be patient and endure, *kwihangana*, in times of problems, as both husbands C and D stated. Husband B concluded with the statement that the Church definitely needed a Revival, because true Christians would make a difference in their own marriage and in the lives of the people around them.

In this section 4.4 a description has been given of how four couples within the Anglican Church experienced marriage, the wedding and its preparations, and how they received teaching and counselling in their churches. In chapter 5 the findings of this chapter, how marriage is thought through, taught and practiced, will be discussed further and compared with the findings from the literature in chapter 3.

Chapter 5 Analysis of findings

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 4 the way marriage is considered, taught and practiced within the Anglican Church of Rwanda (Diocese of Kigali) was described based on the author's research. The research incorporated interviews with the senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali and four couples.

In 5.3 the findings of these interviews with the senior leaders, the pastors and the four couples will be studied further. As explained in chapter 1, three main questions on marriage within the Anglican Church of Rwanda are being investigated in this thesis, concerning Biblical concepts, traditional ceremonies and marital counselling. The questions were as follows: 1) What is the view of the Church on marriage and which Biblical concepts does the Church teach? 2) What is the view and attitude of the Church towards traditional wedding ceremonies? 3) How does the Church prepare people for marriage, and does the Church offer marital counselling? These questions are the guidelines for paragraphs 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3, respectively, and will be used to analyze the results of the research. After the first time, the names of the three senior leaders will be mentioned without any further reference. In 5.4 the findings of the interviews will be compared with the information from the literature in chapter 3. First, however, in 5.2 some limitations to the research will be set forth.

5.2 Limitations to the research

As mentioned in earlier chapters, there is a lack of material on Rwandan marriage in general, and different reasons have been given. In 4.2.1 the possible reasons for the lack of literature from and about the Anglican Church in Rwanda were mentioned. Because of this lack of written resources, the research methodology described in chapter 4 using different kinds of written and oral interviews was chosen. The lack of modern literature on Rwandan marriage customs and of literature in the Anglican

Church, were, however, not the only limitations faced during the research. The different types of interviews caused some difficulties themselves.

Because of the lack of literature on the view of the Anglican Church on marriage oral individual interviews with three senior leaders within the Anglican Church were carried out. These interviews with the senior church leaders took place to obtain information concerning the view and the official position of the Anglican Church on marriage, and its view on the traditional ceremonies (see 4.2). Their answers provided a source of information, but it was difficult to draw conclusions, as sometimes their responses were divergent, maybe due to their different positions within the church hierarchy and due to their differing experience and opinions on certain concepts.

Before the interviews (through questionnaires) with the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali were held, those interviews were expected to be the main source of information. Four couples were selected for in-depth interviews. These couples were recommended by their pastors, as being committed Christians, members of the Anglican Church, having married within the Anglican Church, and available and willing to give an interview. These interviews were planned to verify whether what the pastors had described was their actual experience. This was the reason why only four couples were selected, and not more. However, the information gathered from the pastors' questionnaires, though unique and important, was less useful than expected.

It was very difficult to assess the data from the questionnaires. It was difficult to produce graphs, and therefore few graphs were used to tabulate the data. Although the information from the questionnaires in itself seemed to be a wealth of knowledge, it was not clear if the answers fully reflected the pastors' practice. Several of the hindrances that were faced will be described further.

The questionnaire used to interview the pastors was written in Kinyarwanda, to be able to interview many of them at the same time. The concept of a questionnaire instead of an in-depth interview had, however, disadvantages. Sometimes it was not clear what the pastors' responses meant, as when they gave indistinct answers or when they only answered with "yes" when they were asked to confirm and explain if and how they were actively involved in a certain ceremony.

Because of their low level or lack of education many pastors struggled with the questionnaire. It took some pastors literally hours to finish the first few pages only. Many of them, mainly those who did not finish primary school, appeared to have difficulty with the reading but especially with the writing. Instead of explaining their view, some pastors quoted some Bible texts. Moreover, it was evident that they had no experience with answering questions on paper, especially open questions. Their more educated colleagues had to intervene explaining the questions over and over. And even some of those had difficulty with questions that required self-reflection. Most pastors had difficulty especially with evaluative questions about their own role.

Many pastors apparently took the questionnaire as an exam and gave socially desired answers when asked about their work, and it is therefore difficult to assess to what degree their answers really reflect their practice. It is difficult to assess whether they were likely to underreport, for instance in the case of occurrence and involvement in ceremonies or concepts that are not well regarded, or to overreport, for instance the data (frequency and methods) they gave about premarital counselling.

Another difficulty was the Kinyarwanda itself. The Rwandan culture and the language are changing, and since many cultural traditions are changing or disappearing, some Kinyarwanda terms had to be explained to the pastors in Kinyarwanda⁷⁸. Therefore I

⁷⁸Words can either be wrongly translated, or used in the wrong context; the meaning of a word can change over time, or the meaning of the English translation can be unclear for the translator. One example of a word that caused problems was *kurambagiza*, and its translation “betrothal”. The literal translation is “to spy” (see 3.2.2) and the term was originally used to designate the action of the *umuranga* to investigate the suitability of the young woman and her family during the process of *kuranga* (searching). Often the young man’s family would ask the *umuranga* to start the search for a young woman, but sometimes the young man himself would take the initiative and inform his family that he was interested in a certain young lady, after which the *umuranga* would be asked to start the process of *kurambagiza*: to visit her family to test their and her suitability. During the interviews one couple used the term *kurambagiza* correctly, in the original sense in the context of “searching”. The translator however translated the word wrongly with “betrothal”. During the interview with the second couple the term *kurambagiza*, was again translated as “betrothal”. However, this couple used the term *kurambagiza* as “the first contact established by the young man and the young woman”. This husband explained that after the contact between the two was established, the young man would inform his family, who would appoint the *umuranga* to inform the young woman’s family that the young man was interested to marry their daughter. The third couple explained that they made the first contact themselves, that they decided to marry, and therefore they started the “betrothal” themselves. The English word “betrothal”, rightly used in this context, was the translation of the Kinyarwanda word *kurambagiza*, which was wrongly used in this context. Since these days the contact is mostly established by the couples themselves, the Kinyarwanda term *kurambagiza* is not appropriately used in this context. When in the interviews with the pastors the term *kurambagiza* was mentioned, the translator translated the word as “betrothal”, even when it was rendered as part of *kuranga*. There was one exception, when a pastor explained that *kurambagiza* meant “contacting each other” and specified that these days this was done by the

was sometimes not aware of the modern usage of certain words. For instance, people are openly invited for *gusaba* and *gukwa*, but Rwandans apparently do not talk easily about other ceremonies. Therefore I was not informed that *gutwikurura* these days often takes place on the day of the wedding, fulfilling the role of closure of the wedding. This was consequently not addressed in the questionnaire, which can explain why, for instance, I did not understand the low response on the occurrence of *gutinya*. Apart from the cultural usage of terms, information has most probably been lost in translating the questionnaires and the interviews from English into Kinyarwanda and vice versa.

Another important limitation to the research was the secrecy of the Rwandan culture in relation to my own background-- skin colour, gender and position in the Anglican Church. It is possible that people did not want to share with a *muzungu* woman about culturally sensitive topics and taboos, or topics that are considered as politically sensitive. Certain questions could not be asked, and most probably certain answers were not given. It is possible that people spoke the truth, but it is also possible that because of these “no-go zones” certain ceremonies or practices were only said to happen in the villages, in the North, outside the Church, or by pagans.

After the session with the pastors it was decided that more emphasis would be given to the oral in-depth interviews with the couples. Four couples from the Diocese of Kigali were chosen, two from the villages and two from the city of Kigali, to represent the geographic breadth of the Church. The method chosen was to use open questions so as to probe the facts from the literature and the issues raised in the interviews with the pastors, and to be able to understand, clarify, contradict or confirm the described concepts and practices.

These interviews with the four couples were very useful, but it is not clear whether they really shared what they knew and experienced. Apart from that, their answers do not prove that what they say is really the case, as, for instance, the couples sometimes contradicted themselves. Also it should be mentioned that only in the case of one couple, that had been living in Uganda, did the wife freely participate in the

couples themselves. The American term “dating” is often translated into Kinyarwanda by *kurambagiza*. Apparently the Kinyarwanda has no equivalent for this modern practice.

interview. In the other interviews, in conformity with the traditional Rwandan culture, it was mostly the husband who was the spokesman.

5.3 Findings from the interviews

5.3.1 *Analysis of the view on marriage and teachings of the Church*

From the interviews with the senior leaders of the Anglican Church (see 4.2), as well as from the interviews with the pastors and the four couples, it becomes clear that marriage is considered as very important.

However, the senior leaders said that neither the traditional customs, nor the Western, nor the Biblical practices were ever really thought through. As was explained in 4.2.1 there is a lack of written information about the Anglican view on marriage. And, despite the fact that all interviewed people recognized the importance of marriage, the Diocese of Kigali of the Anglican Church of Rwanda did not provide proper training on marriage for its pastors⁷⁹. The senior leaders confirmed that the pastors are not equipped for their task. Apart from that, there is a lack of Kinyarwanda literature on marriage to equip the pastors and their flock. The fact that all three senior leaders recognized this (see 4.2.4), could be considered as reassuring.

The research showed that marriage plays an important role in society. People generally go through three different legal systems: customary marriage, civil marriage and the Church wedding (see 4.2.2). Many traditional marriage customs are still being celebrated (see 5.3.2). As for the relation between the civil and the Church wedding, all senior leaders explained that the Anglican Church in Rwanda respects the legal status of a civil marriage. Couples who wish to be married in the Church must first carry out the civil marriage before the sector or district officials; the church wedding is in fact a service where God's blessing is invoked.

⁷⁹This is changing, as for pastors without any theological training it is now compulsory to receive training from the Department of Mission and Training of the Diocese of Kigali and therefore obtain at least a certificate level.

The interviews with the pastors showed, however, that they were not fully aware of the legal aspects and conditions of the Church wedding. According to Kolini (3 Oct. 2009, Kigali) the Church sets three conditions for the Church wedding: the civil wedding, mutual consent, and the requirements of the local Church. It is not clear whether these conditions have been communicated to the pastors. Two pastors thought, for instance, that the civil wedding was a mere recommendation. The pastors mentioned various different conditions to be married in the Church, but there was no real consensus. It is also not clear if the pastors are aware of the freedom to make their own local church rules, or whether they believe that these are the general requirements of all Anglican Churches in the Diocese. And it is also not clear whether the requirements of individual churches are justified and in line with general Church rules, insofar as these exist.

Apart from that, the Church has no official position on the existing traditional wedding ceremonies. The interviewed senior leaders have their own (sometimes differing) opinions, but all said that the traditional ceremonies are very important, as they affirm the involvement of the family. However, the Church does not provide a code of conduct, nor does the Church prescribe the role of the pastors in these ceremonies (see 5.3.2).

The research showed that the Church did not provide rules or clear guidelines for officiating at Church weddings. The interviews showed that the pastors have little knowledge about the essentials of the Church wedding. According to Kolini, there is freedom, provided that certain essentials as the use of the Book of Common Prayer, the vows, the blessing and the exchange of the rings are respected. But, when the pastors were asked about the essence of a Christian wedding many of them were very vague and mentioned side or external issues. Only five pastors mentioned the blessing as characteristic for a Christian wedding, and not one pastor mentioned the vows. Although they stated that they use the Bible or the Book of Common Prayer, most of them could not specify what they preach about during the wedding service.

The research seemed to indicate that the pastors and couples are not very aware of the importance of the Church wedding. It was remarkable that the pastors offered few

facts about the wedding service in the Church, especially when compared to the information they are able to deliver about the traditional cultural customs. Few pastors seemed to consider the Church service as very central or essential in the whole wedding process. The account of the four interviewed couples confirmed that the Church wedding is not seen as a central element in the whole process. Although all four of them celebrated the Church wedding, and not, in contrast with their parents, the traditional *gushyingirwa*, none of them gave any details about the Church wedding itself. The Church wedding was merely mentioned in the range of other festivities during the wedding day.

The research showed that the pastors did not receive proper guidelines on what is expected from them during the Church wedding. The pastors were very vague when asked about their own role and involvement in the Church wedding. It is possible that they have difficulty with self-reflection. In general the pastors were positive about their own role in the whole wedding process, although many of them recognized that they need more education and material to fulfil their role as it should be. One of the senior leaders said that pastors are just told to “do their best”: to use their Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and above all their common sense. This is confirmed by the answers from the pastors: most of them state explicitly that they lack skills, knowledge and material about marriage, the wedding and marriage counselling. Several pastors also asked about church policy and guidelines.

The research showed both the pastors’ and the couples’ lack of knowledge about Christian marriage. The interviews with the pastors confirmed that their knowledge of Biblical truths about marriage is very limited, as was described in 4.3. Many pastors were not able to put their view and knowledge into words and their answers were varied, vague and/or indistinct. When asked what they teach on certain Biblical concepts, most of the pastors wrote some Bible texts, but these were limited in number, and they were not able to explain these texts (see 4.3.2). For instance, when asked what they teach on the “institution of marriage” most (30 of the 32) respondents gave Genesis 2: 18-24 (or part of it). Apart from that, the answers of the pastors were more culturally than Biblically oriented. For example, when asked what they teach about “sexuality”, 9 of the 32 pastors who responded just wrote: “They should not

deprive one another”, while 23 of the 32 respondents mentioned I Corinthians 7, or part of it, with or without explanation; 8 of the pastors who added an explanation said: “They have to obey sexuality”. Another example, when asked about “the role and position of husband and wife”, although many gave the text of Ephesians 5: 22-33, their answers were very vague and varied. It seems from the research that they did not understand the Biblical implications of the few texts they mentioned, but that instead they used these texts to ground their own cultural, often androcentric, view. The interviews with the four couples showed likewise that none of them could mention any Bible texts or Biblical truths they had been taught.

From the research it seems, therefore, that the content of the pastors’ teachings is not Biblically but culturally founded. But, although the pastors confirmed that they teach on certain topics (such as communication within marriage, conflicts within the family, relationship with the parents, relationship with the extended family, sexuality within marriage and the spiritual life of the couple), this does not prove that they indeed do teach about these topics. Neither does this information necessarily reflect the content of the teachings the pastors are said to give to their couples: it seems more likely that their answers depict their opinion (see figure 2- 8). This was confirmed by the interviews with the couples, who gave a meagre image as well. One couple did not receive any counselling before the wedding. The three other couples received a certain amount of talks about general social issues, family life, etc. (see 5.3.3). Most topics mentioned above were not addressed at all.

Although, according to the research, the teachings seemed to have a cultural orientation, many disappearing cultural issues and customs were not addressed explicitly (see 5.3.3). The research showed also that the Church did not speak out concerning traditional or foreign cultural practices that have been introduced into the Church, although the senior leaders have their own opinions on the subject. Some pastors, however, seem to be confused and are not able to distinguish between foreign, traditional Rwandan or Christian practices. On the one hand, foreign items that were introduced into the Church wedding service, such as flowers, wedding gown and wedding ring, were often mentioned as being Christian practices. On the other hand, cultural concepts and practices such as the *inkwano*, male domination (i.e.

focus on female obedience), and regulations on the relationship with in-laws and extended family were also explained as being Christian.

The research showed that the Church did not prescribe rules about (the teachings on) marriage, about marriage counselling, or about Church discipline. No official Church position has been communicated on certain specific issues (such as adultery, divorce, premarital pregnancies), and even among the interviewed senior leaders there is no clarity or consensus on these concepts (see also 5.3.3).

In the above paragraphs the view, concepts and teaching on marriage of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (Diocese of Kigali) have been described briefly, by comparing the results of the interviews with the senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali and the four couples. The following section will make use of the same interviews to describe the occurrence of the traditional wedding ceremonies and the involvement of the Church.

5.3.2 Analysis of the traditional ceremonies and the involvement of the Church

In the preceding paragraph has been shown that there is no written material available on the subject of marriage in the Anglican Church of Rwanda. The research showed as well that, although the interviewed senior leaders have their own (sometimes differing) opinions, the Church has no official position on the existing traditional wedding ceremonies. The Church does not present rules for the involvement of the pastors in these ceremonies, and neither sanctions nor condemns practices that have been abolished over time.

The research showed the current existence of many traditional ceremonies. From the senior leaders, both Gatera (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) and Twahirwa (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) mentioned only the ceremonies of *gufata irembo*, *gusaba* and *gukwa* as still practiced remnants of customary marriage. The pastors, however, recognized many more ceremonies (see 5.3 and fig. 8); they even added to the list that was presented to them and shared that there is a wide variation in the way people carry out the various ceremonies. Most of them wrote that the ceremonies of *kuranga*, *gufata irembo*,

gusaba, *gukwa*, *gutebutsa*, *gushyingirwa*, *gutinya* and *gutwikurura* (see 3.2 for a description of these ceremonies) in one or another way, are still being celebrated by most people in their communities these days.

From the explanation of the pastors, however, it could be concluded that several ceremonies, such as *kuranga* and *gutinya*⁸⁰, do not take place in the same way as in the past. Further, the official wedding day *gushyingirwa* had apparently been interpreted by most of the pastors as the modern wedding day *ubukwe*. Many of them confirmed that the traditional wedding day *gushyingirwa* has been replaced by the Church wedding during the present wedding day *ubukwe*.

In general, most pastors stated that the ceremonies of *gushyingirwa* (see 4.4.3 and fig. 9) are considered as pagan and therefore not celebrated anymore. It is difficult to grasp their knowledge and the current day existence of these ceremonies. It is not clear from the questionnaire whether pastors underreported or gave socially desired answers. Three of the four couples showed extreme reluctance when they were asked about these rituals, and were either vague or evasive when asked whether these rituals were still being celebrated. This ambiguity and vagueness about *gushyingirwa* seems to be a pattern during personal conversations and the interviews. Only the couple who had lived in Uganda was willing to explain why they thought the Church had rejected these customs, more specifically the custom of *gukirana* (see 4.4.3).

Neither from the interviews with the pastors, nor from the interviews with the four couples can it be ascertained whether they really share what they know and have experienced. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the rituals of *gushyingirwa* are not being celebrated by most people. Some pastors, however, explaining how certain ceremonies have been replaced by Christian concepts and ceremonies, used

⁸⁰By the time the questionnaire was made I was not aware that these days the *gutwikurura* often takes place on the evening of the wedding or the day after. People invite others for *gusaba no gukwa* and for the Church wedding, but apparently not for *gutwikurura* (at least no strangers), and they do not talk openly about this ceremony. This might explain why the opinions about *gutinya* were divided: 20 pastors wrote that it still takes place, 13 pastors denied that, while 2 pastors did not answer or did not know.

examples that suggested that they did not fully understand the traditional nor the Christian concepts⁸¹.

Neither Twahirwa nor Gatera knew which rituals had been abolished and why. They supposed that the Church considered them as incompatible with a Christian lifestyle. According to Twahirwa in the past people linked some rituals with the abuse of alcohol, and others labelled some ceremonies as “satanic”, which could be the reason why these rituals were abolished. On the other hand, Kolini regretted that certain old customs have been abolished or forgotten and would like to reintroduce some valuable traditional ideas.

About the involvement of the Church in these traditional ceremonies, the research seemed to indicate that there is a discrepancy between theory and practice at the different hierarchical levels. The senior leaders consider the traditional ceremonies as important, because they affirm the involvement of the family. Therefore the involvement of the pastors is recommended, although all three senior leaders shared the opinion that the Church should not take the place of the family.

However, this seemed to be their personal opinion, and this view was not officially communicated to the pastors. Accordingly, the pastors’ questionnaires showed that many pastors seemed to be very involved in the traditional wedding ceremonies (see 4.3.3 and fig 10). They mostly assist as a common visitor, although they often participate as Church representative, and are asked to pray or preach. This happens especially in the ceremonies of *gufata irembo*, *gusaba* and *gukwa*-- in particular *gusaba* is a ceremony to which all pastors, if invited, assist. And although all three senior leaders said that the Church should not take the place of the family in the traditional ceremonies, one third of the pastors said that they are regularly asked to act as family representative; when the pastor is asked to represent either of the two families, he is supposed to assist at all ceremonies.

⁸¹For instance several pastors stated that *guca hagati* has been replaced by the handing over of the bride to the groom in the Church; different pastors mentioned that the rituals around the *umwishywa* were replaced by Christian ceremonies and symbols, such as the ring. One pastor even mentioned the wedding gown and the flowers as Christian symbols that had replaced cultural practices.

However, it appeared from the research that some ceremonies are changing in character, and that the involvement of the Church differs per ceremony and maybe per family. Although one third of the pastors said they regularly assist as family representatives, 12 of the 33 pastors who responded stated that they are not invited to the ceremony of *gutebutsa*, because this is considered as a family matter. Some pastors (8 of the 34 who responded) even reported that they are involved in *gutinya*, although it is not clear what they really mean⁸². It is possible that they visit the couple during the first weeks of their marriage, which shows that the traditional *gutinya* (i.e. strict seclusion) is not being observed anymore. But also at the ceremony of *gutwikurura*, although these days celebrated in a different way from the past, many pastors (29 of the 34 who responded) said they assist. Several pastors even stated that this ceremony is organized and led by the Church.

The interviews with the four couples revealed that indeed the traditional ceremonies, other than *gushyingirwa*, were very often observed. Although none of the four couples observed the traditional custom of *kuranga*, since they established the first contact themselves, they went through many of the other traditional ceremonies. However, in contrast with what the pastors indicated, the couples stated that the Church was not involved in most of these stages, as some ceremonies were considered as family matters. Only in the case of the marriage between two orphans was the Church very involved in the organization of the whole wedding process from the early stage on. The step of betrothal (they wrongly used the term *kurambagiza*) was mentioned as an example: this couple informed the Church leaders, and only later was the remaining family informed. The other three couples did not even invite Church representatives as such to the ceremony of *gufata irembo*, for instance. According to the couples, Church representatives are only present if invited to *gusaba*, and then only in the capacity of family members, friends or colleagues.

The other ceremonies were also celebrated within the circle of the family. One couple had a *gutinya* period of one day, while the other couples observed a longer period (of either two/three days, two weeks, or one month). The *gutwikurura* ceremony took

⁸²The fact that these days *gutwikurura* often takes place on the evening of the wedding annuls the need for *gutinya*.

place afterwards, and the couples confirmed that these days this often happens on the wedding day itself. One husband mentioned that during their ceremony to officially close the wedding process Christians were present and a Christian ceremony was held with songs and prayers. But even though Christians were present as visitors, the traditional wedding ceremonies of the couples were led by the families (except of course in the case of the marriage between two orphans).

Therefore, observing the involvement of the Church in the wedding process, there are certain discrepancies between the answers of the senior leaders, the pastors and the experiences of the couples. Although the senior leaders stated that the Church should be involved, but not act as family representatives, from the pastors it appeared that they are very much involved, and not only as visitors, but also as Church representatives, and even upholding the role of family representative. However, the results of the interviews with the four couples showed that the Church was not involved in many of the different stages. Four couples is a small number from which to draw conclusions, but it is possible that, although we cannot discard the case of overreporting and socially desired answers on the part of the pastors, the involvement of the pastors is a recent phenomenon, not recognizable in the literature or in the interviews with the four couples.

It appears that it is the individual choice of the families involved, which traditional ceremonies are celebrated and which are not. It seems also that it depends on the couple and the family to decide to involve the Church leaders in the different traditional ceremonies. The pastors seem to “go with the flow”: it appears that the decisions and responsibilities they take are not thought through very well, and at least only partly Biblically based.

5.3.3 Analysis of marital counselling and the role of the Church

As was mentioned in 5.3.1 the three senior leaders recognized that the pastors are not well equipped to teach on marriage nor to give counselling. There is little training, and there are no materials available. As was mentioned, a considerable number of

pastors received non-formal education (71 %). They received some teaching on marriage before ordination, especially on the officiating of the Church wedding and the “procession” during the wedding service. Questions about marital counselling, for instance, or various problems can be discussed during this short course, but this happens only on the initiative of the pastors, according to Twahirwa (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali). The official view on concepts like adultery, divorce, and premarital pregnancies, insofar as there is one, has not clearly been communicated to the pastors. The procedure to follow in these cases has not been made clear either. The pastors are supposed to find things out in practice.

The senior leaders recognized that premarital counselling is not taken seriously enough. Gatera (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) emphasized that the Church did not offer an alternative for the African custom of the past where girls and boys were prepared for marriage by their aunts and uncles, respectively. And, although most pastors answered that, yes, they prepare couples for marriage, it cannot be deducted from these interviews that they indeed do give premarital counselling. The same applies for the frequency of the premarital counselling: some pastors stated that they meet many times, while others declared that they meet a few times before the wedding. If we compare the answers of the pastors with the interviews of the couples the following can be noticed. One couple did not receive any teaching on marriage at all, neither during sermons in the Church, nor during their preparation for marriage. The other three couples received some premarital teaching from the Church, which started just before the wedding, after the *gusaba* ceremony.

As was mentioned earlier (in 4.3.2 and 5.2.1) the pastors were asked whether they teach on certain topics, and thereafter what exactly they teach about these topics. Many of them answered positively, and shared what they teach about topics such as communication, conflicts within the family, relationship with the parents and the extended family, sexuality and the spiritual life of the couple (see figure 12). But it cannot be deduced from these interviews whether they really do teach about these topics. The content of the teachings the pastors claim to teach seemed to be very culturally oriented. The three couples that received premarital counselling said that this consisted of a series of talks about general social issues, family life etc. Their

description confirmed the cultural character of these teachings. For instance, when asked whether the pastor spoke about sexuality, one husband shared the quotation “Do not deprive one another,” and added that the pastor taught that sexuality was meant for reproduction, which was confirmed by another husband. Only one husband said that he was taught that sexuality has a twofold purpose: to show affection and for reproduction. Pastors were reported to teach from general daily experiences, and not from the Bible.

Moreover, when the pastors were asked through more open questions how they prepared couples for marriage and what they teach about concepts such as the role of husband and wife, and the place of God in a marriage, their answers were very vague, superficial and not Biblically oriented. The pastors offered some general information, but these could be socially desired answers. Thus there is reason to cast doubt upon their earlier assertion that they indeed teach about the mentioned topic, except the topic of “extended family”.

When asked through open questions, most pastors stated that they talk about family life and about the extended family during the wedding preparations, as many problems in marriage are related to this topic. This is confirmed by the interviews with the couples. The three couples that received some premarital counselling confirmed that this had mainly a social, and not a Biblical content. General topics such as family life and conflicts were treated, and none of them could mention any Bible texts that had been used. Only one couple said that the pastor used “his own experience and Bible texts”, but did not specify. It seems that the premarital teachings of the couples did not consist in explanation of the Biblical principles of a Christian marriage. In all cases, either when asked about what people teach (the pastors), or about what people have been taught (the pastors and the couples), there is no clear Biblical message.

Although, according to the research, the teachings seemed to have a cultural orientation, many disappearing cultural issues were not addressed explicitly. For instance, from the interviews with the four couples it can be concluded that the Church taught them that marriage is meant for one man with one woman, which can

be interpreted as an implicit reaction on the traditional customs. The Church did however not explicitly address the subject of cultural practices such as polygamy and wife-sharing that have been abandoned by the Church, although all four couples mentioned that these practices disappeared because of “civilization and evangelization”. In another example, although one husband stated that his pastor taught that a Christian husband is not allowed to reject his newly married wife if he realizes that she did not go through the *gukuna* rituals, from his answer it seemed that the Church did not express itself on the custom of *gukuna* itself.

The interviewed senior leaders recognized that marital counselling-- apart from the premarital counselling already discussed-- does not take place in an organized way either. However, all three realized that many married people in the churches face various problems. All senior leaders mentioned different examples of problems, mainly related to what could be called a clash between three cultures: traditional Rwandan, modern Western and Christian culture. One example would be the traditional concept of the extended family; in many cases this is a blessing to the spouses, but these days it also causes stress and friction as people in a developing society are faced with their own and other people’s demands and convictions.

Another example of this cultural clash is the changing role and position of husband and wife. On the one hand, as the society changes from an agricultural to a developing urban society, insecurity and conflicts can result, while on the other hand the traditional focus on the wife’s unconditional obedience to her husband is being explained as a Biblical concept.

The couples confirmed the existence of four “problem fields” in marriages: the *inkwano*, the extended family, communications and sexuality. They were asked if they received any premarital teaching on how to handle these problems.

Two couples stated that they did not receive any teaching on the dowry. They explained that this was considered as a cultural issue, in which the Church did not interfere. The two other couples, although they did not receive any specific teaching on this topic, were taught by the Church that the *inkwano* was not a bride price, and that people should not overcharge. Since these two couples married more recently

than the first two couples, it is possible that the Church was reacting on the recent phenomenon of raising “prices”, for instance, and of people cohabiting without being married.

About the extended family, in contrast to the pastors’ answers, the four interviewed couples did not receive any teaching on this subject, and one husband even stated that this was considered the responsibility of the civil administration. One couple explained that in the past couples would know each other and each other’s families well, which prevented problems within marriage. On the other hand, most problems in marriage are caused by relatives; but people these days do not know how to manage these problems. This ambiguous attitude towards the extended family was also shared by Gatera.

The couples were not taught about communication between the spouses either, but more in general about respect and conflicts. In the past obedience was the rule, and spouses did not communicate directly, but through family members. These days, according to one couple, the lack of communication is the main reason for the breakdown of marriages.

During the preparation for marriage of three couples the subject of “sexuality” was just touched on; the other couple stated that nobody in the Church ever talked about sexuality. However, these teachings had a very cultural character, although the couples stated that many people are having problems in this field (lack of knowledge, extramarital affairs, etc.).

All four couples believed that the Church should teach explicitly about these four topics, as they cause many problems within relationships. And all four couples spontaneously mentioned other problems, such as poverty, which causes friction in marriages. All husbands added that a related problem in Rwanda is that couples do not share about their financial situation. Other specific cultural problems were mentioned (see 4.4.4) and it was observed that overall, the Church does not offer the necessary guidance and counselling, other than advising people to *kwihangana*. The one husband who answered that their Church offered follow-up teaching after the wedding, added that the only advice in case of problems is to *kwihangana*. Another

husband, after confirming the need for counselling, observed that even in the Church there is no vision, no manpower, and that the pastors are not well equipped or trained, or not able to help others because they have problems themselves.

Gatera and Twahirwa confirmed the existence of many problems. Among these were premarital pregnancies and divorce. They recognized the problem of premarital pregnancies, but they were not very sure why these are more common than before, although they gave various possible reasons. The rules of how to act in case of premarital pregnancies have not been clearly communicated to the pastors. About divorce there is no real consensus among the three senior leaders. The pastors said that they teach that marriage is for life (some even stated “for eternity”). The interviews with the four couples revealed also that they are taught that marriage is for life, and that divorce is not allowed in principle, not even in case of adultery. Twahirwa and Gatera more or less shared the opinion of the pastors, although they mentioned certain rules of discipline of the Church. Kolini, however, mentioned the existence of “7 reasons for divorce” within the Anglican Church. The procedure of how to deal with adultery is not clear, except in the case of adultery of a pastor, when there does seem to be a certain procedure.

Finally, only Gatera and one of the interviewed pastors mentioned the problem of physical violence within the family, and more specifically the phenomenon of gender based violence, although this is a serious and very real problem in Rwanda⁸³. This topic was not addressed directly in the questions of either of the interviews, and therefore no conclusions can be drawn, but it is remarkable that no other respondents mentioned this topic spontaneously. It is not clear why this was so: whether this topic is taboo, or whether domestic violence is considered as an accepted phenomenon in Rwandan society and the Anglican Church.

In this section the view, concepts and teaching on marriage of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (Diocese of Kigali) have been described briefly, and the results of the interviews with the senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali, and four married couples have been compared with one another. The current existence of

⁸³The Rwandan government is addressing this problem through a national campaign.

traditional wedding ceremonies and the involvement of the Church have been analyzed. All interviewed (the senior leaders, the pastors and the four couples) agreed on the fact that the Church falls short in teaching on marriage and marital counselling, and that there are many problems. The following section (5.4) will compare these results of the interviews with the information from the existing literature on Rwandan marriage as described in chapter 3.

5.4 Comparison of the literature with the interviews

5.4.1 *Introduction*

In chapter 3 a description was given of the traditional Rwandan marriage customs, based on the available literature mainly dated from the fifties and sixties. In this literature it was observed that Rwandan marriage customs were already changing. Later, in 1984, Ndekezi (1984:97) wrote a book based on research among senior people to learn about marriage traditions in former times, before foreign customs influenced the Rwandan customs. Although he asserted that these ceremonies were generally celebrated, he did not clearly describe which ceremonies were still being celebrated by younger people and which ceremonies had been abolished by the time he wrote his book. In the literature of the fifties and sixties it was not really mentioned which marriage ceremonies were changing or disappearing, and why, and it was also not clear which role the Church played in all this. There was therefore a time and information gap where no literature had been published on traditional marriage customs in Rwanda⁸⁴, while there was no literature at all about marriage in the Anglican Church.

The gap between the findings of the literary research and the current situation is bridged somewhat by the interviews with the four couples. They based their information on their own experience during a certain number of years of marriage (two couples married in the seventies, one couple in the late eighties and one couple in the new millennium). Several times the couples stated explicitly that their own experience

⁸⁴The few books that had been written on this subject made mostly use of the literature from the fifties and sixties.

differs from the actual procedures of modern couples. To be able to ascertain whether the data from the literature differ from the current practice in the Anglican Church (Diocese of Kigali), the paragraphs below will attempt to describe the similarities and differences between the literature and the findings of the interviews with senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali and four couples within the Anglican Church. Section 5.4.2 will focus on several Rwandan marriage concepts, while in 5.4.3 the literature about the different wedding ceremonies will be compared with the findings from the interviews.

5.4.2 *Certain traditional marriage concepts, compared with current practice*

The traditional view on marriage, as described in the literature (see 3.2.1), and the modern concept of marriage seem to differ after superficial observation. But although some concepts have been changed, other views still prevail. In this section some traditional marriage concepts will be compared with the findings from the interviews and the current practices.

The first concept to be discussed is marriage as a *rite de passage*. The literature indicates (see 3.2.1) that in the past marriage was in fact a rite of passage; more specifically, the transition from childhood to adulthood was made during the *kurongora* rite (Kagame 1954:154). Some rituals were only accessible for adults, i.e. married people (Bourgeois 1954:246). However, since these days a person officially becomes adult at the age of 21 years, the modern wedding ceremony has in effect lost the important meaning of *rite de passage* it had in the past. But now when a person reaches the age of 21, there are no modern rites to celebrate the transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, the research showed that Rwandans put great emphasis on their wedding rituals, and apparently the wedding ceremonies still form an important transition to adulthood in the perception of many people. For instance, in the contemporary language people will still address an unmarried woman, no matter what her age is, as an *umukobwa*, a girl. It is possible that, although there is no alternative for the *kurongora* rite, the wedding day itself still functions as *rite de passage* from childhood to adulthood in the perception of the Rwandan people.

However, if the wedding day *ubukwe* is considered as a *rite de passage* from childhood to adulthood, it is not clear which specific moment during the wedding day *ubukwe* might be considered as constituting this transition. The pastors and the four couples mentioned that the traditional *gushyingirwa* has been replaced by the Church wedding during the wedding day *ubukwe* (see 4.3.3). However, this is in contrast with the rest of the research, as none of the interviewed people seemed to consider the Church wedding ceremony as essential, as more emphasis was put on the traditional wedding ceremonies. In the questionnaire the pastors were rather vague when asked about the Church ceremony and the couples mentioned the Church wedding only in the range of other ceremonies. Apparently it is not the Church wedding itself that is seen as the essence of the transition to married life. It is possible that the entire wedding process is viewed as the rite of passage of today's practice. This includes all the different traditional ceremonies, culminating in the wedding day *ubukwe*, which finds its closure during the *gutwikurura* ritual in the evening-- which in the past marked the transition of the bride to the life of married women.

A second concept is the importance of the role of the family in the marriage process. The Rwandan marriage rites as described in the literature (Mulago 1991:64) emphasized the importance of family ties. Marriage was in reality a bond between two families, and the many wedding ceremonies and the corresponding presents were meant to help the two families to know each other well and to strengthen the bond between them. This was also considered as a safeguard for a good relationship between the spouses.

Today, the family ties between the two families are still considered as important. These days, however, many young people choose their partners themselves, and the family gets involved in a later stage, if at all. One reason could be the growing focus on individualism in society, mentioned by all senior leaders. Another reason could be that young men are more independent than in the past. The father of the young man was supposed to pay the *inkwano* to the bride's father (Ndekezi 1984:106-107), but these days many young men organize the payment themselves as they are more affluent than their parents.

A third concept is the role of choice criteria in planning a marriage. The literature indicates that young men decided to get married when they wanted to “*kubaka inzu*” (see 3.2.1), when they consider themselves ready to get married. Adriaenssens (1964) mentioned many positive (ch3) and negative (ch2) choice criteria for the suitability of the bride and her family (see 3.2.2). The interviews revealed some differences from the choice criteria described in the literature, although people still seem to follow certain patterns. For example, one interviewed husband mentioned that he decided to get married, and chose his bride to be. However, later he mentioned that between her and his family many marriages had taken place, so it seems that he not only chose an individual young woman, but also chose her family. Nonetheless, these days it is very difficult, if not impossible, to ask people directly about positive and negative choice criteria, more specifically about tribal matters (see 3.2.11). Only one couple mentioned spontaneously that tribal issues can cause problems between the families. Some people state that indeed tribal differences are still on young people’s minds (Kron 2010). Others say that it is more important whether a person belongs to a certain clan (Anonymous 1:2009), as it was in the past (Bourgeois 1954:122-127). However, this issue is not addressed in the Church; it is ignored or maybe even denied in the same way as it is in the rest of the society.

A fourth concept is the emphasis on procreation as the purpose of marriage. Life in the traditional Rwanda was considered as a continuum, and fertility was very important. The literature showed that the main goal of sexuality and marriage was procreation (Mbiti 1975:98-100). This was why marriage was held in such high esteem. People were eager to get married, and feared to remain single. It was mentioned (in 3.2.11.1) that some young women in rural areas preferred to be abducted than to remain single. The interviews with the couples indicate that their thinking about the purpose of marriage remains along the lines of traditional cultural practices. Two couples mentioned for instance that infertility can still be a reason for people to divorce or commit adultery. During wedding preparation pastors put more emphasis on family life in general than on Biblical principles.

A fifth concept is the emphasis on preparation for marriage during childhood and the role of the family in the marriage instructions. In Rwanda’s patrilineal system young

women saw it as their destiny to get married and provide off-spring for their husbands (Adriaenssens 1964:104). During childhood girls were prepared for their task and learned how to be good spouses, house wives and mothers. Young men were prepared for marriage, and for life in general, by their fathers and uncles.

Since so many gaps were left in families after the genocide and because of HIV-AIDS, this chain of passing on information has been broken. Gatera (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) mentioned that the Church took over the role of the family, but never offered an alternative for this preparation by aunts and uncles. One interviewed couple said that these days many couples lack knowledge about sexuality. But, especially in the case of orphans, the question arises about a general lack of knowledge of family life (and life in general) and not only about sexuality.

A sixth concept is the emphasis on sexuality. This includes how children are prepared for the sexual aspect of marriage, the purpose of sexual intercourse, and gender roles in marital sex. In general, the literature describes a strong emphasis on sexuality, and the many rituals and taboos which regulated life (Musabyimana 1999:192). Although all couples mentioned that certain rituals disappeared because “civilization and evangelization” it is not clear what is left of these rituals and taboos in modern Rwanda. The literature described that during childhood girls were prepared for marriage in general, but also for the sexual aspect of the relationship with their husband (Gasarabwé 1997). Girls were meticulously prepared how to please their husbands sexually, through the *gukuna* rituals (Bigirumwami 2004:129-136). Musabyimana mentioned that not having gone through these rituals was a reason for a husband to send his wife away, or to look for another wife (1999:35). According to the interviews on this aspect, only one couple mentioned that their pastor spoke about the *gukuna* rituals, but in an indirect way: newlywed husbands are urged not to send their wives away after having found out that they did not go through the *gukuna* rituals. The rituals of *gukuna*, as described in the literature, were not considered as homosexual practices (Erny 2005:258:262). Even when the girl would sleep with one of her friends, just before the wedding, and when they would prepare each other

sexually (Bigirumwami 2004:168) this was considered as mere preparation for the heterosexual relationship with her future husband (Musabyimana 1999:75-76)⁸⁵.

People do not talk openly about this topic; although on Christian radio programmes in Kinyarwanda this issue is touched implicitly, it is not addressed openly, and certainly not in English. It is therefore not clear what the view of Christians is, and what is left of the *gukuna* rituals, because the traditional custom was totally interwoven with the pagan religious concepts and worldview of those times.

Only one couple mentioned that the pastor taught them that sexuality has a twofold goal-- in addition to procreation, the sharing of affection. In general however, the emphasis in the literature on the duty of women to please their husbands carries over in today's practice. On different occasions the pastors mentioned the texts of I Corinthians 7 as basis for their view on sexuality, texts that can easily be abused. This was confirmed when different pastors, with or without mentioning this passage, presented the one-sided view that "women should not deprive their husbands". It is not clear to what degree the traditional concept of female (sexual) submission has been addressed properly. It was mentioned earlier that Martey (1991) warned about the danger of a male dominated interpretation of the Bible, which in many cases turns out to be a justification for repression of women.

A seventh concept is the importance of virginity. According to the literature, virginity of the future bride was considered as very important (Musabyimana 1999:55-57). Mothers would protect their daughters, and premarital pregnancies were regarded as extremely shameful. For the young men, however, the rules were different, as they were encouraged to experiment. It is not clear to what extent these ideas have changed, and what the Church has taught about it. Considering the many premarital pregnancies these days, and that many couples live together outside of marriage, the conclusion should be that this concept has changed, or at least is changing these

⁸⁵It was mentioned before that also sexual contact between young herdsmen was not considered as homosexual behaviour (Musabyimana 1999:161). This type of contact was not even considered as a taboo, as it was seen as "by default of"-relationships. However, after the genocide the overcrowded prisons presented a modern variation, and the reality cannot be denied that the phenomenon of homosexuality was and is present in Rwanda. However, often "others" are being blamed: for instance in the prisons mainly "genocidaires" are seen as culprits, while amongst the youth the Western influence is seen as evildoer (Rwembehho and Mutara 2008).

days. Some single women, especially after the genocide, decided to have children anyway (Quéméner and Bouvet 1999). By becoming single mothers they broke with the traditional rules and taboos. Regardless of whether the concept of the importance of virginity is changing or has changed, it is clear from the interviews with the senior leaders and the pastors that the issue of premarital pregnancies has not been addressed properly by the Church.

An eighth other concept is the role and meaning of the dowry (see also 3.3.2 and 5.4.3). The literature shows that it was traditionally the task of women to provide offspring for their husband's family. The *inkwano* (the dowry) played a special role in the wedding process. The *inkwano* was a symbolical gift and handed over to the father of the bride, who by accepting it acknowledged that his daughter would be handed over to the family of the young man, and that the children born out of that marriage would belong to the lineage of the young man's family (Adriaenssens 1964:47). It is not clear if the people these days are aware of this symbolical value of the *inkwano*, since the "prices" are rising, according to the four couples, and the words "bride price" are used literally.

The research showed that the increasing value of the dowry has changed its original meaning as symbolical token. Kagame (1954:182) and Bourgeois (1954:134) mentioned that people in the past chose different types of *inkwano* (different numbers of cows, goats, hoes, money and beer) according to the status, tribe and intentions of both families. Even *ubuntu* was considered as an honourable practice, which was confirmed by the four couples. However, Adriaenssens (1964:63) observed that in his time more and more people, Hutu and Tutsi, opted for an *inkwano* that consisted of cows, which was confirmed by the four couples. Adriaenssens believed that of old the *inkwano* had a symbolical value and had a fixed price, something that he considered as essential (1964:55). He and Kagame (1954:178) noticed that in their time people lost the symbolical value of the *inkwano* as many people started to count the dowry in money. All four couples confirmed that these days the concept of the symbolical value is getting lost (which they regret), that the "bride prices" are rising, and that on one hand rich people decide to give or ask exorbitantly high "prices", while on the other hand poor people decide to live together because they cannot afford the *inkwano*. For

that matter, Bigirumwami (2004) observed that in his time it was often more a question of lack of will than of impossibility when a young man said he could not afford an *inkwano*. Nonetheless, it seems that the concept of the *inkwano* itself has not been addressed directly in the Church.

A ninth concept is the view on adultery. In informal conversations and in the interviews people often complain about the Western influence in Rwandan society, as if the concept of adultery was introduced by foreigners. However, the literature confirmed that absolute marital fidelity was introduced as a Christian concept (Adriaenssens 1964:111). Adultery was quite common in the past, although there were strict rules and taboos (Musabyimana 1999:192). Certain adulterous relationships within the family and the society were allowed, others were strictly forbidden (Adriaenssens 1964:111-116). Women were seen as responsible for adultery, while men were allowed more scope, provided that it happened secretly and discreetly. In the literature it is mentioned that young women were told not to protest when for instance the brothers of their husband approached them sexually (Musabyimana 1999:76-77,124).

Today, according to the interviews, the pastors teach monogamy, but it is not clear if such old customs as that “a wife belongs to the family” are still being practiced these days. Only one pastor mentioned explicitly that he teaches people that this is wrong. The four couples mentioned that “evangelization and civilization” were the reason why certain traditional customs were abandoned. Still, women these days, encourage each other to *kwihangana* when they find out that their husbands are unfaithful, which is confirmed by the interviews with the couples. The Church policy on adultery has not clearly been communicated to the pastors, although there seem to be procedures in case a pastor commits adultery. The issues of adultery and the Church policies have not been addressed properly by the Church.

The tenth and last concept concerns the view on divorce. In the literature there was no consensus concerning the occurrence of divorce. For instance Ndekezi (1984:112-113) stated that it was a rare phenomenon, due to the many inquiries before the wedding which promoted a successful marriage. Others, like Adriaenssens

(1964:ch8), mentioned that it was quite common and that there were different types of divorce (see 3.2.11.2). However, compared to the rigid view of many pastors these days (no divorce allowed, not even in the case of adultery), the temporary separation *kwahukana*, described in the literature and mentioned by one pastor, was quite sympathetic, as through leaving the husband temporarily the parents and both families would be forced to intervene and resolve existing problems between the spouses in order to restore their marriage. If people would decide for a definitive divorce, the *inkwano* had to be paid back. This shows that the possibility of divorce was included when people married. As was mentioned earlier, the three senior leaders had no consensus about divorce, while most pastors stated that marriage is for life. The four interviewed couples also condemned divorce, even in the case of adultery (although one husband more or less changed his mind during the interview).

The traditional Rwandan marriage concepts as described in the literature have not been addressed in a suitable way by the Church. In 3.3.4 has been put forward that Van 't Spijker (1990:§5.2) believed that missionaries ignored the traditional customs, and failed to understand the importance of them for the Rwandans. It is clear especially from the interviews with the pastors and the four couples that many traditional concepts still prevail, even within the Anglican Church.

5.4.3 *Wedding ceremonies, literature compared with current practice*

The first impression is that many of the traditional ceremonies as described in the literature are still being celebrated these days, often in the same way as in the past. But, then again, several other ceremonies have disappeared or changed. Below we will consider the customs and ceremonies that have been described in chapter 3. They will be presented in the order in which they are normally celebrated. We will discuss the similarities and differences or discrepancies, according to the findings of the interviews.

Kuranga: The questionnaires and the interviews with the couples showed that the custom of *kuranga* (searching) does not take place in the same way as it did in the

past. Young people these days choose their own marriage partner; all the interviewed couples established the first contact themselves, which means that there is no *kuranga* anymore. Ndekezi (1984:110) was already observing this phenomenon and admonished young people about the danger of focussing on beauty and riches only. He believed the investigations into both families to be an investment in the relationship of the spouses. And although Kolini (3 Oct. 2009, Kigali) and Twahirwa (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) do not applaud a turn back to the past, they observed that the non-involvement of the family causes problems.

Kurambagiza: This term caused some confusion. As described in the literature, *kurambagiza* (lit. spying) was part of the process of *kuranga* (Kagame 1954:123). From the interviews with the pastors and the couples it appears that there is a separate step before the *gufata irembo* ceremony, where a visit is paid to the young girl's family to announce that the couple are interested in marriage. This visit was referred to by some of them as *kurambagiza* and explained as betrothal, while others described the ceremony of *gusaba* with the English word betrothal. It is possible that there is a confusion of terms, some people not knowing well the Kinyarwanda terms or ceremonies, others not knowing how to translate these. It is also possible that people do not know how to fit different modern steps (dating, acquaintance with the mutual families, engagement or betrothal) into the Kinyarwanda customs that they want to maintain. The conclusion should therefore be that the current use of both terms *kurambagiza* and betrothal, if referred to the visit paid to the young woman's family to announce the couple's wish to get married, is inadequate.

Gufata irembo: While, as mentioned in the literature (Erny 2005:227), in the past the future spouses were informed often only after the ceremony of *gufata irembo*, at present the approval of the couple is required. Moreover, they are the ones to inform the family that they want to get married, while in the past during *gufata irembo* only an agreement, and not a commitment was made. The character of this ceremony has therefore changed, and, if celebrated separately, serves maybe more the purpose of an engagement party.

Gusaba: The ceremony of *gusaba* is still being celebrated these days and considered as very important. These ceremonies of *gufata irembo*, *gusaba*, and *gukwa* are generally celebrated in a very traditional way, except that often in Christian families the traditional beer is replaced by sodas. The literature just describes these traditional ceremonies, but does not mention involvement of the Church. However, these days if pastors are invited, most, if not all, are said to assist to these three ceremonies, either as mere visitor, Church representative or representative of the family (see 4.3.3 and figure 10)⁸⁶. The four couples, however, stated that no Church representatives were present as such during these ceremonies, which would be in accordance with the view of the senior leaders. The interviewed leaders encouraged involvement, but not replacement of the family leadership.

Gukwa: The ceremony of *gukwa* was celebrated by all four couples as a separate ceremony, just as in the past, but they mentioned that these days many people combine *gukwa* with other ceremonies. During the *gukwa* ceremony the *inkwano* was handed over: in two cases consisting of one cow, in one case of a cow and a hoe, and in the last case of *ubuntu* (see 5.3.3). In 3.3.2 has already been elaborated upon the concept of the *inkwano*. All four couples shared the view that people should stick to the symbolical value of the *inkwano*, something that was already suggested by Adriaenssens (1964: 63). It was mentioned in the literature that there are different types of *inkwano*, depending on the region and economical situation of the families (Bourgeois 1954:132:141, Kagame 1954:177-181, Bigirumwami 2004:147). Reasonableness was common practice, and friends could even “give a bride for free”, according to Kagame (1954:179-181). The four couples, however, observed the present-day phenomenon of rising “bride prices”, which causes severe problems, especially amongst poor people in post-genocide Rwanda (see also 5.4.2).

As was mentioned in the literature (Ndekezi 184:110), in the past the different steps of the wedding process could easily take one or more years, which was also expressed by one of the interviewed couples. All couples celebrated all listed ceremonies, except the traditional ceremonies during the traditional wedding day *gushyingirwa*, as

⁸⁶About the involvement against non-involvement of the pastors, *gufata irembo* (30 respondents): 27 against 3; *gusaba* (34 respondents): 34 against 0; *gukwa*: (34 respondents) 32 against 2.

separate ceremonies. But, as was already mentioned in the literature, these days different ceremonies are often celebrated on one day. For instance Ndekezi (1984:ch1) mentioned *gusaba no gukwa*, and Adriaenssens (1964:ch3) mentioned *gukwa* and *gutebutsa* as being celebrated in one ceremony (see 3.2.6). Apparently this trend has continued, as these days more different ceremonies (*gufata irembo*, *gusaba*, *gukwa* and *gutebutsa*) are celebrated in one day, even on the same day as the Church wedding. It should be observed that in that case the original meaning of these ceremonies, when celebrated together with other ceremonies, and particularly when celebrated on the wedding day itself, has been lost.

Gutebutsa: The visit of *gutebutsa* was originally meant to announce that the young man had finished building his hut, i.e. to inform the young woman's family that everything was ready for the wedding. The pastors confirmed that these days people still have a meeting to go over the details of the wedding, to pledge contributions, etc. Especially when one or both intendeds are orphans, as with one of the interviewed couples, the Church plays an important role as the members can contribute financially or in kind. In general, however, *gutebutsa* is considered as a family matter; often celebrated during the same event where *gukwa* is celebrated. Often it consists only in a small informal meeting with some designated family members and friends. However, still 21 of the 33 pastors who responded said that they assist to *gutebutsa* meetings, mostly if they fulfilled a role during the other wedding ceremonies (see figure 10).

Gushyingirwa: Most rituals and ceremonies of the traditional *gushyingirwa* are not being recognized during modern weddings⁸⁷. In general, from the traditional rituals during *gushyingirwa* only the custom of *gutonda imisango* is practised during present day wedding ceremonies. Some pastors said that they had never heard of some of the other rituals that were celebrated during *gushyingirwa*. Nevertheless, it is not possible to conclude from the interviews with the pastors and the couples that these ceremonies are no longer being celebrated at all, although it is clear that they are not well-regarded and that they are disappearing. Some pastors and the couples said that

⁸⁷Most of the pastors (30 of the 33 who responded) said that *gushyingirwa* still takes place these days. It became clear, however, that they did not refer to the traditional custom, but to the modern wedding day, *ubukwe*.

some traditional *gushyingirwa* rituals are still being celebrated in some places, but only by either non-Christians or back-sliders.

The parents of the four interviewed couples had gone through these traditional ceremonies, but all couples mentioned spontaneously that the rituals during the traditional *gushyingirwa* disappeared through “evangelization and civilization”. One husband mentioned the role of the teachings of the Church that changed the behaviour of Christians, which the non-Christians imitated. He added that the Church spoke out against the practice of *gukirana*, teaching that the marital union was not something to be ashamed of. Another husband mentioned that the Church forbade the rituals of *gukirana* and *kumara amavuta* due to their violent and humiliating character. It was mentioned in the literature that some rituals were forbidden by the Church. Adriaenssens (1964:69) mentioned specifically the several *kurongora* rituals with the *umwishywa*, the *guca hagati* and *kumara amavuta*. Bigirumwami (2004:168) described some traditional rituals, recognized how important they were for the Rwandans, and was aware of the difficulties for the (Catholic) Church to teach Biblical principles. But none of the writers of that time explained why, when and how the Church forbade these rituals.

It is possible that the existing Church wedding still contains elements of the traditional *gushyingirwa* ceremonies. For one example, the presence of a matron, a best man and a court of young men and women during the Church wedding could be reminders of the traditional court that accompanied the couple during the *gushyingirwa* ceremonies. A second example, different pastors mentioned that *guca hagati* is substituted by the handing over of the bride, in the Church, from her father to her husband. Most probably they meant the moment just before the *kurongora* rituals, when the matron or the aunt and an uncle (or a representative of the groom’s family) would do the same in the inner hut of the young man (Kagame 1954:153). Third, the use of the *umwishywa*, as described by for instance Ndekezi (1984:88-91) is, according to Kolini (3 Oct. 2009, Kigali) and different pastors, replaced by the use of the rings, as both represent faithfulness and endlessness. In a fourth example, the literature describes the seriousness, and even sadness, demonstrated by the girl and her friends when she left her father’s house (Ndekezi 1984:82-87). Moreover, before

the *kurongora* rituals the young woman's friends would cry, although the young man and his friend would shout for joy (Adriaenssens 1964: 66). It is possible that the seriousness and the absence of demonstrations of joy and excitement during modern celebrations on the wedding day and especially during the Church service are remnants of the traditional *gushyingirwa*.

Some elements of the traditional *gushyingirwa* have changed. During the traditional wedding day the parents of the bride were not present. This has definitely changed, because these days parents and older family members are among the guests. Snacks or food are often being served these days, which was not the case during the traditional wedding. Different pastors mentioned another difference with the past as described in the literature: the modern wedding day is not celebrated at night, in contrast with the traditional *kurongora* rituals (Ndekezi 1984:82)⁸⁸. And these days, in general, most couples know each other before they get married, while the literature described that often the first sexual contact the couple had was their first real contact (Ndekezi 1984:92).

Gutinya: It is difficult to find out what people these days think about this custom and even more why people still celebrate it. The literature emphasizes that this custom was surrounded by taboo: the word *gutinya* means "to fear", as by not observing this ritual women feared they would get a skin disease (Adriaenssens 1964:70). Others emphasized the shame factor: some women were so embarrassed that they had slept (or had been forced to sleep) with a man that they refused to come out (Erny 2005:235-236). More than one third of the pastors (13 of the 33 who responded) stated that *gutinya* does not take place anymore. Several pastors said that they urge people to shorten this period, which is confirmed by the interviews with the couples, but it is not explained why they give that advice. One of the interviewed couples, married in the late 1980s, still observed a very rigorous *gutinya*: the wife even covered her face and refused to show herself in public for a whole month. Another couple, however, stated that pastors these days discourage people to observe *gutinya*. He added that women are taught that it is normal to have a sexual relationship after

⁸⁸Daylight symbolizes openness and transparency; the traditional customs that have been abolished took place at night.

having been married, and that there is no reason to resist and hide. Apparently the traditional association of *gutinya* with shame is regarded as less positive than in the past, although it is not clear what the pastors think and what they teach about it. Several pastors (8 of the 34 who responded) said that they are involved in *gutinya*, by either visiting the couple or by teaching the couple beforehand.

The literature mentioned that the *gutinya* period was also called *kwarama* (Adriaenssens 1964:70). The name was derived from a ritual during the first day, when the couple and the parents of the husband would make bread and butter and eat together to symbolize their unity. None of the pastors, however, mentioned *kwarama*. Not only the length but also the original character of *gutinya* is changing, which is suggested by the fact that some pastors said that they use the *gutinya* period to visit the couple.

Gutwikurura: This ceremony is still observed, although it has changed. Mbiti (1975:102) and Kagame (1954:176) mentioned that, for the woman, both *gutinya* (seclusion) and *gutwikurura* (exposure) represented the birth into the life of the married people. In the literature it is mentioned that the traditional *gutwikurura* is a disappearing phenomenon: Adriaenssens (1964:57-58) wrote that Christians in his time (i.e. in the sixties) did not practice this ceremony anymore. However, all interviewed couples observed this ceremony. Two couples, married in the seventies and the late eighties, respectively, even mentioned a very traditional custom, the trimming of the hair, during the *gutwikurura*. But all four couples confirmed that these days the ceremony of *gutwikurura* does not take place in its original aspect. A few pastors explained that it differs from family to family. Most pastors (32 of the 33 respondents) confirmed the existence, in one or another way, of *gutwikurura* these days, and many (29) said that they are involved in the ceremony. Two pastors explained that *gutwikurura* often takes place on the evening of the wedding, after the other ceremonies, and that it therefore fulfils the role of the closure of the wedding.

The question is to what extent have the traditional concepts that have laid the foundations of these customs and ceremonies changed (see 5.4.2). It is obvious that certain ceremonies such as the rituals during *gushyingirwa* have been rejected by

most people. It is also manifest that certain Western ideas have been adopted into the Rwandan wedding ceremonies and into the Church service. It is even clear from the interviews that many Christians, including pastors, really would like to incorporate the Christian view in their lifestyle, but that they have difficulty doing so. But it is not clear what the motivations are behind the strong tendency to hold on to certain traditional wedding customs and concepts on one hand, while on the other hand other concepts and ceremonies have been abolished. There is therefore reasonable doubt to what extent the Church, including the pastors, has understood, valued, appreciated, adopted and applied the Biblical concepts of marriage.

In this chapter the findings from the different interviews held with the senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali and four couples in the Anglican Church as described in chapter 4 have first been compared to each other (in 5.3) to be able to answer the questions raised in chapter 1 concerning the concepts and view of the Church on marriage, the view and attitude towards traditional wedding ceremonies and the practice of marital counselling. Thereafter (in 5.4) these findings have been compared with the findings from the literature as described in chapter 3. In the next chapter the research findings of this chapter will be compared with the Biblical principles, as explained in chapter 2.

Chapter 6 Comparison of research findings with Biblical principles

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the research findings from the different interviews (with the senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali and four couples within the Anglican Church) as described in chapter 4, were compared with one another (in 5.2), and subsequently (in 5.3) these findings were compared with the findings from the literature as described in chapter 3. In this chapter the Biblical principles distilled from especially Genesis 1-2, Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5, and described in chapter 2, will serve as standard and model for the results of the research as described in chapter 5. The findings of the research, concerning the concepts and view of the Church on marriage, the view and attitude towards Rwandan traditional wedding ceremonies and the practice of marital counselling will be compared with these Biblical principles.

6.2 The concepts and view of the Anglican Church (DK) on marriage in light of the Bible

We looked in chapter 2 for a Biblical basis for marriage and chose Genesis 1-2 and the related texts in Matthew 19:3-9 and Ephesians 5: 22-33 as the three main passages that talk about marriage in Scripture. As the Biblical message transcends time and place, these key principles should shape any cultural context. In the following section, the Biblical principles from the three key passages from chapter 2 will be compared with the findings of the research about the concepts and view on marriage within the Anglican Church (DK).

6.2.1 Findings related to Genesis 1 and 2

In Genesis 1 and 2 the Bible gives us key notes about the creation of man, which form the basis for our view on marriage. These first two chapters of the Bible show us a very positive perspective of man, as God's creation, and made in His image. Mankind has a high calling: he is made to live in relationship with God, and is called to rule the earth. We saw that all men, irrespective of race, tribe, gender or position, are equal in value. It is not clear whether these concepts have penetrated the way of thinking of the Anglican pastors and Christians, considering the hierarchy of the society, the male domination, (the rising "prices" of) the dowry, and the emphasis on marriage and procreation.

Genesis 1 and 2 teach us that God made human beings male and female, which offers us several key principles about the institution of marriage. First is concluded that the marital relationship between a man and a woman is God's design for mankind. As was mentioned in 4.2.1 the senior leaders emphasised the fact that marriage is meant for one man and one woman, which could be either a statement against (factual) polygamy or homosexuality. Although marriage is held in high regard in Rwanda, this appreciation does not seem to be Biblically inspired. The knowledge of pastors and couples about the institution of marriage, and other basic Biblical principles on marriage was very meagre. The responses of the pastors, when asked about certain concepts of marriage, were mostly very vague (4.3.2). Although 29 of the 32 pastors referred to some Bible texts from Genesis 2 when asked about the institution of marriage, they were actually not able to explain any Biblical concepts derived from these verses. The couples also could not refer to any Bible texts about the essence of marriage.

The fact that the triune God created man in His image as a relational being, male and female, presents us with a second key principle on marriage. Husband and wife together reflect the relationship within the Godhead. Husband and wife are made to complement each other, and to become one. In general, the research did not show evidence that the pastors or the couples are very aware of this principle (see 6.2.2). On the contrary, throughout the interviews it was mentioned that often the families

form a wedge between the spouses and the four couples mentioned that communication within marriage is a serious problem. In general, marriages are still influenced by the traditional idea that a marriage is more a bond between two families than between two individuals.

The third principle derived from Genesis 1-2 is based on the fact that in the Godhead there is subordination in roles, but equality in deity, power and glory. In the same way, although husband and wife are equal in value before God, husband and wife are different. Adam was created first, and God gave Eve to Adam as a suitable helper, to assist him in his duties. The husband is the primary responsible party and representative of the two, while the wife is the loving helper.

Husband and wife have indeed different roles in Rwanda. But when the pastors were asked about role and position of husband and wife, they did not show that their concepts were shaped by these Biblical principles. Although many of them mentioned Biblical texts, such as Ephesians 5: 22-33, the pastors seemed more influenced by their cultural values (see 6.2.3). Two pastors mentioned here, and another pastor said the same when he spoke about the spiritual life of the family, that the man is the head, and the woman the heart of the family. Although this was only explicitly mentioned by a few pastors, this response seems typical⁸⁹. The man is seen as superior, as the leader and representative of the family, outside the house. The woman is seen as helper, but not in the Biblical sense. Inside the home the woman is responsible, and also for the education of the children. Although the two have defined roles, from the interviews with the couples and from the overall impression of the pastors' answers it is evident that a strong bond on an equal level is generally missing.

6.2.2 Findings related to Matthew 19: 1-12

Matthew 19 supplies several key principles on marriage. First, although we live in a fallen world, in Christ the high ideal of Genesis 1-2 is reconfirmed. Genesis 3 shows

⁸⁹This is visible in the statue of a woman and a child (said to symbolize the Rwandan family), at one roundabout of Kigali, where the father/husband is notably absent.

that after the Fall there would be a distortion of all relationships, including marriage. For instance, it is written there that men would rule over their wives, but this would be a punishment, a misrepresentation of the given roles. That sin affects marriage is obvious, as can be seen by the high divorce rate among other things. When asked about His opinion on the reasons for divorce (either for trivial reasons or for sexual immorality, see 2.3.2) Jesus referred to how it was “in the beginning”. Only one pastor referred once to the impact of sin on marriage (in 4.3.2), but Genesis 3 was never mentioned, indicating that the research does not give evidence that the pastors are aware of the implications of Genesis for teaching on marriage. The Biblical sequence shown in Matthew 19 where Jesus reverts to the ideal of Genesis 1-2 against the reality of a broken world due the Fall does not seem to play a role in the theology of the pastors.

Second, Matthew 19 showed once more that divorce was never God’s intention, but that marriage was meant to be “forever”. Divorce was not God’s intention, although it was legally allowed in case of “sexual immorality”-- mostly interpreted as “marital unfaithfulness”, to protect the person violated (see 2.3.2). The literature mentioned that absolute marital faithfulness was not the rule in traditional Rwanda. And certain sexual relationships were not considered as adulterous (see 3.3.3). It seems that the Church did not address these issues explicitly, nor that Biblical directives have been explained to pastors and Church members. Pastors do not seem to be aware of the regulations and code of conduct of the Church. One senior leader stated that sometimes people just divorce, with or without rules. All four couples stated that divorce is not allowed, not even in the case of adultery; in that case people should *kwihangana*. However, this argument seems to be used to force the violated party of a marriage to put up with the adulterous behaviour of the partner, for instance. As a matter of fact, this is not only in contrast with the Biblical clause in Matthew 19, but also with the Rwandan civil laws and general Church laws that protect the rights of the offended.

Third, in Matthew 19: 5-6 Jesus referred to a key text from Genesis 1 that reappears in Ephesians 5. The text offers us a sequence of three consecutive steps: “... a man shall *leave* his father and his mother, he will be *united* with his wife and they will be

one flesh". These three steps seem to form a serious challenge to the Rwandan culture.

(a) The Rwandan emphasis on the two families, the importance of the parents even after marriage, and the importance and demands of the extended families (see 4.3.2 and 4.4.4) make it difficult for a man (and a woman) to leave the parents. Especially men have difficulty seeing their wives as their first responsibility and most important relationship.

(b) Because in Rwanda a married woman becomes part of the family of her husband, there is little emphasis on the status of the newlywed couple as a social entity. However, following the sense of the Bible text, after marriage man and woman are united. They form a new family, even without or before having children, despite the Rwandan emphasis on procreation.

(c) In being "one flesh" the whole personality of the spouses is involved: their unity has social, spiritual, mental and physical implications (see 2.3.1). Even the sexual relationship between husband and wife is not regarded as merely physical.

However, on the one hand, the interviews showed that the "one flesh" unity between the spouses does not seem to involve all levels of their life and personality. The pastors had difficulty expressing their view on spirituality and communication between the spouses. All four couples mentioned that communication between spouses is a problem. Several times it was mentioned that often spouses do not trust each other. Although married couples officially form a social unity, generally there is no real idea that they are "one on all levels".

On the other hand, the research showed that the view on the sexual relationship between spouses was very limited. First, there was a strong emphasis on the physical aspects of the sexual relationship and on procreation (commonly called "reproduction"). Second, the pastors emphasized in different parts of the questionnaire, whether it was relevant or not, the "availability" of the wife (their understanding of "They should not deprive one another"). Third, there was no positive notion of a spiritual aspect of sexuality and there was hardly any mention of anything

about the role of God in it. In this connection-- one pastor mentioned that sexuality is God's commandment and another pastor mentioned that sexuality is not a sin.

Definitely the most quoted Bible text in the whole research was I Corinthians 7, which should be seen as the core idea of the pastors' concepts on sexuality within marriage. When asked what they teach about sexuality 23 of the 32 pastors who responded gave this text of 1 Corinthians 7, and some explained the pericope with the words: "They should not deprive one another". Moreover, nine pastors did not refer to any Bible text; the only basis for a Biblical view on marriage they gave was the sentence: "I teach them that they should not deprive one another". This androcentric view was also evidenced by such expressions as "a man must be given what he deserves from his wife". The view of the pastors on sexuality is therefore very culturally oriented, and even Bible texts on marriage are explained from a traditional point of view.

6.2.3 Findings related to Ephesians 5: 22-33

Genesis provides us with the key notion that in their marital relationship husband and wife reflect the harmonious relationship within the Godhead. In Ephesians 5 Paul put emphasis on the relationship between Christ and the church, as example and image for the relationship between the spouses. Husband and wife submit to each other out of reverence for Christ, and together they submit to Christ and are members of His body, the Church. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and wives are called to submit to their husband, as the Church submits to Christ. The love of Christ for the Church is the couple's high ideal. Their marriage is a testimony of that love and mirrors the relationship between Christ and the Church.

However, none of the pastors seemed to have understood what Paul wanted to get across when he compared the marital relationship with Christ's love for the Church. Whether the pastors were asked about the role or place of God in the marital relationship, or about spirituality, their answers were very vague. But asked about the role and position of husband and wife, most pastors quoted Ephesians 5: 22-33. Many tried to explain this text, but in their explanation none of them mentioned all elements

of the pericope: mutual submission out of reverence for Christ (vs 21), submission of the wife to her husband as the Church does to Christ (vs 22-24), love of the husband for his wife as Christ loved the Church (vs 25-30), unity between husband and wife which finds its ground in Christ's love for the Church, which is called a mystery⁹⁰.

Therefore one may conclude that, on the one hand, the pastors had no knowledge of the high ideal for married couples, and on the other hand, they were not aware of the implications of this text for the marital relationship, and especially not of the implications for husbands.

In this section some key Biblical principles of marriage have been compared with the view on marriage of the Anglican Church (DK). In the next section the practice of the Anglican Church concerning the traditional wedding ceremonies will be held up to the light of the Biblical message on marriage.

6.3 The attitude of the Anglican Church (DK) towards traditional Rwandan wedding ceremonies in light of Biblical principles

In chapter 3 the traditional wedding ceremonies were described. In chapter 4 the view of the Anglican Church (DK) toward these wedding ceremonies was discussed, and the way the pastors and the couples were said to be involved in these ceremonies (see 4.2.3, 4.3.3 and 4.4.3). In this paragraph these findings of the research will be compared with the general Biblical marriage principles as they have been distilled from chapter 2. Although most of the conclusions in this chapter derive directly from the research, there are also indirect results and conclusions.

The wedding ceremonies as described in the literature (see chapter 3) and as still being practiced in the Anglican Church (see 4.3.3 and 4.4.3) are of great value for the

⁹⁰The overall emphasis was: "Women should submit to their husbands" (or even "Women should submit to men" which was not entirely clear from the context, because of the translation from the Kinyarwanda). Two pastors mentioned the wife's submission to her husband, together with a husband's love for his wife, but did not mention anything about Christ or the Church. Two other pastors mentioned the example of either Jesus' love or Jesus' love for the Church as reason for the wife's submission and the husband's love. One pastor referred to the headship of Christ over the Church as reason for the submission of the wife to her husband "because he is the head of the family, as Christ is the head of the Church", but did not refer to the duty of the husband to love his wife (as Christ loved the Church).

Rwandans. According to Van 't Spijker (1990:§5.2), in the past missionaries have ignored the importance of traditional customs. The research showed that the Anglican Church, as far as we know, did not evaluate the Rwandan marriage customs, and did not study the Biblical truths on marriage either. All four couples said that certain wedding ceremonies disappeared due to “civilization and evangelization”. But most wedding ceremonies, as described in chapter 3, are still being celebrated these days. In practice, the Church accepted that people celebrated certain traditional ceremonies, and introduced the Church wedding and Christian rituals, without having studied neither, the traditional nor the Christian rituals.

In chapter 2 and in 3.3.4 some guidelines were given for the application of the Biblical truth in one's own context. In his research Van 't Spijker (1990:§6.4) concludes that the Church should try to understand the importance of traditional customs for the people involved, and evangelize existing rites. Van 't Spijker advises that people should not be the slave of a ritual, but that every ritual should breathe out the freedom we have in Christ. Along these lines we should try to value the different traditional wedding ceremonies.

There are certain rituals that were considered as neutral, apparently there is nothing really unethical or inappropriate about them, but they have been abandoned for other reasons. One of these customs is *kuranga* which does not make sense anymore. After all, couples these days make the first contact themselves, and both the government and the Church require mutual consent.

The research does not give reason to believe that the custom of *kuranga* has disappeared out of the conviction that it is not in line with Biblical principles. Yet the fact that two individuals mutually decide to start a life together, i.e. when they leave the parents and are united in marriage, is along the lines of the Biblical principle derived from Genesis 1 and 2. However, the modern Western focus on individuality should not be mistaken for a Biblical point of view.

The disappearance of *kuranga* does not show to what extent the individual choice criteria or the influence of the family have changed. The literature showed that the involvement of the families was meant to strengthen the bond between the spouses

and to avoid eventual problems. Yet the research showed that it was the families themselves that often cause problems. Most pastors said that *kuranga* had disappeared, but confirmed that they are still available to give advice, and, if necessary, to mediate between the families. Thus, the family can be either a positive or a negative influence, and the Church should encourage the former.

Apart from the “neutral” rituals that have changed or disappeared, there are other ceremonies that are considered as very important, if not essential. Most people celebrate *gufata irembo*, *gusaba* and *gukwa*, as either separate or combined ceremonies. These ceremonies fulfil an important role, as both families are involved. Therefore, pastors are encouraged by the senior leaders to attend these ceremonies: they consider it as very important that the Church is involved in the life of the Church members. From the pastors’ questionnaires, in fact, it could be concluded that they are much involved, and that they appear to take on the responsibility of the family representatives. The Church does not evaluate the involvement of Church leaders, nor does it produce guidelines for the pastors and Church members to avoid that the Church takes the role of the family. The interviews showed that the Church does not speak out on the role of the family members or the spouses’ individual responsibility in these ceremonies. As long as these requirements of individual responsibility and mutual consent are met, and the couples are encouraged to leave the parents, and to form a new social entity, there is no reason to go against or even ban these ceremonies.

The interviews showed that even the ceremonies and customs that are considered as very important can have a negative impact on the wedding process and on the couple, when the custom itself appears to be more important than the wellbeing of the couple or the individual spouses. To be able to assess these customs according to Biblical principles the following questions should be asked. Does this custom or ceremony contribute to the wellbeing of the couple? Does this custom hinder the couple in the Biblical sequence: leave the parents/being united/become one flesh? Does this custom contradict any of the other Biblical principles on marriage?

One of the hindrances if not a stumbling block is the *inkwano* (see 3.3.2), according to the interviews with the couples and the literature. Although a very important feature in Rwandan culture, the *inkwano* should be subordinate to the wedding process and contribute to it. Personally, grounded on the basic equality of man and woman, as described in Genesis 1-2, I find the idea of an *inkwano* hard to take. However, I recognize that, being a *muzungu*, I deliberate upon this topic from my own European background. The Church, however, never did evaluate the *inkwano* and did not express itself on this topic. Apparently this custom is so rooted in the Rwandan society, that the Church was not able to dispose of the negative concomitants of the *inkwano*. The Church did not censure the association of the *inkwano* with a bride price, did not speak out against the rising prices, nor did it propagate a symbolic value of the *inkwano*.

The interviewed couples mentioned another hindrance in the wedding process: the cost of all these wedding ceremonies. These days young couples often cannot afford to pay for the *inkwano* and the festivities of the different ceremonies. They feel pressurized to meet the expectations of their families and friends, when celebrating the various ceremonies. This self-imposed burden keeps people away from marriage⁹¹. The research does not show that the Church teaches their members to focus on the essence of the wedding ceremony instead of on outward appearances, to propagate modesty, and advocate simpler ceremonies and festivities.

Certain traditional wedding ceremonies have been abolished, although it is not clear whether they were explicitly forbidden or whether they just disappeared by themselves (because people considered them incompatible with either a Christian or a modern lifestyle). According to Twahirwa (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) missionaries labelled some of the Rwandan marriage rituals as “satanic”. The four couples confirmed that certain rituals are not celebrated anymore. Some of these ceremonies were and are considered as plainly negative and humiliating, especially for women. It must be also for that reason that the Church abolished certain rituals such as those during the

⁹¹For instance, even when the traditional ceremonies of *gusaba* and *gukwa* are celebrated on the wedding day itself, the bride and groom wear traditional clothes during the traditional wedding ceremonies, and change into Western wedding dress and suit before the Church ceremony. Often there is a best man and matron, and a court of bridesmaids and young men. This is however neither required nor necessary, and since all of them need to be dressed up, this forms an extra (unnecessary) expenditure.

traditional wedding day *gushyingirwa*. The research showed that in general these ceremonies are not celebrated anymore, although several pastors and the four couples mentioned that sometimes these rituals are still celebrated by some people.

Many pastors said that these days the rituals of *gushyingirwa* are replaced by modern rituals and the Church wedding. One pastor stated: “We replaced some and changed other rituals: we now bring the Word of God in some traditional ceremonies”.

However, the interviews with the pastors showed that they do not really know how to cope with the modern rituals during the wedding day. The traditional wedding rituals have mostly been abolished, but several pastors mentioned that certain elements are still being recognized in the modern Church wedding. On the other hand, several times the foreign elements that have been introduced into the modern weddings such as the wedding rings were mentioned as being a “Christian symbol”-- one pastor stated that the Church has adopted Christian concepts, adding the example of rings, wedding gown and flowers. It seems that the Church has never confronted itself with the traditional rituals during *gushyingirwa* and instead of evaluating these well, they have just been abolished, and other ceremonies have simply taken their place.

However, it is not clear what modern people consider as the essential ceremony of the wedding process. As was mentioned in 5.3.3, in the past *kurongora* was the essential wedding rite when the transition from childhood to adulthood was made (Kagame 1954:154). The pastors mentioned several times that the *ubukwe* and especially the Church wedding took the place of the traditional *gushyingirwa*; some pastors said that the imposition of the *umwishywa* was substituted by the exchange of the wedding rings in the Church. Therefore, I simply presumed that the Church wedding would be seen as the most important element and “turning point” of the wedding day, and I did not verify exclusively whether that was the case⁹².

Nevertheless, the lack of details in all interviews and the lack of knowledge of the pastors about Christian marriage in general, and specifically the Church wedding, demonstrated that the Church wedding itself is not seen as the main and essential element of the wedding process. It is not clear from the research what, according to

⁹²Regarding the socially desired answers of the pastors in other instances, it is probable that the pastors would have answered positively that indeed the Church wedding should be seen as the highlight of the *ubukwe*.

the interviewed people, should be considered as the main element of the *ubukwe*: the day of *ubukwe* in its entirety, the Church wedding during the *ubukwe*, or another moment during that day⁹³. The Church did not review the different aspects of the Church wedding nor did it reflect on how the Biblical key principles can be expressed in the Church ceremony.

It seems that the modern *ubukwe* is not the result of a well thought-through process. Certain rituals of *gushyingirwa* with a negative and humiliating connotation have been abolished (such as *gukirana*, *kumara amavuta*, etc), which we should applaud as they are not compatible with a Christian lifestyle. Certain elements of *gushyingirwa* seem to have been transplanted into the modern *ubukwe*. Certain elements have been supplanted by modern rituals. But, it is also possible that certain valuable elements of *gushyingirwa* have been abolished without reason, while they could contribute to a better understanding of the Biblical perception of marriage. The research did not show that the Church evaluated the rituals of the modern *ubukwe* to see how the Biblical concepts on marriage could contribute to a Christian celebration of the *ubukwe*.

The Church wedding itself, although it should be the highlight of the *ubukwe* and of the other wedding ceremonies, does not reflect the joy it should radiate. For outsiders the seriousness of the people involved in the ceremonies on the wedding day, and especially during the Church service, is rather peculiar. This is maybe understandable from the responses of the interviewed people on the Biblical view on marriage. From their lack of knowledge concerning the Biblical key principles of marriage, it appears that the traditional cultural concepts are more important than the Biblical concepts that come up during the Church ceremony.

One of the traditional customs that is changing and disappearing lately is *gutinya*, which had a very outspoken notion of fear and shame (*gutinya* means “to fear”). Even today this custom is not well regarded: pastors urge people to shorten the *gutinya*

⁹³Regarding the emphasis on sexuality it is also possible that it is the “consummation of marriage” i.e. the first sexual contact that is considered as the most essential element of the *ubukwe*. This would be strange though, as for many newlyweds this is not their first sexual contact. But as said before, the interviewed people were not directly questioned about this subject because, in the first place, I was biased because of their earlier statement that the Church wedding had taken the place of *gushyingirwa*. In the second place, this subject did not come up automatically, as most interviewed people were very reluctant if the subject of sexuality was touched.

period, as was mentioned several times in the interviews. These days the *gutwikurura* often takes place on the day of the wedding or the day after, which annuls the need for *gutinya*. Apart from that, the custom itself is less strictly observed, as several pastors mentioned that they use this time to visit the couple. In the literature it was mentioned that the *gutinya*-period was also called *kwarama* (Adriaenssens 1964:70). This was the traditional version of the modern “honeymoon”: the newlyweds and the parents of the groom would prepare butter and bread, to symbolize their communion. It is remarkable that the Church did not give a positive Christian interpretation of this period by boycotting the term *gutinya* and adopting the more positive term *kwarama*, and by explaining that a *kwarama*-period of a couple of days or weeks would serve the unity of the couple-- obviously without the presence of the parents.

In the next section the practice of marital counselling in the Anglican Church (DK) will be held to the light of the Biblical principles as described in chapter 2.

6.4 Marital counselling as done in the EAR/DK in the light of Biblical principles

The following paragraphs will compare the practice of marital counselling in the Anglican Church (DK) with Biblical principles. In 6.4.1 premarital counselling will be elaborated upon, and the way the Church prepares couples for marriage. In 6.4.2 the practice of marital counselling in case of problems will be compared with these Biblical principles.

6.4.1 Premarital counselling in light of the Bible

The research showed that premarital counselling is a common practice, which is laudable. Most pastors said that they do give premarital counselling, that they meet either in groups or individually and that they meet somewhere between one and many times-- mostly six or eight times (see 4.3.2). Three of the four couples confirmed that

they received some premarital counselling (see 4.4.2). These facts indicate that preparation for marriage is regarded as important.

Concerning the content of their teaching, the outcome of the research was less positive. The research showed that the knowledge of the pastors of Biblical principles of marriage is meagre. The senior leaders recognized that the pastors are not well instructed to give premarital counselling (see 4.2.4). It is therefore quite understandable that these pastors are not able to communicate clearly Biblical principles to the new young couples in the Church. The teaching of the pastors was mainly culturally inspired, and not Bible based. When the pastors were asked what they teach couples during the preparation for marriage, their answers were either very vague or they dealt with the family relations. And when the pastors answered what they teach on certain specific topics, their responses were generally either very general and superficial, or very culturally oriented (see 4.3.2 and figures 2-7 and 12).

An important question that should be asked is if and to what extent the marriage preparation is the responsibility of the Church or of the family. In the past young men and women would be prepared for marriage by their uncles and aunts, respectively. According to Gatera (7 Oct. 2009, Kigali) the Church took the place of the family, but did not offer an alternative and did not take the responsibility to prepare couples well for marriage.

It is not clear whether the traditional concepts and practices on marriage are still taught in Rwandan families. In the past the preparations for marriage were done by the family and would already begin during childhood (see 3.2.1). The education of especially girls centred upon how to become a good wife, housewife and mother. There was a strong emphasis on sexuality and procreation, although young women were supposed to remain virgin. Through the rituals of *gukuna*, practiced in the girls' age group, girls were prepared for the sexual aspect of marriage. These days marriage, sexuality and procreation are still emphasized in daily life. The research did not offer evidence that the Church had reviewed the concepts of the marriage preparation done by either the family or the Church, and to see where they should step in to shape new values along Biblical lines.

Some of the concepts on marriage that the pastors were said to teach, especially those on the role of husband and wife, had a sexual, and male chauvinistic oriented, notion. When asked specifically, most pastors said they teach on the topic of sexuality, but their teaching did not have a real Biblical content. The subject of *gukuna* was not touched explicitly in the questionnaire or in the other interviews, due to its taboo character. Only one of the couples spoke in an indirect way about this ritual. Three couples received some limited and cultural teaching on sexuality during premarital counselling (4.4.2).

The strong emphasis in Rwanda on marital status, sexuality and procreation, as shown in the research, led to certain derived concepts and beliefs that seem to be in opposition to the Biblical principles. For instance, against the reigning view and practice should be opposed the Biblical concept that the value of women does not depend on their marital status or fertility; that the sexual relationship within marriage is meant not only for “reproduction”, not merely physical, not a goal in itself, and not focussed only on male fulfilment.

The Biblical principles as described in 2.3 applied to the Rwandan practice add up positively as follows: women have the same value as men; unmarried women are as important as married women; husband and wife form a family (even before or without having children); children are considered as a blessing of the Lord (but childless women have the same value as mothers, and childlessness is not a reason for adultery or divorce); husband and wife are one (which supposes a strong bond between the spouses); marriage is an exclusive relationship between one husband and one wife; the relationship between husband and wife involves all aspects of the personality; the unity between husband and wife has also a spiritual character; since Christian couples submit to Christ their relationship does not involve only the two of them; and sexuality within marriage is God given and meant to unify the spouses.

The research did not show that the Church studied these Biblical principles. The Church did not think about their application in the Rwandan context, to be able to teach them directly (to the couples during premarital counselling) or indirectly (to

parents, so that they can teach their children) or to facilitate the teaching (supplying materials or training).

The other Biblical principles, as distilled from the exegesis of Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5, and the related semantic studies, as described in chapter 2.3, should form the basis of the premarital teachings. Nevertheless, although Ephesians 5 was often mentioned during the interviews, the pastors explained these texts first and foremost from a cultural perspective. Therefore, the premarital teachings of the pastors missed some very important Biblical components.

The exegesis of Ephesians 5 (see 2.3.3) shed an essential light on marriage; these principles that ought to be taught, either in premarital counselling or during other teachings in the Church are the following. First, in a Christian marriage husband and wife submit to each other (verse 21), and both are members of Christ's body, the church. The narrative exegesis of Genesis showed that man and woman are made in the image of God, that they are made male and female, and that in their marital relationship husband and wife reflect the relationship within the Godhead. This first principle from Ephesians adds even more to this, and is very important for the context in Rwanda: husband and wife are not only equal before God, they are also one in Christ, which gives their relationship a spiritual component.

Second, Paul compared the marital relationship between husband and wife with the relationship between Christ and the Church. Because Christ is the head of the Church, and the Church submits to Christ, wives are called to submit to their husbands. Because Christ loves the Church, husbands are called to love their wives with sacrificial love, just as Christ sacrificed Himself for the Church. Therefore, the inspiration for the relationship between husband and wife, and for each one of them, is Christ Himself. The research showed that only a few pastors had a glimpse of what this text meant. Apparently, though this principle is so important, it had not been discussed during the premarital counselling.

The exegesis of Ephesians 5 (see verse 1-20) showed that the context of these verses indicated that the marital relationship between husband and wife is a way to give testimony of the new life in Christ. The research did not show that any of the

interviewed people were aware of this aspect of the marital relationship; during teachings on marriage and premarital counselling this principle had not been explained. The submission of the wife to the husband, and the love of the husband for the wife mirror the unity of Christ with the Church-- which is a profound mystery according to Paul (verse 32). Thus, the marital relationship, the love of the husband for his wife, and the respect of the wife for her husband, combine to function as what might be called a “tool of evangelism”.

The exegesis of the selected Biblical texts provided us with the following principles that should be included in the premarital counselling and teachings on marriage. Marriage is a Godly institution, and is meant to last a lifetime (see also 6.4.2). The key text of Genesis 2: 24, quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19: 5, and again by Paul in Ephesians 5: 31 offered us a sequence of three consecutive steps: a man shall *leave* his parents, be *united* to his wife, and the two will become *one flesh* (see 2.3.1.6 for a semantic study of this word). These steps will offer young couples guidance on how to view their relationship, and when applying them to their relationship with their families, they can avoid many problems between the spouses.

It is evident that modern couples find themselves in a gap between tradition and modern practice. The four interviewed couples mentioned that these days many young people do not marry according to the same traditional rituals as they adhered to. Although pastors do their best to counsel people, and try to prepare couples well for marriage, their knowledge and concepts are still shaped by their traditional cultural background. Young couples these days are more likely to contract Western, romantic marriages instead of the traditional marriage of convenience people used to contract in the agrarian society of Rwanda. But these young people go from a traditional to a modern concept, without a proper Christian foundation. The interviews do not give evidence that the Church stands in the gap and takes its responsibility in teaching them Biblical principles and preparing them for marriage.

In the following section the counselling that is done within the Anglican Church (DK) will be compared to the previously studied Biblical principles.

6.4.2 Marital counselling in light of the Bible

The pastors were specifically asked about marital counselling (see 4.3.4), whether they give counselling in case of marital problems, and also whether they beforehand, during premarital counselling, advice people what to do in case of problems. Their responses did not prove to be very useful, as most questions were simply answered with “yes”. And when they answered if their churches have marriage counsellors, it is not clear if the “yes” of many of them reflected the reality. Although pastors answered that the pastor himself, his wife, members of the Mothers Union or St Andrews, family members or some elderly people counselled couples, the question that remains is whether they indeed do have trained counsellors. It is very likely that the pastors gave socially desired answers which did not reflect the reality (see 5.2 for limitations to the research).

Since the concepts of the pastors on marriage appeared to be culturally oriented, one could deduct from their answers that, when they do counsel people on these topics, their teachings will not be Bible based but culturally inspired. The couples (see 4.4.4) were asked if they believed that married people face problems in the four mentioned fields of dowry, extended family, communication and sexuality. They confirmed that this was the case, and they added several other topics to the list (amongst others poverty, infertility, and lack of community due to mistrust). Apart from that, their answers showed that if they received any teaching at all on these topics, these were not Biblically oriented. Several times it was mentioned that the only advice people receive is to *kwihangana* (to be patient, to put up with). The senior leaders also mentioned that married couples face many problems, but all three of the interviewed senior leaders said that the pastors are not well equipped to teach people well.

However, the Biblical principles as they were described earlier, and especially the key text of Matthew 19: 5 (and the parallel texts in Genesis 2: 24 and Ephesians 5: 31) would offer a clear insight in several of the described problems and give guidance towards their possible solution. Many problems within marriage will find an answer if couples are taught the triple sequence of: leaving the parents / being united with the spouse / becoming one flesh. Problems with the parents and the extended family

could be avoided or resolved if the couples would get a proper Biblical teaching on “leaving the parents”. Problems with communication within marriage could be avoided or resolved if the couples would be taught what the “unity between the spouses” involves. Problems with, or a lack of Biblical understanding of sexuality could be avoided or resolved if couples would be instructed what it means to be “one flesh”.

The other insights that confirm or add to the key text of Matthew 19: 5 and that should be taught as part of couples counselling include the following. First, the basic principle from Genesis that man is made in the image of God. This conception of fundamental equality of people irrespective of their gender, race, tribe, status, position in society, is in contrast with the belief of many people all over the world that some people are considered of more value than others. However, this principle could change the image spouses have of themselves and of each other. This principle could also inspire the Church to review the concept of the *inkwano*. Second, when touching the subject of adultery and divorce, Jesus referred to the institution of marriage in Genesis, as a God given, exclusive and unbreakable union. This principle is in sharp contrast with the traditional view on adultery, but also opposed to the mentioned solution of *kwihangana*. A last example, the passage from Ephesians brings marriage to another, spiritual, level; Biblical teaching about this could avoid or resolve problems or a lack of understanding on the spiritual aspect of marriage. The high standard, the uniqueness and exclusivity of marriage ought to be taught to Christians in general, and specifically to couples, to impart to them the value of virginity (of both sexes) before marriage, for instance, and faithfulness and purity within or outside marriage.

Summarized, the Church is not prepared nor equipped to give marital counselling apart from offering culturally oriented solutions, although clearly married couples face many problems. Pastors and couples are not aware of any Biblical solution, although they recognize that there are many problems concerning marriage. Yet, the Bible offers clear teachings for a better understanding of marriage and very practical guidelines for the solution of many problems within marriage. The Church, however, has not equipped pastors to teach these principles in their churches.

In this chapter the findings of the research concerning the concepts and view of the Anglican Church in Rwanda (DK) on marriage, the view and attitude towards Rwandan traditional wedding ceremonies and the practice of marital counselling were compared with the Biblical principles as described in chapter 2. In the following chapter final conclusions will be made and recommendations will be given.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and recommendations

In the previous chapters the following was presented. After an exegesis of some verses from Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5, several Biblical marriage principles were described in chapter 2. The traditional Rwandan marriage customs and ceremonies as described in the literature were explained in chapter 3. In chapter 4 a description was given of three types of interviews with three senior leaders, the pastors of the Diocese of Kigali, and four couples within the EAR/DK, respectively. Thereafter the findings of these interviews were compared with each other (5.3) and with the findings from the literature (in 5.4). Next this information was compared with Biblical principles (chapter 6). Finally, in this chapter, final conclusions will be made, the hypothesis will be revisited and recommendations will be given for further research.

7.1 Final conclusions

The key questions that were asked in chapter 1 dealt with issues such as the view and concepts of the Anglican Church on marriage, the view on and involvement of the Church in traditional Rwandan marriage customs, and the practice of (pre) marital counselling. In the following sections these questions will be answered, based on the earlier described results of the research.

7.1.1 *Conclusion: the view and concepts of the Anglican Church on marriage*

The first key question, asked in chapter 1, was: what is the view of the EAR/DK on marriage, and what concepts does the Church teach?

It is clear from the literary research that marriage is regarded as very important in the society of Rwanda, and, as appeared from the interviews, also in the context of the Anglican Church (DK). In the past there was a strong emphasis on marriage, procreation and sexuality, and the family played an important role in (the preparations

for) marriage, as in fact marriage was more a bond between two families than a bond between two individuals. It seems from the research that the Church is still influenced by these traditional concepts, but that they were never really thought through.

The Anglican Church accepts the three legal ways of getting married, but in practice there is more emphasis on the traditional wedding ceremonies. The Church requires people to celebrate the civil wedding first, before the present wedding day *ubukwe*. During that day the Church ceremony takes place, where God's blessing is asked over the couple's marriage. The different traditional wedding ceremonies are celebrated at home, mostly before the actual wedding day. Most pastors said that the present day *ubukwe*, with the wedding ceremony in the Church has replaced the traditional *gushyingirwa*. The research showed that pastors, however, could not explain essentials nor details about a Christian wedding-- which was confirmed by the interviews with the four couples. Their answers about the role of God in marriage, for instance, or about spirituality, and the essentials of a Christian marriage and Church wedding were vague, and the Biblical basis of marriage did not seem clear to them.

Although the general perception in the Church is that God instituted marriage, the interviews showed that the Church does not really have a Biblical view on marriage. Pastors and couples showed that their frame of reference mainly consisted of traditional cultural concepts. The Biblical view and principles on marriage had not been explained well to the pastors. There is no good material available to train either pastors or Church members. Pastors are not trained to teach Biblical principles about marriage to their church members. Therefore the concepts that the pastors teach to the couples during premarital counselling are mainly culturally oriented.

The Anglican Church of Rwanda, while it rejects homosexual relationships⁹⁴ (see 4.2.1), nevertheless falls short when it comes to introspection concerning traditional concepts on sexuality that are still in effect under the surface. Rwandan and Western

⁹⁴A recent BBC article (Kenya gay activist 2010) shows that after Malawi, Burundi, Cameroun and Uganda, now also in Kenya heated public discussions have come up about the criminalization of homosexual relationships, resulting in strong disagreements between advocates and opponents, and even acts of violence. It is observed that the opponents of homosexual relationships often use cultural arguments, such as "Homosexuality is imported from the West" and "It is against African culture" (Rwembeho and Mutara 2010). Even Christians seem to have biased opinions, based more on cultural principles than on Biblical arguments.

Christians need to submit to Biblical principles, which is a challenge for Christians of all times and places.

7.1.2 Conclusion: view and attitude of the Anglican Church (DK) towards traditional marriage customs

The second key question, asked in chapter 1, was: what is the view and attitude of the Anglican Church (DK) towards traditional marriage customs? In particular, what is the view of the Church towards traditional wedding ceremonies, which ceremonies are still being observed by Christians, and in which steps is the Church immediately involved?

The Anglican Church considers the traditional wedding ceremonies as very important, as these assure the involvement of the family in the whole process. In the course of time, however, certain traditional customs have changed. First, certain ceremonies, for instance the rituals during the traditional wedding day, *gushyingirwa*, have been abolished, most probably due to their humiliating or openly sexual character. The current wedding day, *ubukwe*, with the wedding ceremony in the Church, is said to have replaced the traditional wedding day. Second, certain customs or ceremonies, such as *kuranga* just disappeared, most probably due to Westernization. Third, other customs and ceremonies, such as *gutinya* and *gutwikurura*, have changed in character. Fourth, several other ceremonies, like *gufata irembo*, *gusaba* and *gukwa*, are still celebrated. In some families these rituals are “Christianized” as prayers are said and Christian songs are sung, while sodas replace the traditional beer.

Although certain traditional customs have either been abolished, adapted, or supplanted, it seems that the Anglican Church did not play an active role in this process, but that “things just happened”. All four interviewed couples mentioned spontaneously that certain rituals disappeared through “civilization and evangelization”. Kolini (03-10-2009, Kigali) did not share the opinion that the disappearance of traditional rites should be considered as all positive, but pointed out that valuable customs disappeared because people adopted a Western life style. But

then again, the Anglican Church did not touch these topics directly. These days many traditional ceremonies are still celebrated, but the Church has never studied the deeper cultural meaning of these traditional customs nor their implications for Christians. It seems that their own Rwandan cultural wedding ceremonies are so valuable for Christians these days that they do not inquire into their origin, meaning and implications.

While some customs changed or disappeared, many of the traditional wedding ceremonies are still being observed, by Christians and non-Christians. The traditional way of “searching a bride”, *kuranga*, through an *umuranga*, the representative of the young man’s family, has disappeared, as these days most young men choose their own bride, but pastors and family still seem to have a certain influence in this choice. The involvement of the family in the wedding process is still very important, which is especially visible in the ceremonies of *gufata irembo* (booking a bride), *gusaba* (asking) and *gukwa* (handing over of the *inkwano*, the dowry). These days, perhaps depending on the financial situation or the attachment to the traditional ceremonies, people choose to either celebrate these ceremonies separately, or to combine several ceremonies, sometimes even on the wedding day itself, before the Church ceremony. These days often the next step, *gutebutsa* (hastening), is combined with one or more of the earlier mentioned ceremonies. The traditional character of this ceremony has therefore changed: today it is a matter of a family reunion where the last details of the wedding are discussed. The traditional wedding day, *gushyingirwa*, is not celebrated anymore by most people. The couples stated, and this was also mentioned by some pastors, that the rituals of the traditional *gushyingirwa* are only celebrated by some people (either called back-sliders, non-Christians, or pagans) and somewhere else (either in the villages, outside the church, or in the North). Christians are all said to celebrate the modern day *ubukwe* with a Church ceremony to ask a blessing over their marriage, which was contracted earlier during the civil wedding before the local authorities. The traditional seclusion period immediately after the wedding, *gutinya*, still takes place, although people do not really know how to cope with the traditional connotation of shame and fear. Therefore these days its character is changing and the period is shortened from several weeks to mostly a few days, and often even annulled when the *gutwikurura* takes place on the day after the wedding. During that

ceremony, if celebrated as separate ceremony, these days mostly a few days after the wedding, the official wedding process is closed. Therefore, to conclude, most traditional ceremonies are still celebrated, in one or another way, and also by Christians.

About the involvement of the pastors in the traditional Rwandan wedding ceremonies there are no prescribed rules. The senior leaders of the Anglican Church (DK) encouraged involvement in the traditional Rwandan wedding ceremonies, but thought that the Church should not take the place of the family. However, according to the pastors they are very involved. Pastors are said to sometimes advise people, or if necessary, to mediate between the two families, either during the exploratory phase that replaced *kuranga*, or later in the process. Almost all of the pastors, if invited, attend *gufata irembo*, *gusaba*, and *gukwa*. They attend as either a mere visitor, as Church representative (and are asked to pray or preach) or even as representative of one of the two families (and are asked to act and speak on their behalf). Especially when they act as family representative they attend all ceremonies. Since the four couples did not recognize the strong involvement of the pastors in their own ceremonies, it is possible that this is a recent phenomenon, maybe influenced by Pentecostal churches.

7.1.3 Conclusion: practice of marital counselling in the Anglican Church (DK)

The third key question, asked in chapter 1, was: how does the Church prepare people for marriage, what does the Church teach about certain problems and in which way does the Church offer marriage counselling?

The senior leaders recognized that the pastors are not well equipped to give marital counselling. It is therefore praiseworthy if the pastors, as they said, indeed do give premarital counselling and meet with couples, individually or in groups, during several weeks before the wedding. However, the research confirmed that the pastors are not well instructed, and that they lack the Biblical knowledge and the material to do this well. It should be considered as positive that the pastors themselves communicated

that this was the case. The research showed that the concepts of the pastors are mainly culturally inspired, and their teachings deal for the most part with family issues.

To a certain extent the Church seems to have taken over the marriage preparation from the family. In the past couples were prepared for marriage by their families (mainly aunts and uncles), and the preparations, especially for girls, started already during childhood. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of marriage, procreation and sexuality. Girls were trained through the *gukuna* rituals and were taught how to please their future husbands, and never refuse his (or his brothers') advances. It is not clear whether couples that marry these days still receive these traditional teachings during their upbringing. In post-genocide Rwanda many couples marry as orphans, and will not receive any guidance from family members. Obviously the pastors of these days grew up with traditional concepts; the research showed that their view on marriage and sexuality is very culturally oriented-- which was demonstrated by the repeated remark "They should not deprive one another". It is therefore also not clear if the premarital teachings of the pastors replaced the teachings of the family, or if the pastors still teach the same concepts as in the traditional families.

Married couples these days seem to face many problems. Many of those problems appear to relate to the clash between the different cultures: the traditional Rwandan, the Western and the Biblical culture. The couples confirmed the following problems: First of all, the concept of the *inkwano* does not seem clear to many people, which is confirmed by the rising "prices". This causes a stumbling block for many, which could be one of the reasons for premarital pregnancies and cohabitation before marriage. Second, communication within marriage is a problem, when spouses go their own way, and seem to trust more in their family and friends than in their marriage partner. Third, the relation with the parents and the extended family is seen as a cherished heritage, but at the same time as a source of conflicts. Fourth, there is lack of knowledge about the Biblical concept of sexuality, which causes problems in daily life. Fifth, poverty is a problem, aggravated by the complementary (issues of a lack of consensus and trust between spouses, and demands of the family).

Since few Churches have trained counsellors, the pastors (or sometimes designated Church members) counsel people in case of problems, but the pastors confirmed that they lack the knowledge, training and material to do it well. They seem to offer a cultural rather than a Biblical solution. The research showed that most of the Biblical principles as described in chapter 2, were not taught, but the teachings of the pastors focussed on culturally inspired concepts, and consequently the solutions that are offered for problems that occur in marriage are also traditional-- *kwihangana* (being patient, putting up with) was rendered as the remedy for various problems.

The Anglican Church did not give clear guidelines to the pastors about how to act in the case of premarital pregnancies, divorce, adultery or the problems that the couples mentioned. The traditional view on these concepts has not been studied thoroughly, and the Church does not seem to offer Biblical solutions, apart from the traditional palliative *kwihangana*. There seems to be little insight into the Biblical principles such as those that were derived from an exegesis of Genesis 1-2, Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5. Which, when taught to couples, could strengthen the bond between the spouses and avoid problems, and give guidelines for pastors during counselling.

Conclusion

Marriage is considered as very important in the Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK) and the traditional cultural customs are highly valued. There is, however, no insight into the Biblical foundation of marriage and the pastors seem to consider their Rwandan traditional wedding ceremonies as more important than the Biblical concepts and principles. There is a certain discontinuity: certain traditional ceremonies have disappeared, probably due to Westernization or Christianization. There is also continuity: other ceremonies are still celebrated, either in the same way as in the past or in an adapted way. Certain cultural elements need to be retained as long as they do not conflict with the tenets of faith of the Church. But the traditional customs are so important that people celebrate them apparently unquestioningly. Some Christian elements have entered into the traditional ceremonies, but there is confusion about the essentials. The ceremonies during the so-called Church wedding were never thought through, and are celebrated without much conviction and knowledge of the

Biblical foundation. On the contrary, the pastors said to be very involved in the traditional ceremonies, although this also happened without much reflection.

The research showed that the Church lacks a theology on marriage, training for its pastors, and materials for pastors and Church members. Accordingly, the Church is not well able to teach a Biblical foundation on marriage, to equip couples for marriage and to help its members in case of marital problems.

Hypothesis revisited

The research conducted has definitely validated the hypothesis that “Teaching Biblical marriage principles by the Anglican Church of Rwanda can enhance the marital counselling in a traditionally influenced culture”.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions from the research the author would like to give the following recommendations. These recommendations pertain to the key questions concerning the view and concepts of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK), the view of the Church and its involvement in the different traditional wedding ceremonies, and the (pre) marital counselling of the Church.

7.2.1 Recommendations: view and concepts of the Anglican Church (DK)

7.2.1.1 Theological Department: It is recommended that the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda elaborate its own theology and appoint a theologian, or even establish a Department that focuses on theological issues, and their application for the Anglican Church in the Rwandan context. This Department should be formed on the Provincial level, and not only in the Diocese of Kigali⁹⁵.

⁹⁵The research for this thesis concentrated on the Diocese of Kigali. It is possible that the outcome would be different in other Dioceses, either negatively (in some of the other Dioceses pastors have been trained better than in the Diocese of Kigali) or positively (Kigali is considered as the more central and developed area of the country).

7.2.1.2 Theology on marriage: Because of the urgent need for an applied Theology of Marriage, it is recommended that one theologian from this Department specifically investigate this topic. This person would have to study the Biblical concepts on marriage, the problem of faith versus culture, and continuity and discontinuity of Rwandan culture.

7.2.1.3 Production of literature: At the same time as the theological research is being done, this research could be made practical by producing books for all levels in the Anglican Church. First of all, a countrywide marriage guidance manual needs to be prepared. But work books are needed for people on all levels: pastors, Sunday school teachers, parents, couples, counsellors, home group leaders, and individual Church members. The Church would need to facilitate material to be used during the education at home, premarital counselling and counselling in case of problems. Pastors need to be equipped with material to teach people about marriage. Use can be made of foreign, existing material, but this needs to be checked as to its Biblical content, and it needs to be adapted to the Rwandan context⁹⁶.

7.2.1.4 Training and education: The Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK) would do well to provide ongoing training for the pastors and church members. Pastors and individual church members need to be encouraged to continue studying. The Rwanda Christian University (formerly Kigali Anglican Theological College) at Kabuga could encourage its students to study theological topics that relate to their own Rwandan context.

7.2.1.5 Biblical, Western or Rwanda influences in current wedding practices: The Anglican Church of Rwanda would have to review the concepts, practices, ceremonies and liturgy concerning marriage and the wedding, and differentiate between Biblical, Western and Rwandan influences. The Church needs to formulate

⁹⁶There is Western material that could be used and adapted to the Rwandan context. The Alpha Course offers an Alpha Marriage Course, which books are very suitable to be used, provided that extra material is added on Rwandan cultural matters. The Navigators published several books for children of all ages that could be adapted to the Rwandan context. There is also African material that could give insight in for instance the relationship between culture and faith. Today in Africa has published booklets that could be used as discussion material in youth groups. TEE books such as “Imibereho ya Gikristo yo mu muryango” [The Christian way of living at home. EHV] could be adapted according to the mentioned Biblical principles.

guidelines and a code of conduct for the pastors, and communicate these to the pastors and the congregations. The Church has to accept the challenge that young people go from a traditional society to a Western marriage, without a proper Biblical foundation. But not only people that are interested in marriage should be addressed. Since so many people only attend the Sunday service, pastors will have to be taught to preach Biblically based sermons on this topic.

7.2.1.6 Review concept of human sexuality: It is recommended that the Anglican Church in Rwanda review its concepts on human sexuality in general to avoid a one-sided rejection of for instance homosexual relationships, while ignoring or trivializing problems related to heterosexuality.

7.2.1.7 Topics of research: It is recommended that the Church carry out further research on marriage, for instance through the earlier mentioned Provincial Theological Department or the Theological College at Kabuga, about the following topics.

Topics related to the Church:

- The wedding ceremony in the Church, essentials and foreign (imported Western) items
- The issue of premarital pregnancies, and the attitude of the Church
- The role of the Church and church leaders in the traditional ceremonies
- The implications of marriage as a “play” of God’s love, in Christ, for the Church.
- Review of the availability and if necessary revision of the existing material on marriage in Kinyarwanda
- Gender based violence in Christian families, and the reaction of the Church

Topics related to the traditional wedding ceremonies:

- The “clash of cultures” (traditional Rwandan, Western and Biblical) in modern marriages
- The traditional wedding ceremonies in the light of Scripture (making suggestions on the “evangelization” of some of these ceremonies)
- The practice of the *inkwano*, the rising “prices” and the reaction of the Church (offering Christian insights and guidelines)
- The current occurrence of traditional hidden practices, such as *gukuna* (offering Christian insights)

Topics related to Biblical marital counselling:

- The Biblical position on marriage, procreation, and sexuality

- The concept of the family in Biblical perspective
- The education concerning marriage and sexuality people receive at home (suggesting guidelines for parents and pastors)
- The traditional concept of virginity versus modern thinking and practices, in light of the Bible
- The Biblical view and a pastoral approach on adultery and divorce
- How to build a healthy marital relationship
- The Biblical view on certain problem fields within marriage, such as communication and trust, and conflict resolution

7.2.2 Recommendations: traditional customs and Church involvement

7.2.2.1 Application of Biblical principles to the Rwandan context: It is recommended that the Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK) study the Biblical parameters given in Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5, and compare these to the Rwandan concepts. Since marriage is a divine institution, and because the Bible gives us a very high ideal, the Church should make the effort to apply these very positive aspects to the Rwandan context. It would be good if the Church would study the traditional Rwandan wedding ceremonies, their meaning, impact and implication on people's lives, and then take a position, formulate guidelines and communicate these to the pastors and Church members. Neutral or positive customs can be retained, as the Church should abstain from propagating a Western life style. However, the impact of these ceremonies on the individuals and the wedding process needs to be analyzed. Customs with an underlying pagan foundation and oppressing and humiliating rituals will either have to be banned, rethought or reformed. One example is *gutinya* that could be replaced by *kwarama* (see 6.3). Most importantly: it is recommended that the Church investigate how Biblical principles can enrich the current traditional wedding ceremonies and contribute to better marriages.

7.2.2.2 Review concept of church wedding: It is recommended that the Church consider the celebration of the Church wedding during the present day *ubukwe* (which most pastors said has replaced the traditional *gushyingirwa*), and its role within the other wedding ceremonies. The Church would have to investigate which traditional customs are still celebrated and which foreign (Christian or secular Western) concepts

have been introduced. The Church will have to make clear to people what are essentials and requirements, and what are electives.

7.2.2.3 Role of church leaders in wedding process: The Anglican Church could take a position on the involvement of the Church and church leaders in the traditional ceremonies, and think about the role of the family representatives versus church leaders. The Church is advised to examine the (apparently recent) involvement of the pastors in the traditional wedding ceremonies. The Church will need to provide guidelines for pastors, and remind families and couples of their own responsibility.

7.2.2.4 Seek positive use of traditional ceremonies: The Anglican Church could examine how the traditional ceremonies can be used positively to enhance a better relationship between the future spouses. Since these days so many different ceremonies are celebrated on the same day, their function is so diluted as to be virtually irrelevant. The Church should encourage couples to prepare themselves well for marriage. Use can be made of the different celebrations of the traditional ceremonies, when these are celebrated in their due time. For instance, celebrating *gufata irembo* on the wedding day itself does not make sense. However, when celebrated as a form of engagement party, it could be a very useful step in the whole process.

7.2.2.5 Review concept of the inkwano: The Church should censure the association of the *inkwano* with a bride *price*, openly speak out against the rising prices, and propagate a symbolic value of the *inkwano*. The Church would have to discuss the proper use of the *inkwano*, and assert that it is used as a unifying tool within the marital relationship, assuring the equal value of the spouses.

7.2.2.6 Speak out on hidden customs: It is recommended that the Anglican Church speak out on cultural customs that have remained within the hidden sphere of the family. Couples and pastors are very proud of their own cultural customs, but are reluctant to talk about them, especially about rituals that have been abolished or that are being practiced within the context of the family. The Church could encourage the pastors and the members to discuss these customs.

7.2.2.7 Propagate freedom in Christ above all: It is recommended that the Church propagate the reality of the freedom we have in Christ, which gives Christians the liberty to choose, to either follow or leave behind certain traditional or Western ceremonies.

7.2.3 Recommendations: marital counselling in the Anglican Church (DK)

7.2.3.1 Provide Biblical marriage counselling: The Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK) has failed on many basic pastoral issues, and should provide material for their premarital courses and for marital counselling. There is an urgent need for a marriage guidance manual (as mentioned in 7.2.1). Regarding the lack of Biblical insights the Church would have to focus in the first place on the teaching on the Biblical fundamentals of Christian marriage.

7.2.3.2 Teach three steps from the key texts: It is recommended that the Anglican Church teach, explicitly and specifically, the triple sequence from the key texts that our passages from Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5 provided: a man will *leave* his parents, *be united* with his wife, and they will become *one flesh*. These three consecutive steps should be taught to couples and other Church members.

7.2.3.3 Use family as positive force: The Church could challenge Christians to use the (extended) family as a unifying tool instead of as a source of tension. Both the man and the woman will have to be encouraged to (literally and figuratively) leave the parents and the family, to build their own home. On the other hand the same family can be used as a protecting social network to help the couple establish their new family. The Church should shed light upon the negative and positive forces of the family in the relationship of the married couple.

7.2.3.4 Provide Biblical view on sexuality: The Anglican Church ought to provide Biblical insight in response to the traditional concepts of marriage, procreation, and sexuality. The Church will need to provide information and guidelines to give people a Biblical concept of sexuality and the sexual relationship within marriage. The Church

should teach young couples how to establish healthy relationships in preparation for their marriage.

7.2.3.5 *Teaching on counselling marital problems:* The Church ought to provide Biblical guidelines for couples and pastors on how to handle problems in the fields of communication, conflict resolving, trust, sexuality, adultery, divorce, *inkwano*, extended family, and encourage a discussion on these topics. It is recommended that the Church provide ongoing possibilities for counselling or training for couples in the different stages of their marriage.

In this section several recommendations for the Anglican Church (DK) were given concerning the view and concepts of the Church on marriage, the view and attitude of the Church towards the traditional wedding ceremonies, and the (pre)marital counselling of the Church.

7.2.4 *Recommendations for further academic research*

Recommendations for future students for a DTh or PhD studies that wish to engage in further academic research in different fields include the following.

7.2.4.1 *The view and concepts on marriage of the Anglican Church in Rwanda*

In the fields of Biblical Theology (Exegesis and Hermeneutics), Practical Theology and Missiology further academic research is suggested on the Biblical comparison of God's love for the Church with the marital relationship between husband and wife. How does this concept in Ephesians 5 relate to other Bible teachings (for instance the OT idea of God as bride groom)? And, has this idea of God's love for the church as a blueprint for the marital relationship between husband and wife been used, for instance in the early church, in evangelism? How could this concept positively influence marriage in the Anglican Church in the Rwandan context and could it be used in evangelism and mission?

7.2.4.2 The view and attitude of the Church towards traditional Rwandan marriage customs

In the field of Practical Theology (Pastoral Counselling and Anthropology) further academic research is recommended on how the Bible speaks about marriage and violence, and about domestic violence. The Rwandan traditional concepts and ceremonies from the past, such as *gukuna*, *gukirana* and *gutinya*, need to be further analyzed, and the research would attempt to answer the question whether these practices are still prevalent in Rwandan marriages today. The question would also be whether the culturally fuelled antagonism between husband and wife still plays a role in the marital relationship, and if there is a correlation between the traditional concepts on gender on the one side and gender based violence on the other, and how the Anglican Church could address this problem in Rwandan society.

7.2.4.3 The practice of the (pre) marital counselling in the Anglican Church of Rwanda

In the field of Pastoral Theology (Christian Education with implications for the field of Pastoral Counselling) academic research is recommended about the sexual education in the past and the present of the Rwandan context. And then, how the Christian concept of sexuality and marriage could be communicated to the different age groups of the Church in the Rwandan context, starting with children, followed by sexual education for young people, and then premarital counselling and marital counselling for couples, taking into account the existing cultural challenges (such as *gukuna*, the use of the *inkwano*, emphasis on procreation, view on virginity, adultery and divorce).

In this thesis the research has been described on the marital counselling within the Anglican Church of Rwanda (DK), and recommendations were given for further research. It is my hope that this research will contribute towards a better understanding of the Biblical concepts on marriage, and that this will result in an improved, practical and all embracing tertiary education in which academically presented Biblical pre-marital counselling will play a major role. There is a potential of a strong and vibrant culture of Christian values in future Christian marriages in

Rwanda, if the Church is willing to accept this challenge. This will enable future pastors and current church leaders to play a greater role in the cultivation of a stable society, based on solid marriages in the nation of Rwanda.

Appendix 1 Glossary

This glossary contains a list of Kinyarwanda-English vocabulary, but uses the English alphabetical order (including the Kinyarwanda prefixes).

Kinyarwanda	English
<i>abakatekisiti</i>	plural of <i>umukatekisiti</i> : catechist, lay reader in the EAR
<i>abarimu</i>	plural of <i>umwarimu</i> : teacher, lay reader in the EAR
<i>abarokore</i>	plural of <i>umurokore</i> : born again Christian, “saved one”
<i>abashumba</i>	plural of <i>umushumba</i> : pastor; here: pastor of cows, or actor as such during wedding ceremonies
<i>amafaranga</i>	money (or: francs, the franc being the Rwandan monetary unit)
<i>amakanisa</i>	plural of <i>ikanisa</i> : small church, daughter church
<i>guca hagati</i>	ritual during the traditional wedding rite, where a boy would ritually defend his sister thus proving her virginity
<i>gucyura</i>	a) to marry a woman that has been married before b) the marriage of a widow, by the brother of the deceased, either official or unofficial c) sexual intercourse between a man and the wife of his brother
<i>gucyura uwahukanye</i>	bringing back home the temporarily divorced wife
<i>gufata irembo</i>	ceremony to book a bride: to formalize the beginning of the wedding negotiations, thus excluding other candidates
<i>guhungura</i>	to marry the widow of one’s deceased brother
<i>gukirana</i>	ritual fight between the spouses before the first sexual intercourse
<i>gukuna</i>	preparatory rituals to prepare girls for marriage by stretching the labia minora, traditionally done in age groups

<i>gukwa</i>	ceremony of handing over the dowry
<i>gusaba</i>	ceremony of asking of the bride and negotiating the <i>inkwano</i>
<i>gusambakaza</i>	marriage of a divorced woman or a widow with a man from another family than her former husband's (which was considered as divorce)
<i>gusambana</i>	to commit adultery, fornication
<i>gusenda</i>	type of divorce, where the wife is chased away
<i>gushumbusha</i>	the marriage of a woman with the husband of her ill, sterile or deceased sister
<i>gushyingirwa</i>	the traditional actual wedding day
<i>gutana</i>	to divorce, on initiative of either of the two spouses
<i>gutebutsa</i>	to hasten: preparatory meeting before the wedding
<i>gutekesha</i>	to cause somebody to cook (<i>guteka</i> : to cook): ritual after the wedding where after the bride was allowed to cook for the first time
<i>gutenda</i>	payment of the <i>inkwano</i> through labour
<i>gutonda imisango</i>	giving speeches during the wedding and other ceremonies
<i>guterura</i>	abduction of a young woman, with or without her consent, to force parents to marry their daughter to the young man concerned
<i>gutinya</i>	to fear: ceremonial seclusion period for the bride after the wedding
<i>gutwikurura</i>	unveiling ceremony after <i>gutinya</i>
<i>ibihembo</i>	presents offered to the bride by her mother after the wedding (or: presents offered as compensation to the mother after childbirth)
<i>ibirongoranywa</i>	presents (household items) given to the bride by her family
<i>ibitwikurura</i>	presents offered to the bride or the couple during <i>gutwikurura</i>

<i>ibyvugo</i>	form of poetry, the high deeds of the groom, sung by others or himself during the wedding ceremony
<i>ikanisa</i>	daughter church in the EAR, small church without pastor, led by an <i>umwarimu</i>
<i>imisango</i>	ceremonial speeches by representatives of the two families during the wedding ceremonies
<i>indongoranyo</i>	gift, equivalent of the <i>inkwano</i> , given by the father of the bride to the father of the groom (who then gave it to the couple)
<i>ingobyi</i>	stretcher on which the bride was carried to the groom's house
<i>inkwano</i>	the wedding pawn, either symbolical or not, given by the young man's family to the father of the bride (mostly wrongly translated as dowry)
<i>izimano</i>	a present given to the family of the bride after the wedding
<i>kubaka inzu</i>	to build a house: to establish a family
<i>kubyukurutsa</i>	ritual parade and milking of the cows, done in company of visitors
<i>kumara amavuta</i>	ritual first sexual contact after <i>gukirana</i> , where the husband had to force himself upon his wife, who was rubbed with butter (<i>amavuta</i>)
<i>kurambagiza</i>	to spy: inquiries and observation of the suitability for marriage of a young woman and her family
<i>kuranga</i>	to search: traditionally when a representative of a young man's family went to look for a bride
<i>kurara umuhuro</i>	night watch at the young man's home before his wedding
<i>kurarira umugeni</i>	to stay over at the bride's: singing and dancing at the young woman's house before the wedding, ending in sexual preparations for the wedding (see <i>gukuna</i>)

<i>kureshya</i>	first visit of the young man's father to the family of the young woman
<i>kurongora</i>	to marry a woman that has not been married before
<i>kwahukana</i>	to separate, to divorce temporarily (to force a husband to engage the families to start the reconciliation process)
<i>kwarama</i>	period after the wedding, characterized by symbolical making and eating of bread and butter by the couple and the groom's parents
<i>kwera</i>	ritual to finalize a mourning period
<i>kwiba</i>	to steal, here: to abduct a girl to force her to marriage
<i>kwihangana</i>	to put up with, to be patient
<i>kwinjira</i>	relationship after a man decides to live with a widow or a divorced woman in her house
<i>kwishyingira</i>	marriage after a young woman decides to go to live with a young man
<i>ubukwe</i>	wedding, or the actual wedding day
<i>umukatekisiti</i>	catechist, lay reader in the EAR
<i>umunani</i>	pre-heritage gift from the father to his son after the wedding
<i>umuranga</i>	connector, representative of the young man's family
<i>umushumba</i>	pastor; here: pastor of cows, or actor as such during wedding ceremonies
<i>umwarimu</i>	teacher, here: lay reader in the EAR
<i>umwishywa</i>	crown made of marsh plants, used during wedding ceremonies
<i>urugo</i>	compound, enclosure, "home"
<i>urwagwa</i>	locally brewed banana beer, used during ceremonies

Appendix 2

Interview questions for senior leaders of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (EAR)

All three interviewed received several questions about how the Anglican Church in the Rwandan context has adapted, adopted or supplanted Anglican practices and teachings in the local situation. The following standard questions were raised and depending upon the individual interviews other topics came up.

a) Organization of the Anglican Church of Rwanda

Province: subdivision in dioceses, archdeaconries, parishes. History? Archives?
Education of the pastors?

b) Place and importance of marriage

Relationship between customary wedding, civil wedding and church wedding.
Marriage is not a sacrament in the Anglican Church. What is the view of the EAR on marriage? What are the guidelines for the pastors?

c) Relationship between state and church

Is the church wedding a legal way to contract marriage in the EAR? What is a legal marriage? Civil marriage: where, how and what? Conditions? What about the dowry?

What is the essence of the Church wedding? Condition for a couple to be married in the church? What are the formalities? Who can celebrate a marriage? Priests only? How much is formalized and how much freedom do individual parishes have? In what does a wedding in the church consist? What liturgy do churches use? Is it Rwandan

or adopted from somewhere else? Do the English speaking and the Kinyarwanda speaking churches use the same liturgy?

d) Relationship between church and culture

What is the church's relationship with traditional marriage customs? Is there freedom or does the church guide people? Is the church involved in traditional customs? Is that based on the freedom of the individual pastors? Should the pastor be involved in the traditional ceremonies?

Are there customs that are abolished by the church? Are there customs that are changed by the church? Did the Church introduce new ceremonies?

e) Counselling

Premarital counselling: who gives the premarital counselling? Is there prescribed material or do the pastors have freedom? Are there rules about sessions, material etc as a condition before people can get married?

Marital counselling: are there counsellors? Did the pastors receive pastoral training?

What are the problems in marriage according to the interviewed? What are the problems that pastors face in the counselling?

Anglican view on divorce? On which grounds? Adultery? Sanctions? Pregnancies: what is teaching of the Church? What is the reason why so many couples get pregnant before they marry? What is policy? Sanctions?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire for pastors of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (EAR), Diocese of Kigali December 2006

A. About the pastor and his ministry:

How old are you?

How long have you been a pastor?

Do you work in the city or in a village?

How many members does your church have?

How many weddings have you celebrated in the church?

Who taught you about how to officiate church weddings? And where?

B. Concepts and teaching:

1. When you prepare people for marriage, what Biblical concepts on marriage do you teach?

- a. About the fact that God instituted marriage
- b. About the role and position of man and wife
- c. About the place of sexuality in a marriage
- d. About the following words:
 - Love
 - Respect
 - Honour
 - Service
 - Submission
 - Care

2. Which Bible texts do you use to explain about marriage?

3. Do you use texts from the Old Testament or from the New Testament? Which?

4. Do you teach them on communication within marriage? What?

5. Do you teach them on conflicts in the family? What?
6. Do you teach them about the relation with their parents after they marry? What?
7. Do you teach them about the relation with the extended family? What?
8. Do you teach them about sexuality in marriage? What?
9. Do you teach them about their spiritual life as a couple and as a family? What?

C. In practice:

Please read the following steps before you answer the questions. If you don't recognize them, or if in your community and church people have other ceremonies, please write that down!

Kuranga

Gufata irembo

Gusaba

Gukwa

Gutebutsa

Gushyingirwa

Gutinya

Gutwikurura

Do you recognize these steps in your community? Explain.

Are you present, and what is your task at the following possible steps of weddings:

Kuranga (searching)

Do you play an active role in connecting people together?

Do you have a role in establishing contacts between the two families?

Do you advice people that are looking for a partner?

Explain.

Gufata irembo (booking the bride)

If there is a ceremony, do you have a role in this phase? Explain.

Gusaba (asking)

Are you invited and present at the ceremony of gusaba when people in your church marry?

Do you play a role in the ceremony? Explain.

Gukwa (handing over of the inkwano)

Are you invited and present at the ceremony of gukwa?

Do you play a role in the ceremony? Explain.

Gutebutsa (to hasten, expeditions)

Are you invited and present at the ceremony of gutebutsa?

Do you play a role in the ceremony? Explain.

Gushyingirwa or **umunsi w'ubukwe** (the actual wedding day)

Do you recognize these steps from the traditional wedding ceremonies in nowadays weddings?

Gutonda imisango

Gushaka: kurongora (imposition of the *umwishywa*/ spitting of the *imbazi*)

Kwakira umwishywa

Guca hagati

Gukirana: kumara amavuta

Is the nowadays wedding in the church a replacement for the traditional wedding? Explain.

If there are still ceremonies (of gushyingirwa) left, do you play a role in it? Explain.

Gutinya, kwarama (seclusion)

Do people in your church still celebrate this ceremony?

Do you play a role in it? Explain.

Gutwikurura (unveiling)

Do people in your church still celebrate this ceremony?

Do you play a role in it? Explain.

D. Church wedding:

In what consists the preparation before the wedding?

Which material do you use to prepare them for their marriage (books, Bible texts, etc)?

What do you teach about the place of God in the relationship of the spouses?

Do you meet individually? Or in groups?

How many times do you meet before the wedding?

What are the conditions for people to be married in the church?

Do they celebrate a civil wedding first? Is that a condition?

When does the civil wedding take place?

Do they have other celebrations at home on the day of the wedding?

Which ones take place before the church wedding and which ones after the church wedding?

What is the place of the church wedding in the whole process of getting married?

Which liturgy, books or Bible texts do you use during the wedding service?

What makes a wedding a Christian wedding?

E. After the wedding:

Do you counsel people after the wedding?

During marriage preparation, do you advise them what to do in time of real problems?

Do you have marriage counsellors in your church?

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How do you feel about your own role concerning the church wedding celebration?

Are there things you can improve?

In which area could the church help you to improve the marriage preparation?

Appendix 4

Interview questions for four couples of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (Diocese of Kigali)

The survey questions were basic questions about the description of different marriage ceremonies and the role of the church, premarital counselling, marriage counselling. In individual cases, depending on the given information, other topics came up.

Introduction: general information. Since when are you married? How did you meet each other? Did you choose your own partner? Was your marriage arranged?

1) Wedding ceremonies: In Rwanda there are different marriage ceremonies. Describe the different ceremonies when you married, and describe in which steps the church was directly involved. When was the church wedding? When did you start to live together? What is essential? Kuranga, (kurambagiza,) gufata irembo, gusaba, gukwa, gutebutsa, (civil wedding) gusezerana mbere y'amategeko,) gushyingirwa (gutonda imisango, gushaka/kurongora, kwakira umwishywa, guca hagati, gukirana: kumara amavuta) and/or umunsi w'ubukwe, church wedding, gutinya, gutwikurura, (guca mw'irembo, gutekesha).

If you compare the modern weddings with the weddings in your time, do you see a difference? Is there a difference between the village and the city? Attitude church towards traditional customs? How do people choose between church rituals and tradition? Relation between traditional and Christian customs? Did the church abolish certain rituals? Reaction of the people (compare kwera, kwirabura)?

2) Preparation for marriage: How was your marriage preparation? Before you knew your future husband: during childhood, during adolescence. When you were engaged. By whom? What kind of things did they teach you? What did the church teach you about marriage?

How did the church prepare you for your marriage? Did you have premarital counselling? Did the pastor use Biblical truths or Bible texts? How did the church connect the following concepts with the Christian faith and the Bible?

What did the pastor teach you about how to cope with:

Dowry: What did the church teach about the roles of men and women, although they are different, do they have equal value? The same rights? How do you explain: man and woman are one? How do you value the dowry? Symbolic? Do you see a change in the concept?

Extended family: In Rwanda, when a couple marries, the woman leaves her family and becomes part of the man's family. How does that work out in practice? How is the relationship with the man and his own family? And with the woman and the family of her husband?

Communication (verbal): Do they consider themselves as friends? Do they talk about their work, worries, etc? If they have problems, do they talk with each other, or with family members?

Sexuality: They shall be one flesh; what does that mean? What is the role of sexuality? Is it allowed to have relationships outside marriage? What is the Christian view? Rwandan view? What do people choose?

Is it allowed to divorce?

3) Marital counselling: What was the role of the church once you were married? Which are the fields where people encounter most problems: dowry, extended family, communication, sexuality, or other topics? If you have problems, by example in one of these fields, in which way does the church support you? What does the church teach?

Finally:

You married in the Anglican Church. What makes a marriage a Christian marriage? What is the role of (your faith in) God in your marriage? Which Bible texts or Biblical truths are essential if you consider marriage?

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⁹⁷In case of Dutch surnames the following rules for capitalization are used. In the bibliography "Van Bruggen" comes under B, and not under V. The "van" is then put behind the surname. When there is no first name or initial: Van Bruggen, otherwise: J. van Bruggen, I followed this rule throughout my thesis.

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