

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO MARITAL INEQUALITY IN CENTRAL MALAWI CONFERENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Malawians have misunderstood the ‘complementary marital equality’ of husband and wife. Concepts and insights in this crucial ingredient of a fulfilling matrimony have been distorted and misapplied, leading to distrust, spouse and child abuse, household violence, and untold misery in the family relationship. The researcher was convinced that a conscious study of the essence of matrimony was required if the marital inequality was to be cleared. This is a theological issue. Since the whole Christendom accepts that the Bible is God’s inspired Word, the research called for the examining of most of the texts that relate to the marital relationship. This was tied together with insights from the writings of Ellen G. White and the views contributed by both Seventh-day Adventist authors and non-Seventh-day authors. The writer further held family ministries seminars both in rural and urban settings as a tool to glean from a wide spectrum the standpoint documented in this manuscript.

The Bible declares that marriage was instituted by God for the good of humankind. The relationship of our progenitors, the couple of the first marriage, was one of mutual and relational equality, structured in the similitude of the Godhead. Ellen G. White, Seventh-day and some non-Seventh-day Adventist authors all share the same view. To equate 'gender equality' with the 'relational equality in the marital relationship is a gross misrepresentation. The essence of marriage is embedded in the relational equality. This enables the spouses to complement and complete each other. They are mutually equal. Both have implanted in them the image and likeness of God. They have differentiated roles and responsibilities, but there is neither superiority nor inferiority between them. Marriage is a co-partnership of equality in difference.

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A project  
presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Joe Elliott Noah Gumbala

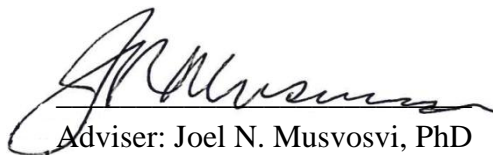
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To Mary, my wife, and to my son, James Madalitso for supporting me and encouraging me throughout this project.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

One morning, as I was sweeping the backyard of our house, the wife of our next door neighbour—a respectable Christian lady—passed by and remarked that I was doing ‘gender’ work. When I asked her what she meant she told me that sweeping the yard was women’s work. I shared this with my wife who commented that another neighbour had told her in a matter-of-fact tone that husbands and wives would never stand at an equal footing.

On another occasion, while we were waiting to catch a bus, several men were hotly arguing on ‘gender equality.’ One man even retorted by saying that he would never accept this idea until such a time that he, or any other man, became pregnant. Such distortions and gross misrepresentations have spilled over into the Church, which understandable, because the Church is in the world. However, this researcher has seen that the structure of the marriage relationship is not determined primarily by societal norms. It is not even structured along traditional or customary dictates. Marriage is as old as humankind. The researcher, therefore, deems it expedient to go to the beginning of humanity in order to discover the establishment of this institution.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

In the Central Malawi Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there are gross misunderstandings about the marital and relational equality of husband and wife. These misunderstandings may be the result of cultural baggage or a willful disregard of the prevailing valuable dynamics of the marriage institution. The distortion and misapplication of

concepts and insights in mutual and marital equality have led to relationship imbalances and marital inequalities. This has further resulted in distrust between the couple, spouse and child abuse, household violence, and untold misery in the family relationship.

### **Purpose of Study**

In line with the understanding that “God Himself instituted and ordained marriage at the very beginning of human history,”<sup>1</sup> this project presents to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Central Malawi Conference, and to all Malawians of goodwill, the biblical teaching on the marital equality of husband and wife so as to assist the Church and all Malawians to change their present mindset and behaviour.

### **Significance of Study**

Between 2006 and 2008, Malawi experienced a heart-rending wave of domestic scourge. The Nation, Malawi News, and The Daily Times—leading newspapers in Malawi—had carried articles on violence over women in regard to gender.<sup>2</sup> According to these newspapers, the first three months of 2006, experienced over eighty cases of this plague. It ranged from wife killing, wife battering, mutilations of women limbs and other organs, to grievous bodily harm, rape and other forms of cruelty.<sup>3</sup>

Due to this horrendous violence on women and children, this researcher came out completely convinced that the root cause of this behaviour is lack of knowledge on the

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<sup>1</sup>Myles Munro, *The Purpose and Power of Love and Marriage* (Shippensburg, Pasadena: Destiny Image Publishers, 2002), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Malawi Adventist University Library, Newspaper Archive, Ntcheu: Malawi, 23 February, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan Green, “Seizing the Moment: A Successful Campaign on Domestic Violence in Malawi,” *From Poverty to Power: NGOs and Advocacy*, accessed 15 July, 2009, <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=313>.

mutual and marital equality that God intended should exist between husband and wife. As a result, the writer has been constrained to put down in this treatise the information he has gathered through experience and the study of the Bible and other authors on this issue. Through the concepts discussed in this exposition, the writer hopes that the Church members and all people of concern will be helped to relate to one another according to God's design when He instituted marriage to be a blessing in this relational and "intimate fellowship of kindred hearts."<sup>4</sup>

### **Definition of Terms**

Some terms in this thesis carry somewhat different shades of meaning. This is due to the local contemporary usage and understanding. Here the researcher attempts to define them.

- **Gender.** Locally stratified use to refer to whatever housework is considered to be women's work.
- **Gender equality.** The proposition of "giving women's experiences equal status with the traditionally male-dominated view of the world."<sup>5</sup>
- **Patrilineal.** Marriage custom that traces family relationships through the male line. The patriarchs on the husband's side wield the most power in such a marriage. They have the prerogatives when it comes to making major decisions.
- **Matrilineal.** Marriage custom that traces family relationships through the female line. The matriarchs exert the most power of rule in these marriages.

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<sup>4</sup>Ray E. Baber, *Marriage and the Family* (New York: Maple Press, 1939), 203.

<sup>5</sup>David H. Olson, and John Defrain, *Marriage and Family: Diversity and Strengths* (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1994), 9.

- **Relational equality.** The complementary equal status of husband and wife characterized by a “life of intimacy, of deep mutual involvement, of complete openness to each other” in the confinements of marriage.<sup>6</sup>
- **Dowry.** An agreed number of heads of cattle or sum of money paid out by the bridegroom’s family to the bride’s entire family in appreciation for bringing up the bride.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The research was confined to the Central Malawi Conference and the South Malawi Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Finances prohibited the researcher from visiting as many people and families in the North Malawi Field as planned. Furthermore, due to the hunger and orphan plight, many organizations had sprouted to make money and the people were unhappy about this. With this setting, some couples became suspicious and thought the researcher was also out just to make money. This affected the patronage of the seminars that the writer conducted.

### **Methodology**

Since this paper is a response to marital inequality based on the biblical and theological standpoint, the researcher, with the help of a concordance, traced and studied almost all Bible texts that deal with the husband and wife relationship in order to find out what the Scriptures say on the marital equality. Secondly, he read as much as possible on family life issues to discover what other authors have said in this area of human life. He also explored the writings of Ellen G. White to see what perspectives she put forth about marriage. The research also included the Internet. Finally, with the help of research assistants, the researcher conducted a lot of marriage seminars and gathered information from Malawian

views on the mutual and relational equality of husband and wife. The seminar presentations and discussions were based on selected topics that were relevant to the project.

### **Overview of Study**

In this research, the writer considered all the relevant areas of this aspect of matrimony. All the findings are shown in five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This states the reasons that prompted the research and the possible challenges that were met.

Chapter 2: Biblical Foundations and Ellen G. White Perspectives. This is the account of what the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White say on the mutual and relational equality of matrimony.

Chapter 3: Review of Literature. The reader will come across a brief history of marriage, the views of Seventh-day Adventist authors, and those of other theologians.

Chapter 4: A Brief Description of the Local Setting. This chapter discusses some marriage customs of Malawi, and the researcher's seminar discussions as a response to the challenge on mutual and relational equality.

Chapter 5: Some Suggested Solutions. This section outlines some suggestions the researcher puts forward as possible solutions to the problem at hand. It also summarizes and concludes the project.

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<sup>6</sup>Roger L. Dudley and Peggy Dudley, *Married and Glad of It: The Sure Way to a Happy Marriage* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 26.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS AND ELLEN G. WHITE PERSPECTIVES

#### **Marriage in the Bible**

Marriage, the term we use to designate the state in which a man and a woman find themselves joined together at one time or another in their lifespan, has many facets— theological, biological, sociological, historical, philosophical, and psychological—just to name a few. This shows that the marriage institution is complex, deep, mystical, and far-reaching. Books and extensive research works have given it an elaborate coverage but we still encounter many gray and misty areas. The task of this research was to look at the mutual and relational equality of the two sexes—male and female—that the institution consummates.

The impetus to research on the specified aspect of the marital relationship had been motivated by the numerous accounts that had been reported in Malawi, our country. The Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS) reported that the police had announced that they had detained a man in the northern town of Karonga for allegedly killing his wife after she refused him sex. It went on to say that within a week of the Karonga murder, two other husbands attempted to kill their wives: one by chopping off both arms of the spouse, the other by petrol-bombing his wife. Shortly after that, a woman and her one-month-old baby were found in a maize patch. They had allegedly been killed and mutilated by the woman's husband, before he attempted to hang himself. The IPS further stated that civil society groups saw such incidents as only the tip of the iceberg. These groups concurred with seventeen non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which observed that the revealed cases only represented

a fraction of the reality of the magnitude of violence against women taking place in the country.<sup>1</sup>

The NGOs conceded that various research studies indicated that a huge number of cases of gender-based violence were covered up by the culture of silence, especially where cultural norms were often at odds with gender equality. Many Malawi women found themselves without a voice in the family. It was disheartening to note that this oppression persisted despite the fact that women outnumber men. In addition to their concerns about wife battering, the activists say they are alarmed by apparent increases in rape, underage sex and molestation perpetrated by men who believe that intercourse with a child or a virgin can rid them of HIV, reiterated by witchdoctors.<sup>2</sup>

These events prompted President Bingu wa Mutharika, the then President of Malawi, to call for women to “break this culture of silence from now onwards. Do not listen to myths which say you’ll...shut your mouth even when he (a husband) cuts your limbs,” he said in a state-of-the-nation address towards the end of January, 2006. “These sinister things sound like nightmares, but they are real. As your leader, I’m annoyed, disturbed and deeply saddened. Have men in our land chosen to become worse than beasts?” Mutharika asked.<sup>3</sup>

In a related development, the Presbyterian Record confirmed that church leaders in Malawi, disturbed by these atrocities, avowed to join hands across denominational lines to find ways to halt the scourge for their society. The clergymen accepted that “there is a need to

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Phiri, “Have Men in Our Land Chosen to Become Worse Than Beasts?” *Inter Press Service News Agency* (February, 2006), accessed 22 January, 2009, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2006/2/rights>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



review theologies, the ministries, the way marriages are instituted and community life. There is need to provide comprehensive pre-marriage and post-marriage counselling and training.”<sup>4</sup>

After a careful observation and study of the newspaper reports and comments from most of the readers, one cannot deny that there seems to be a wave of madness in the modern husband and father. However, this researcher came out completely convinced that the root cause of the untold violence and this beast-likeness behaviour could be the lack of knowledge in the design that God had on the relational equality in matrimony. “Marital illiteracy is one of the biggest challenges facing couples today.... Many marriages fail or fall short of reaching their full potential because the couples never learn what marriage is really about.”<sup>5</sup> Since it is an accepted fact that all Christendom believes that the Bible is the Word of God and humanity was created by Him (God), the researcher’s point of departure in the quest for possible solutions to this inhumanness was the Bible.

### **God: The Author of Marriage**

The Bible declares that God is the Author of marriage. This institution was conceived in His mind, fashioned in His heart, and given to humankind as a permanent sacred gift. When sin entered Eden, God did not withdraw it as He did with the holy clothing<sup>6</sup> (Genesis 3:7). He did not dissolve it, even when Adam, the husband, blamed Eve, his wife, for the eating of the forbidden fruit. Marriage still remained, and it is still with us. Since Christianity is of God and the Bible is the inspired revelation of God’s will and acts, the project takes its readers to the study of this divine institution as revealed in the Bible in order to get some glimpses into some of the foundational concepts of why God, the Creator, established this

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<sup>4</sup>The Presbyterian Record, “Malawi Churches Fight Domestic Violence,” *Presbyterian Record*, accessed 3 June 2006, <http://www.presbyterianrecord.ca/2006/04/01>.

<sup>5</sup>Munro, 61.

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1958), 45, 57.

husband-wife relationship. Additionally, it is hoped that the solution to the marital inequality that has troubled marriage all these years will be found.

### **Humanity Was Created as a Reflection of God**

“The Bible is the manufacturer’s repair and instruction book for humans (2 Timothy 3:16).”<sup>7</sup> So for *repairs* on matrimonial ideologies, our first and foremost consultant is none other but the Bible. “The first two chapters of Genesis contain certain important clues to help us understand what marriage was meant to be...”<sup>8</sup> It sets the stage of how the two genders of the human species were related to each other. These two chapters must be the “starting point for wrestling with male and female relatedness.”<sup>9</sup> “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over all the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. So God created man in his own image ... male and female created he them (Genesis 1:26-28).”<sup>\*</sup> This was the sixth day of God’s creation acts. The earth teemed up with all forms of life. God now climaxed it all by creating man—male and female—as the crown of His creation.

This sacred record is profound, clear, and unequivocal. It gives us no room for doubt and no ground for erroneous suppositions and conclusions. In the creation account, all creatures were created after their own kind. Man, however, finds his identity in God. He is akin to God since he reflects God’s image and likeness. Thus the “genealogy of our race,

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<sup>7</sup>James Hurley, “Celebrating Love: A Theology of Marriage,” in “*Christian Counseling Today*” (Buffalo Grove, Illinois: Evangelical Press Association, 1996), 12.

<sup>8</sup>Munro, 48.

<sup>9</sup>Diana S. Richmond Garland and David E. Garland, *Beyond Companionship—Christians in Marriage* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 27.

<sup>\*</sup>Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations are from The New King’s Version of the Bible.

given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator.”<sup>10</sup> As such, the husband and wife are children of God (Luke 3:38). He created the male and the female after His own likeness, making them His reflection. In this alone we can begin to discern that they are to function as equals and relate to each other equally as well.<sup>11</sup>

### **A Look at the Relational Dimension in Humankind**

The plurality in the divine council—“let *us* make man in our image, after *our* likeness” (Genesis 1:26, emphasis supplied)—originated the relational aspect in the human race. Even the name *'elohiym* (God), in this verse is an “absolute masculine plural noun.”<sup>12</sup> In this name alone we find that the Godhead is a plurality of divine Persons. They sat in council to discuss the issue at hand—an aspect of relational equality and oneness.

Though we may not fully understand what it is to be created in God’s image, the Bible portrays God as a personal Being. He loves, thinks, chooses, desires, and feels. He is also merciful, kind, forgiving, and patient (Exodus 34:6, 7). These are some of His attributes that He must have shared with humanity in creating them “in His likeness.” Furthermore God’s essential nature is love (1 John 4:16). So the Bible depicts that God exists in a plurality of three divine, diverse, personal Beings (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 48:16; John 1:1-3, 14; Matthew 3:16, 17; John 14:10, 16, 23, 26; 17:21). Though diverse in personhood, they are essentially One God. They perform different functions but in unity. Among them, there prevails relational unity and equality. So the plural ‘*let us*’ is the key to the relational characteristics of the Godhead.

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<sup>10</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1958), 45.

<sup>11</sup>Garland and Garland, 26.

<sup>12</sup>Bibleworks 5.0.020w, PC Software.

As earlier pointed out, love is one of God's attributes. He is principally love (1John 4:8). Since love is action-oriented and always flows out, God had a yearning in His heart for fellowship beyond the Godhead, on a personal level.<sup>13</sup> Thus, He created humankind, as His own children (Luke 3:38, last part), to share His love with them. Then He implanted in them—when He breathed into man the breath of life (Genesis 2:7)—the capacity to reciprocate His nature of love. They, in turn, were to relate to one another with love and adoration as the Persons of the Godhead do.

### **Humanity Is the Handiwork of God**

“And God said, Let us make *man* in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion ...” (Genesis 1:26-28). In this construction, the use of the plural pronoun after a singular noun, *man*, was not just a grammatical oversight or just some literary style. It was neither a problem of translation from the original text. The plural pronoun was an indication that the noun *man* did not imply singularity of thought. “The term *man* is used here (in both the Hebrew and the English) in the generic sense.... The term includes both male and female.”<sup>14</sup>

Subsequently, the seemingly singular noun was generically employed to refer to two individuals of different genders, but of the same species. In this vein, the male is not complete without the female; neither can the female be a complete human without the male counterpart. We could, therefore, equate thus: male (*man*) + female (*man*) = (*full*) man. This explains why God created *them* male and female (Genesis 1:27), blessed them, and gave *them* dominion (Genesis 1:28) and called *their* name Adam, (*'adam*) (Genesis 5:2). “The use of the

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<sup>13</sup>Martin Weber, *Hurt, Healing, & Happy Again* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1989), 15.

<sup>14</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington DC.: Review and Herald, 2006), 296.

plural in these verses indicates that God did not design a hierarchical relationship between male and female.... They were created equal.”<sup>15</sup> So there stood before Him, in His image, a complete genus of man. This further demonstrated the relational aspect of the two natures. They stood side by side, “equal in being, in worth, but not identical in person. Their physiques are complementary, their functions cooperative.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, they were “made in the similitude of God.” (James 3:9, NKJV).

### **Humanity Was Created in the Image of God.**

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). This text divides itself clearly into three parts: ‘formed man of the dust of the ground,’ ‘breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,’ and ‘man became a living soul.’ The research revealed that in the first part the Hebrew used *man*, (‘*adam*), generically as in Genesis 1:26. This term refers to both genders of the human species. In the second part the ‘*his*’ singled out the *male*, and the third part used *man*, (‘*adam*), generically again to refer to both the man and the woman.<sup>17</sup> With this original understanding, Genesis 2:7 connected very well with Genesis 1:26, 27. Hence the two genders were within the one mortal being. So the Creator breathed into humanity, both male and female, His own life and nature—His likeness, His image.

### **Humanity Is a Distinct Creation**

God just spoke the other creatures into existence. “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:5, 9). However, He did not do so with

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<sup>15</sup>Garland and Garland, 28.

<sup>16</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 296.

<sup>17</sup>Garland and Garland, 29.

humanity's creation. He fashioned man using His own hands. In so doing, there was "a clear discontinuity between human beings and the animal kingdom."<sup>18</sup> This act also expressed God's infinite and unfathomable love, making humans a new and distinct order.

Humanity was an extension of the heavenly family. Though sexually different, both had all the divine characteristics that reflected God's image. This differentiated them from the rest of the lower animal kingdom. Various species of creation came "within each category, for instance, the diverse 'beast of the earth.... Humans appear as a category by themselves. They came originally in a single variety."<sup>19</sup> Again, they were relationally equal because they were a *single* entity, bearing the superscription of their Creator. In this understanding, the researcher believed that relational equality must be completely different from gender equality since the former related to companionship, and the later applied to biological differentiation.

### **Humanity Is Earthly**

In the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:26 used the singular noun *man* ('*adam*) followed by a plural verb. From the ISBE Bible Dictionary, the study showed that the term described the colour of the human being, from *ha, 'adam*, 'to be red.' Most probably, it described the material God used, *ha, 'adam*, 'the ground,' or 'the one of the soil.' Thus the man was a red being of 'dirt,' or 'earth.'<sup>20</sup> The ISBE Bible Dictionary further asserted that

the author of Gen 2:7 seems to associate it, rather by word-play than derivation, with Heb: *ha-'adhamah*, "the ground" or "soil," as the source from which man's body was taken (compare 3:19,23). The name Heb: '*adhamah* itself seems to be closely connected with the name Edom (Heb: '*edhom*, Gen 25:30), meaning "red"; but whether from the redness of the soil, or the ruddiness of the man, or merely the incident recorded in Gen

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<sup>18</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 93.

<sup>19</sup>Aecio E. Cairus, "The Doctrine of Man" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 2000), 211.

<sup>20</sup>"Adam" (ISBE Bible Dictionary, Bibleworks-Version 7, PC Software).

25:30, is uncertain. Without doubt the writer ... had in mind man's earthly origin, and understood the name accordingly.”<sup>21</sup>  
In this vein, the designation *man* (*'adam*) was not a proper noun, but a description of the species that God formed from earthly material. The term distinguished this species from nonhuman creatures.

Thus the male was formed from the earth (Genesis 2:7). The female was made from the rib that was taken from the man who was taken from the earth (Genesis 2:21, 22). In this setting, both the male and the female were of the soil—earthly and mortal. This was why *man* (*'adam*) was used with the plural pronouns *them* in Genesis 1:26 and *their* in Genesis 5:2. In this context then, “the man and the woman were intended by God to correspond to each other.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Both Genders Are Called by the Same Name**

“Male and female created he them: and blessed them and called their name Adam ... (Genesis 5:2). Right from the onset, the human species was created male and female and was called by the same name: *Adam* (*'adam*). Moses, the writer of Genesis, was not just playing with words or just being poetical. Inspiration must have revealed to him to use this term. It was only when the two genders were singularized that we find the term *Adam* (*'adam*) being used to refer to the male only. (See Genesis 2:19 and 3:9.)

Adam is the generic term for man, including woman (Gen. 1:26,27)... Both man's and woman's characteristic excellencies were contained in the Adam before that Eve was taken out of his side. The creation of woman from man (marked by the very names *isha*, *ish*) subsequently implies the same truth.”<sup>23</sup>

Matthew Henry, commenting on Genesis 5:2, further contends

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Garland and Garland, 28.

<sup>23</sup>Fausset's Bible Dictionary, art. '*Adam*' (Bibleworks-Version 7: PC Software).

that he *called their name Adam. Adam signifies earth, red earth. God gave them this name ... which would be a continual memorandum to him of the meanness of his original, and oblige him to look unto the rock whence he was hewn and the hole of the pit whence he was digged [sic], (Isa. 51:1).*<sup>24</sup>

The texts, however, do not inform us who decided to name the *male* ‘Adam.’ Since one of humanity’s culturally behaviour is the giving of names, the researcher believed that this was the writer’s contribution. It was worthwhile to note that it was only after the Fall that the man called his wife Eve.

### **Both Male and Female Were Created on the Same Day**

“Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, *in the day when they were created* (Genesis 5:2). The text is crisply clear. Adam and Eve were created on *the same day*, the sixth day of creation week (Genesis 1:31). In the Hebrew mind, a period of time that had a point of beginning and ending was taken literary, unless it was otherwise documented. Consequently, the days of creation recorded in the Genesis accounted for literal days. They had a beginning and they had an ending, because the Scriptural narrative records that “the evening and the morning were the first day”<sup>25</sup> (Genesis 1:5). See also verses 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31.

It had been God’s plan all along to created humankind male and female. And this the Creator God did on the same day. He began with creating the male, of course. The researcher reported the use of the masculine pronoun *his* in the second part of Genesis 2:7. Soon after the male, He created the female on the *same day*. There was indeed some delay, but the complete human pair was created on the sixth day. This discovery helped the researcher to

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<sup>24</sup>Henry Matthew Commentary (Bibleworks-Version 7: PC Software).

<sup>25</sup>Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Hagerstown: Maryland, 1976), 1:226.



see the two as of equal standing relationally in matters of creation time. None of them had preeminence.

The evidence here elaborated bore witness to the fact that all God's creation acts were finished in six literal days. This included the creation of humankind: "so God created man in his own image ... male and female created he them." And verse 28 states, "And God blessed them, and ... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it..." It goes without saying that it would be hard to imagine God pronouncing a blessing of procreation to the male only.

Genesis 2:7, 18-25 could have seemed to bring in an ambiguous and contradictory thought. This mist disappeared when the text was studied in the context that the creation narrative in this chapter completed and harmonized the account in chapter one. These were not two different narratives of two different creation stories. Genesis 2 gives us some of the details that had not been covered in Genesis 1, thus completing the whole picture of how God had engaged Himself in the creation of the two human beings.

### **They Were Empowered to Reign as Sovereigns of the Earth**

The Scriptures state that both the man and the woman were to have "dominion over the fish of the sea ..., and over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28). Right from the beginning, God had planned that humankind would have authority over the earth. Adam and Eve were to reign as king and queen over God's creation. Both of them were invested with the authority over the earth and all other living things. They were master and mistress. They were not to reign over each other as master and slave, or as mistress and slave. But relating to one another as equals, both were to discharge their power co-regently.

Nevertheless, they were to execute this responsibility in consultation with God, their Father and overall King. This was why God came to visit them "in the cool of the day" (at the end of the day) to discuss matters of shared interest in the running of the affairs of the earthly

domain (Genesis 3:8). This dominion was not given to the man to subjugate his wife, or vice versa. Created in perfect equality they were expected to exercise the vicegerence entrusted to them by their Maker in harmony and love. They were to employ their stewardship mutually. Consequently, God treated them as equal partners.

### **Both Were Given Power to Procreate**

He who made them male and female “blessed them, and . . . said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it . . .” (Genesis 1:28). This could be seen as God’s pronouncement of a blessing upon a couple after being wedded. In this declaration, God actually endowed them with the power to propagate their species. He shared with humankind the divine attribute of creation embedded in procreation. As a matter of fact, Kis posited that “‘procreation’ means ‘to create for’ or ‘to create in place of’ God. Through this act humans participate in bringing to life new, unique human beings.”<sup>26</sup>

This enabled the two people to populate the earth with beings that would have an imprint of God’s image and character in them. In this context, the writer of this project found that one of the purposes of marriage as ordained by God was human population. In this manner, humans were able to transmit the nature they had received of God. This benediction heightened the unity, mutuality, and the co-equality of the husband-wife relationship. It was pronounced upon the first couple to be enjoyed in equal manner. This wonderful sanction remained with humanity even after the Fall. God never rescinded it.

### **Both Were Called to Detachment and Attachment**

The text, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), was another dimension of the foundational

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<sup>26</sup>Miroslav M. Kis, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 2000), 703.

principles of harmonious equality. Three other times this text was repeated in the Scriptures (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:6, 7; Ephesians 5:31), perhaps to underscore the importance of this principle. Marriage had a double call. The first call was a summons to both spouses to sacrificially detach themselves from parents and all other ties—cultural, or otherwise—that could impede the healthy growth into oneness. The issue was one of priority. The Bible was not contradicting itself in respect to honour our parents (Exodus 19:12). It was not intended to cut off the relationship with the spouses’ family. The principle was an injunction to the couple to release themselves from the authority of their parents and other *powerful* ties and commit themselves to each other.

The second call was a process of attachment. This involved the giving to each of the two physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Cleaving to one’s spouse meant making him or her the first priority. Husband and wife needed to remind themselves the traditional wedding vow: “Leaving all others, will you cleave unto him/her?” and the answer: “I’ll do.” The choice to marry someone meant to cleave to that person “until death do you part.” Spouses that follow this divine mandate make their happiness and well-being their top [priority. In so doing, the couple is enabled to reflect the image of God in their relationship.

### **The Consummation of the Mutuality and Relational Equality**

Humanity is replete with all kinds of relationships. This is understandable because we are first and foremost a social species. One of these social relationships is marriage. This institution is the highest peak in the expression and consummation of all human interactions. To complete the relational equality, God first made man from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). This was the starting point. Moses, the author, explained how humanity and its relational dimension were put in place. God started with the male in laying the foundation for the marital relationship. As already discussed, God had ended the creation of the man and the woman as recorded in Genesis 1:27, 28. Additionally, Genesis 2: 7, 18, 19 tells us how He

had accomplished this. It was during the naming of the animals that the man felt his intense desire for a female being of his nature and kind. The absence of the man's female counterpart "was not God's oversight but because of God's foresight. He did not create her until Adam expressly yearned for her."<sup>27</sup>

### **The 'Helpmeet' Is Formed**

To make this yearning ripe, God so deliberately paraded all the animals before the man and commanded him to name them. This work the man did and in the process the incompleteness of the relational dimension was evoked. To this unspoken longing, God, his Maker, responded by saying, "*It is not good* that the man should be alone; I will make an helpmeet for him" (Genesis 2:18). This statement was the epitome of the mutual relationality of the marital relationship. The ideal time had come. Alberta Mazart observes that

God's realization that it was not good for the man to be alone was not an afterthought, a decision prompted by unforeseen need. This joining of male and female in a human relationship was always in His plan, and now was the time to bring it about. God could have created Adam and Eve simultaneously, but He did not. Perhaps He knew there could be times when Adam would need to remember how lonely it was without Eve and how much he needed her to complete his wholeness."<sup>28</sup>

So God busied Himself to provide man with the help meet—"a fit helper, or a suitable companion, to be mutually complementary and interdependent."<sup>29</sup> Estep Jr., Anthony, and Allison concur with Cairus as they posit that God's parading of the animals before the man was not a futile attempt on His part to see if the man would "find some creature that would be suitable for the man, but it served to arouse in the man the realization that he had no

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<sup>27</sup>Garland and Garland, 28.

<sup>28</sup>Alberta Mazart, *Captivated by Love* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1981), 10.

<sup>29</sup>Cairus, 210.

corresponding mate” —a counterpart was missing.<sup>30</sup> When this realization was effected, God then caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and then dismembered him. He took a rib (Heb: *tseelah, therefore ‘side’*)<sup>31</sup> from his (the man’s) side. This position significantly suggested essential equality. The sense ‘*side*’ when preserved, underlined the equality and complementarity of man and woman.”<sup>32</sup> “And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Genesis 2:22).

Moses was indeed a Hebrew scholar. He described the creation of the ‘help meet’ by using a different Hebrew verb. In other instances before this time, especially when he was writing about the creation of man, the male counterpart, “he employed ... ‘to create’ (1:27), ‘to make’ (1:26) and ‘to form’ (2:7), but now God ‘builds’ the woman.”<sup>33</sup> On the surface this pronouncement in Genesis 2:18 would seem to indicate a hint of the woman being subordinate to the man. On the contrary, the truth of the matter was that the woman’s role was to stand by the man’s side in order to help him in carrying out his God-given responsibilities, not as a subordinate, but as an equal.

The ISBE Bible Dictionary completed this thought by testifying that “Heb [sic]: *ishshah*, “woman” (literally, “man-ess”), is not strictly a name but a generic designation, referring to her relation to the man; a relation she was created to fulfill in default of any true companionship between man and the beasts, and represented as intimate and sacred beyond that between child and parents.”<sup>34</sup> An argument could come up and say that the very nature of

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<sup>30</sup>James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, & Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 176.

<sup>31</sup>“Eve,” (Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, Bibleworks-Version 7: PC Software).

<sup>32</sup>Cairus, 210.

<sup>33</sup>Nichol, ed., 1:226.

<sup>34</sup>“Eve,” (Bibleworks-Version 7, PC Software).

‘helper’ position presupposes submission and subservience. This ambiguity could arise because of how the word ‘helper’ is figured out. This research indicated that such an argument could originate from the English translation of the Hebrew *ezer*, sometimes spelled as *‘azar*.

In the original thought, *ezer* meant ‘supporter, or ‘benefactor’. This same word was used of the God who helps human beings (Ps 33:20; compare with Ps 54:4). The New American Standard Version translates *‘azar* ‘to help,’ ‘to succour,’ ‘to support,’ *ezer*, as ‘helper suitable for him.’ When the Psalmist saw the Almighty God as his *ezer*: “Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul” (Psalm 54:4), he was, in effect, exclaiming in sheer pride of his Benefactor, and drawing the people’s attention by saying, “Look, God is my deliverer! The Lord is among those who support me.”

This word, therefore, was rendered “literary as *corresponding to*.”<sup>35</sup> Richard M. Davidson specified that the word ‘helper’ “is a relational term, describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, either superiority or inferiority.”<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, in the Hebrew mind, the ‘helper’ (*ezer*) the Creator built from the rib that He had taken from the side of the male, was a corresponding female being that would complement and complete the man. So the two were counterparts who were to relate equally to each other.

### **They Were One Flesh with Different Roles**

This is another sensitive and controversial area of matrimony. In the heart and will of God as revealed in the Bible, marriage was an establishment between male and female. This very composition spelled differences. With this gender differentiation, came differences in

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<sup>35</sup>“Eve,” (Bibleworks-Version 7, PC Software).

the roles for the husband and the wife. 1 Corinthians 11:3 states that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of every man, and God is the Head of Christ. Since ‘man’ (Greek: *aner*) in this context can be “used generically of a group of both men and women,”<sup>37</sup> this headship and leadership was not to not be dictatorial, condescending, or patronizing to the wife.

Putting together 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23-33, the researcher deduced that the husband was to lead out in the marriage and in the home with love and the mind of Christ. A closer look at the comparisons the Apostle Paul made in these texts indicated that the husband was a kind of father, provider and defender of the home. He was mandated to feed, care, nurture, and cherish his wife as his own body. Likewise, the wife was exhorted to submit to the authority of her own husband in everything as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22-24). Similar admonitions can be found in Colossians 3:18, 19 and 1 Peter 3:7. In all these texts, the overarching characteristics emphasized as husband and wife carried out their roles were love and respect. If such were to be the attitude in the home, then headship, love, and submission would not be a problem for either partner.

The complementary role for the wife was thoroughly covered in Proverbs 31. While the husband was to help with the children and with household chores, as he fulfilled his love for his wife, Proverbs 31 also portrayed an industrious wife. The home was to be the wife’s primary sphere of influence and responsibility. She was the mistress of the household, ensuring that everyone took his/her share of work seriously. Though society seemed to have classified gender roles in the home, who did what would not be an impediment in this ideal setting because love, respect, and mutual submission would reign supreme. The goal was not

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<sup>36</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 2” in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 26 (No. 1), 15.

<sup>37</sup>Bibleworks-Version 5.0.020w, PC Software.

for both spouses to be in competition, but to compliment and complement each other. Self-giving love and service to one another within the confinements of mutuality and equality, without losing their distinctiveness and personality, would prevail in such a relationship.

### **Ellen G. White on Relational Equality**

Ellen G. White (November 26, 1827–July 16, 1915) was a prolific Christian writer. She was considered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as possessing the gift of prophecy. Her supporters regarded her as a contemporary prophet, even though she never claimed this title herself. She wrote profusely on many subjects concerning theology, evangelism, Christian lifestyle, education, health, and the marriage ordinance. The researched perused through some of her writings and learned some of her perspectives in this profound dimension of mutual and relational equality in this institution.

### **Marriage**

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. It was the first gift of God to man. Marriage is a blessing. . . it provides for man’s social needs.”<sup>38</sup> This was what Ellen G. White observed as she studied the marriage institution. She stated unequivocally that the marriage union was not the product of man’s doing. She went further emphasizing that the marriage relationship that was ordered in accordance with God’s directions glorified the Creator and benefitted the couple.

Her other touching comment was made in connection with Genesis 2:24. A cursory reading of this text shows that the words in this text were the product of Moses, the author, by way of comment soon after Adam had exclaimed his satisfaction. Ellen G. White, on the contrary, expressed that in saying this statement, God “enunciated the law of marriage for all

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<sup>38</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 25, 26.



the children of Adam to the close of time.”<sup>39</sup> In thus ascribing the statement to God, she seemed to be in conflict with many theologians. Nonetheless, her thought was verity when we remember that Moses was writing under the inspiration of God. In this manner, the thought came from God, and Moses may have put it in his own words. God, through Moses, definitely spelled out an authoritative declaration of His divine will concerning the institution of marriage. It was in this comprehension that God, and not Moses, laid the foundation for the mutual affection and the tender endearment that husband and wife should experience in this union of ‘one flesh.’

### **Mutuality and Relational Equality**

In many of her writings, Ellen White was an advocate of the mutual and relational equality that should exist between husband and wife. Commenting on Genesis 2:18, “And the LORD said, *It is not good* that the man should be alone; I will make an helpmeet for him,” she wrote:

Among all the creatures God had made on the earth there was not one equal to man . . . . Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without companionship the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness. Eve communion with angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship. There was none of the same nature to love and to be loved. God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him’—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, who could be one with him in love and sympathy.<sup>40</sup>

What Ellen White’s depiction here came about during the time Adam was naming the animals. Purposely, the Lord God brought to him “every beast of the field and every fowl of the air . . . to see what the man would call them: and whatsoever name Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (Genesis 2:19). In his engagement, Adam had to

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<sup>39</sup>Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1955), 63, 64.

<sup>40</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1958),46.

study the habits and special peculiarities of the animals and the birds in order to give them appropriate names. Presently, in the busy-ness of his assignment, he perceived that each creature had a companion—male and female of the same kind—but he was alone; the male of course but no female of his kind.

### **Adam Was Restless and Lonesome**

This realization made him restless and lonesome. He looked around in desperation, but his search availed him nothing. There was none of his nature. All the animals were too inferior. They could not match up to him. He felt very sad, let down, and dejected. He felt a deep and bottomless relational vacuum inside him. This revelation brought about an intense longing for fellowship and intimate relationship only one of his own kind could fill. He must have wondered: ‘Why should I be alone; this is not good. Something must be muddled up here.’ The pain of aloneness was unbearable. This was exactly what God had wanted: the calculated delay resulted in the desired effect. The bridegroom was then ready for his bride. God had then laid the foundation for all future marital relationships. This was what every true bridegroom would experience in the future: aloneness and deep emptiness—the desire for a true and satisfying companion.

In line with this thought, Genesis 2:18 was the Creator’s echo of the unspoken thoughts of Adam. “The Lord was pleased with this last and noblest of all His creatures . . . but it was not His purpose that man should live in solitude.”<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the text before us was not another creation account, but an explanation of the establishment of the marriage relationship. It was a filling-in of some detail that had been omitted in Genesis 1:26-28.

### **God Meets Adam’s Need**

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<sup>41</sup>Ellen White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 25.

To supply the need, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam—the first anesthetic operation. Adam slept quietly and submissively, in the will of God, while a benefactor Creator prepared a partner for him. He took out one of the man’s ribs near the heart, thereby dissecting and dismembering him. This man, *ishadam*, was now split.<sup>42</sup> The rib stood for the *female* who had been in the *male* (cf. Genesis 2:7) until that moment. God then closed the hollow in the man’s side with flesh (Genesis 2:21). Thus the material for building the woman, *ishshah*, was then ready in God’s hands. Then with this rib, God went into His ‘workshop.’ He busied Himself there molding Adam’s solution to his lonesomeness: a beautiful and comely woman. Her shape, the contours, the hilly areas, the valleys, and every other thing on her body and about her, were all designed for Adam’s satisfaction.

God fashioned Eve in a very exclusive manner. Ellen White saw in this woman a helper corresponding to him; one who was fitted to be his companion. Eve was made to be Adam’s all in love and sympathy. In her book, she penned down a profound observation when she said that

Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of him, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. ‘For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it. Ephesians 5:29.’<sup>43</sup>

### **The Woman was Built for the Man**

God made the woman for man’s good and happiness. She was his female counterpart; a companion comparable to him; suited to meet his needs. The man was now satisfied. The human species was finally complete. In this crowning act of create

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<sup>42</sup>“Eve,” *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary* (Bibleworks, Version 7: PC Software).

<sup>43</sup>Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1958), 46.

humankind, God's emotional hunger was also fulfilled. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). God's desire for matrimony was that both the man and the woman should cultivate the same interests, be led to study each other's dispositions, and bear one another's burdens. In so doing they would move towards God's ideal for marital happiness.

Marriage could be likened to a building enterprise. Consequently, the couple should endeavor to affirm and build each other. They should strive to cleave to one another through cultivating the grace of "kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering."<sup>44</sup> In this way, they would grow together in assimilation of tastes and the reciprocities of attachment. They would experience the satisfaction that would come from their participation in mutual obligations, favours, and privileges. Such relational deeds would bring heaven's blessing in the home.

### **Ellen G. White's Classic Book on Marriage: The Adventist Home**

This Christian lady looked at this matrimonial union with very high regard. She wrote extensively on many and varied themes concerning it. She reasoned with couples that were going through crises. She advised the youth who were contemplating this marital union. She advised husbands and wives to have no secrets between them. The husband should love his wife together with all her faults. The wife should do likewise. She also reminded mothers-to-be that prenatal influences had far-reaching results in the life of their children. She dealt with child development and parenting. The question of headship and submission were not left uncovered. Her admonitions and lessons were timely and insightful. All these insights and admonitions were recorded in many books, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, and newsletters.

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<sup>44</sup>Ellen White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 114.

Since all these were scattered and somehow hard to find when one wanted to read them, it dawned on her to compile them into one book. This she did and titled it *The Adventist Home*. In this book she reiterated repeatedly that marriage was a sacred gift from God to humanity. She undeniably emphasized that Jehovah God had intended marriage to be—“an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity”<sup>45</sup> On many occasions Ellen White’s heart went to the youthful newly-weds as they started the marriage union. She instructed them to understand that marriage was not an affiliation one entered and left at one’s whim. It was a relation that binds husband and wife for a lifetime. She likened it to following a course of study from which the student was “never in this life to be graduated.”<sup>46</sup> She went to appeal to them that they should endeavour to make their friendliness and fondness contribute to each other’s happiness. In this manner they would ever live up to God’s ideal for marriage.

### **Home Is the Heart of All Activity**

In collaboration with other sociologists, Ellen White confirmed that society “is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it.”<sup>47</sup> This made the home the base upon which the community, the church, and the nation are founded. The manners, the morals, and all the cultural aspects of humanity depended upon the household. A well-ordered home built all the entities of society. In this vein, she counselled that the “home should be made all that the word implies. It should be a little heaven upon earth ... where affections are

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<sup>45</sup>Ellen White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1955), 65.

<sup>46</sup>Ellen White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 105.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

cultivated instead of being studiously repressed.”<sup>48</sup> This made the home the heart of all human activity.

### **Husbands and Wives Have Different Roles**

The Lord God created two genders—male and female—so that the two should complement and complete each other. This fact implied that the difference in gender brought differences in the household roles. Society and culture had also played a major part in stratifying what men’s and women’s roles were. Traditionally, housework such as laundering, floor mopping, cooking, clearing and cleaning the dining table, washing dishes, child care, tutoring and disciplining kids, iron clothes, and numerous other chores in the home had been considered as women’s work. Another traditional notion was that women should stay at home and do these jobs, while the men should go out to work in order to support the wife. Even when the husband was at home, he feels he was free to do what he wanted.

In her discourses as found in *The Adventist Home*, Ellen White accepted the reality of gender. Many of her counsels to families addressed this important topic. She encouraged couples to bear in mind that each one of them had individual responsibilities, emphasizing that “the two who unite their interest in life will have distinct characteristics and individual responsibilities. Each one will have his or her work....”<sup>49</sup> At another time, she wrote to husbands and wives, advising them to maintain their personal individuality and personality, although they were married and gave themselves to each other by a most solemn vow. None of them was to be submerged in the individuality of another. Matrimony did not turn

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>49</sup>White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 114.

one into a puppet. “The two were one,” she observed, “yet each had a separate identity which the marriage covenant could not destroy.”<sup>50</sup>

### **How Husbands and Wives Should Regard Household Chores**

She repeatedly wrote profusely that stratification of gender roles in the home was the cause of many couple misunderstandings and marriage breakages. To her, housework was not demeaning to man or woman. The husband should not take his wife as a house keeper, whose chief business was in the kitchen, or minding the children. As moral and responsible beings, both husband and wife had the same area of action. This was their marriage and their home. All household duties devolved upon both; but no one was to doubt that their duties varied according to circumstances. As both worked in their respective spheres, “the wife is to grace the family circle as a wife and companion to a wise husband .... The husband should let his wife know that he appreciates her work.”<sup>51</sup>

This prolific Christian author underscored the fact that the name ‘husband’ was a contraction of a compound word: ‘house-band.’ As such, the husband was to act as a band that encircled the home, protecting it from marauders and like destroyers. She strongly recommended that the husband should do his faithful part to assist in lightening the burdens of home making. His wife was not to be regarded as if she was a beast of burden. He should always keep in mind that the duties and responsibilities in the home rested squarely on both of them. These tasks did not attach to them as men and as women, but as companions and parents. Household responsibilities were God-ordained sacred obligations resting on both of them. The researcher found out that a diligent study of *The Adventist Home* would convince the reader that Ellen White advocated for companionship marriage.

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 114.

## **Her Views on Male Headship and Female Submission**

“The husband is the head of the family as Christ is the head of the church .... He should maintain his position in his family with all meekness, yet with decision. It is the duty of the wife to yield her wishes and will to her husband.”<sup>52</sup> This was how Ellen White looked at the question of headship and submission in marriage. God had constituted that the husband should be his wife’s counsellor, adviser, and protector. The wife should look to him for love and sympathy and for assistance in the training of the children.

With this thought in mind she quoted Colossians 3:12 and Ephesians 5:22-25, where the Apostle Paul discussed the roles of husband and wife.<sup>53</sup> In her comments, she took us back to the beginning to reveal how Adam and Eve carried out these roles. “When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority over the man, but in all things, she should be his equal.”<sup>54</sup> This followed that Adam and Eve accepted their roles as they were. There was neither competition nor dissatisfaction between them. Their maleness and femaleness was given to them by the Creator. Their relationship was one of harmony. By giving us this picture, our authority stressed that “neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter .... Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ellen G. White, “Letter 9, 1864” in *Testimonies on Sexual Behaviour, Adultery, and Divorce* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1864), 26.

<sup>52</sup> Ellen G. White, “Testimony for the Church, *Review and Herald*, April 22, 1892.

<sup>53</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1890), 46.

<sup>54</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1890), 484.



## **Sin Perverted the Marital Relationship**

When the progenitors of our race sinned, marriage was perverted. A curse blanketed the whole earth, including this sacred gift of God. As a result God pronounced what would befall Adam and Eve because of their disobedience. All things would run out of the course that God had ordained. The harmony of the home would turn sour. Eve's desire would be to her husband and Adam would rule over her (Genesis 3:16). This brought about the man's superiority and domination. He began to control everything around him. Adam named his wife Eve, because she was going to be "the mother of all living things" (Genesis 3:20). This must have been the beginning of arbitrarily labeling and stratifying gender roles in the home. With the passing of years, the behaviour had grown to immeasurable proportions.

During the seminars, the research revealed that many husbands and wives were no longer enjoying the bliss that God had envisioned. Many couples had started their marital life with high hopes and dreams. However, somewhere along the way, their plans had become shattered. Some had resorted to divorce; others lived a solitary life within the home. Life became a drudgery. Many lament: 'Why marriage?' Conversely, the good news was that Jesus Christ came "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). One of the things that was distorted and lost was the mutuality and relational equality of husband and wife that had existed in Eden.

## **The Purpose of the Gospel**

In this regard Ellen White comes in and underscored that among other issues, "the

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<sup>55</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1890), 47.

purpose of the gospel is to restore its purity and beauty.”<sup>56</sup> In Jesus the old things had passed away. Consequently, every husband and wife, who had experienced the redemption of the Lord, had to go back to Eden and structure their married life after the Edenic model. They would not quarrel and fight over who is to control what. Under the grace of God, the husband would not be tyrannical, exacting, and critical of his wife’s actions. He would be careful, attentive, constant, faithful, and compassionate. The wife would also respect and adore her husband. She would be faithful, obedient and sincere. Both would bear one another’s burdens and lighten each other’s responsibilities. Both would yield to one another, knowing that the marriage undertaking, run in companionship, would gladden both their hearts. In so doing, their home would be “the happiest place on earth, the very symbol of the home in heaven.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1955), 64.

<sup>57</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 102.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **A Brief History of Marriage**

The history of this institution dates back to the origin of humankind. Like most other social establishments, marriage as we know it today has evolved over the centuries. It has increased in complexity as societies have become more sophisticated and civilized.

Immensely steeped in custom and tradition, religion and civil law, many practices have died away as new ones have replaced them. The history is long and varied as are the nationalities and traditions. In this chapter we will just take a bird's eye view.

The origin of marriage can be traced back to Judeo/Christian biblical roots.<sup>1</sup> God instituted it when He declared, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him*” (Genesis 2:18, New King James Version). Henceforth, God fashioned the woman from the rib He had taken from the side of the man and brought her to the man. On seeing the woman, Adam exclaimed, “*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*” (Genesis 2:23).

One of the studies on matrimony reports that

marriage has evolved through three general stages: marriage by force or capture, marriage by purchase or contract, and marriage by mutual love .... Marriage by force or capture goes back to primitive culture when tribal groups were routinely hostile to each other. At that time marriages were ‘consummated’ as the groom captured a desirable woman in the process of conquering and pillaging a rival tribe. Marriage by purchase or contract ...

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<sup>1</sup>David Adamovich, “With This Ring I Thee Wed...”: A Compilation of Customs and Traditions Regarding Marriage, *Waterfront Wedding Chapel*, accessed 11 July, 2009, <http://www.limarriages.com/customs.html>.

evolved from marriage by force. The bride was first stolen, and later compensation was provided to her family or tribe to escape their vengeance. Marriage by mutual love evolved gradually. It was not until the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century that women gained the privilege of choosing or refusing their husbands according to their own judgment.<sup>2</sup>

### **Marriage in Malawi**

The insights brought forth in the above quotation tallied very well with the historical viewpoint in Malawi. In the past, marriage by arrangement prevailed throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> The Ngoni of Central Region practiced this as a measure to preserve the distinctiveness of the tribe. Their maxim was “*Kunzi azilowa m’khola.*” This literary meant that the ‘ox’ should mate with a ‘cow’ in the same kraal. Such an arrangement took place between the two families concerned, without consulting their children. Some of these arrangements would be done while the ‘groom’ and the ‘bride’ were still young.

### **Marriage by Elopement**

Marriage by mutual love gradually rivaled with the arranged one. This came about because many young men and women did not approve what their parents and uncles were doing. Since it was hard to disobey elders in those times, many young people who loved each other opted for elopement. The writer’s father once told his children that he and his wife eloped in order to evade an arranged marital union that was about to take place between him and another woman he did not love. He ran away with his loved one to a district in the Southern region and started their married life there. After their first born child, they returned home in the Central region and followed the traditional customs of a proper marriage.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Chief Mcheneka, Mcheneka Village, Dedza, interview by the author, Dedza: Malawi, 25 April, 2008. During the marriage seminars, the researcher also held interviews with pastors who come from the three regions of Malawi. All these reported that arranged marriages were the older of the day in the whole country.

In the Northern region, marriage by elopement was locally called *'kusomphola'*.<sup>4</sup> In such setting, the man took the woman he loved and hid her in a house at his home. Since the Northerners practiced the tradition of paying a dowry, this arrangement was secretly known by some of the groom's relatives who approved marriage by mutual love. After a day or two, these elders would go to the woman's village and reveal the whole scenario. Arrangements for an acceptable marriage would then begin.

### **Marriage by Mutual Love**

Marriage by mutual love overpowered the old traditional notions of marriage by arrangement. Although traditions take time to die, this modern trend is the type practiced in our times. The young people choose their spouse-to-be by mutual agreement. Then the traditions of *'ankhoswe'* (mediators) proceed as the case may be. This historical development is another gem of evidence that marriage is a relational transaction built on mutual love and acceptance.

### **Other Authors' Views**

The Jewish religious leaders confronted the Lord Jesus Christ on the question of divorce (Matthew 19:3). In response the Master referred them to the beginning. "Have you not read, that he which made them *at the beginning* made them male and female ..." (Genesis 19:4, emphasis supplied)? Jesus drew these teachers of the law back to the beginning because it was there that we would find the fundamental truths of the marriage relationship. The researcher also felt that it would be well to go to the beginning and explore further what other authors had said on the question of relational equality of husband and wife.

As human beings, we often spend a large part of our entire lives looking for partners.

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<sup>4</sup>MacJoe Chavura and Jim Nazombe, Pastors in North Malawi Field, interview by author, Lilongwe, Malawi, 27 May July 27, 2009.

We are social beings. There is in us an inborn yearning to love and be loved. Marriage was brought into existence in response to this need for love and companionship. The project has thus far traced the biblical data to establish the truth that this institution calls for a relational equality of the husband and the wife. It has gleaned and studied some of the insights from the writings of Ellen G. White for the self-same reason. It would stand to be incomplete if the researcher would not consult what other authors had said on this crucial aspect of the marital relation.

### **What Seventh-day Adventist Authors Say**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has many theologians and authors. To record what all these scholars have contributed to the question before us is to go beyond the requirements of this paper. May it suffice just to pick out a few of them and consider their views on this non-avoidable sphere of the human race.

### **Companion Marriage Calls for Relational Equality and Mutuality**

When God declared, “let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26), He was giving birth to a new order of creatures. This was so because Jesus, according to the flesh, “was the son of . . . Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God” (Luke 3:38). By creating them in His own image and likeness, Adam and Eve became God’s own children. He invested Himself in them. Thus He imparted to them the relational equality and mutuality that marriage needed. At the same time God was establishing a pattern for all humanity to emulate in regard to matrimony.

As God’s children, Bob Spangler observed, they “were perfect, noble, and well balanced.”<sup>5</sup> Again the Genesis narrative indicated that the two progenitors of our race were created as a reflection of God. As such, “they were equal in being, in worth, [although] not

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<sup>5</sup>Bob Spangler, *Marked!* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 17.

identical in person. Their physiques are complementary, their functions are cooperative.”<sup>6</sup> Then there is the “let us” facet. God is a social Being, “unity of co-eternal Persons.”<sup>7</sup> In the creation account, the Father interacted with the other members of the Godhead to effect His will. “Man was to bear God’s image both in outward resemblance and in character.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the man (both male and female) became the partaker of “the harmonious and loving fellowship as found in the three Persons of the Godhead as they relate to each other.”<sup>9</sup>

In him was embedded the relational nature, a natural endowment given by the Creator. Accordingly, being partakers of the divine nature, “humans are social creatures, born with yearnings for interaction with one another—the most binding of which finds expression in family life.”<sup>10</sup> It followed then that the height of friendship and joyful romance were to be experienced in the marital relation. It was in matrimony that companionship and relationality embrace each other.

### **True Love Is the Foundational Ingredient**

Marriage is the blending and fellowship of two kindred hearts. Two people, male and female—according to God’s order—mutually fall in love. They find that they have similar qualities or interests. So they decide to share their life together ever after because they love

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<sup>6</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Silver Spring, Michigan: Pacific Press, 2006), 331.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>8</sup>White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

<sup>9</sup>Brian Graig, *Searching for Intimacy in Marriage: The Role that Emotion Plays in Creating Understanding and Connectedness in Marriage* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2004), 21.

<sup>10</sup>Fernando L. Canale, “Doctrine of God” in *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen, 105-157 (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 2000), 726.

each other. Van Pelt saw marriage as “a union of love encompassing all areas of life: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.”<sup>11</sup>

In this understanding, true love then transcended everything. It knew no barriers. The project established that the litmus test of true love was found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. The Apostle Paul, among other aspects, claimed that this kind of love was always patient and kind. It was not selfish but delighted in seeking the good of others. It also did not rejoice in evil. Such love originated from God, for He only is love. This kind of love fitted very well in marriage because “love is a relational reality.”<sup>12</sup>

### **True Biblical Marital Union Is Heterogenic**

God’s original blueprint of marriage was heterogenic. There was need for two different genders of the same kind for marriage to reach God’s plan. When the two genders were made, God called them *man*, (*’adam*) (Genesis 5:2). As earlier pointed out, this term in this context referred to both the man and the woman. Karen and Ron Flowers stipulated that the text “in Genesis 1:26 27 uses the singular ‘Adam’ twice, not as a name for them, but as a designation for the human pair. This unique construction reflects the unity and mutuality in marriage that God intended.”<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Richard Davidson posited that both the male and the female stood equally direct before the Creator and His act. Their “equal pairing ... here has no hint of ontological or functional superiority/inferiority or headship/submission.”<sup>14</sup> Just as God created the plants

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<sup>11</sup>Nancy Van Pelt, *To Have and To Hold: A Guide to Successful Marriage* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), 16.

<sup>12</sup>Van Pelt, 111.

<sup>13</sup>Karen and Ron Flowers, *Love Aflame* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1992), 77.

<sup>14</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*, edited by Nancy Vyhmeister, 259-284,



and the animals each after their own kind, so it was with humanity. The man and the woman were male and female of the same species—their own kind, the offspring of the Creator Himself. God was their ‘Abba’ (Romans 8:15). They were intimately and passionately connected with Him. Actually, He had created them “to satisfy an emotional hunger in His own heart.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Both Genders Were Made on the Same Day**

Apart from the fact that God designated the man and the woman the same name when He created them (Genesis 5:2), there was also the truth that He created them on the same day. The study of the biblical record showed that the creation days in the creation account were literal days, for “the evening and the morning were the first day ... (Genesis 1:5).

The literal statement, ‘evening was [with the following hours of the night], and morning was [with the succeeding hours of day], day one’ is a clear description of an astronomical day, that is, a day of 24 hours .... Thus the Hebrews, who were never in doubt about the meaning of this expression, began the day at sunset and ended it with the following sunset (Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6) .... The belief in a divine and instantaneous creation as a result of the words spoken by God stands in complete opposition to the theory ... that the world and all upon it came into being through a slow process ... lasting for untold ages.<sup>16</sup>

When creating them, God had planned from the beginning to make man His representative, or viceroy, over this planet. Thus both Adam and his wife were to reign as king and queen over God’s creation. Both of them were invested with authority over the earth and other living. They were master and mistress. They were co-regents in their kingly duties. This was the horizontal relational dimension.

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Special Committee, SDA Theological Seminary (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1998), 260.

<sup>15</sup>Martin Weber, *Hurt, Healing, & Happy Again* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1989), 61.

<sup>16</sup>Nichol, 1:12.

### **There Was neither Competition nor Question of Inequality**

Until this time, “both male and female understood themselves in relation to their Creator.”<sup>17</sup> They were who they were because God had made them so. Eden knew neither competition nor inequality. Adam and Eve knew that they were differently made. In fact these differences were contributory to their fulfilling joy and the banishment of Adam’s lonesomeness. So they enjoyed all this freely, without any inhibitions. There were no roadblocks in all their relationship endeavours. “They were content with their creatureliness .... It was good to be male and it was good to be female.”<sup>18</sup>

They were open and honest with each other in their interactions. They were secure in the knowledge of their origins. When sin entered, all this was altered. They became dissatisfied with their creatureliness. It was no longer good to be content with who they were. Labelling, blaming, and fault-finding were common occurrences. Thus marriage suffered. The lot of both the man and the woman became tortuous. Worse than that, the man usurped all the power, prestige, and marital privileges. The woman became as man’s property and chattel.

### **Modern Woman’s Lot**

Most of the elderly couples in the seminars conceded that the woman’s lot became more and more severe and painful as the years passed by. The husbands in the true traditional setting did not run their households as cruelly as the contemporary ones were doing nowadays. The relationship was like the one a chief had over his subjects. The wife (or wives, in case of polygamous setting) served the husband, but she (or they) did not feel they

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>18</sup>Weber, 51.

were his slaves. He listened to her (them) and gave her(them) the needed service.<sup>19</sup> Of course there might have been some degree of marital inequality, but the household seemed to accept it.

From such observations, the researcher was convinced that there was some degree of relatedness even in the traditional marriages. With the enlightenment, the many modern couples who attended the seminars confessed that their marital relationships were not as satisfying as those of the olden times. This was because contemporary circumstances were such that the relational equality suffered a big blow. The researcher saw this as the outcome of sin's baleful havoc as the Bible chronicled in Genesis 3.

### **Non-Seventh-day Adventist Authors**

The understanding that marriage was instituted to furnish humans with on-the-spot graphic illustration of relational living was not only propagated by Seventh-day authors alone. Other scholars and theologians also embraced it. Sociologist J. Ross Eshleman stipulated that the marriage institution had a threefold dimension: a social group, a social institution, and a social system. As a social group, he stated that the family members acknowledged and accepted each other. They worked together for mutual benefit and interacted in a sexually bonded and intimate atmosphere.<sup>20</sup>

He further added that socially, marriage was an agent whose societal objectives revolved around intimate relationships and the prolonging of their existence through child bearing and rearing. As such, the family—a result of marriage—“has many interdependent components with major differentiations by gender, race, class, and size.”<sup>21</sup> Other related

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<sup>19</sup>Wilson Sangala, Jumbe Village, interview by author, Dedza: Malawi, 25 May, 2009.

<sup>20</sup>J. Ross Eshleman, *The Family, An Introduction* (Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 4.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid*, 4.

aspects included marriage, love, children, permanence, sexual exclusivity, and the continuity of their generations.

### ***The Imago Dei***

Commenting on the human pair's being created in the image of God, Millard Ericson reported that "humanity does not exist as a solitary individual, but two persons confronting each other."<sup>22</sup> Using the concept of *Imago Dei*, Beale and Carson developed this same thought by pointing out that "God did not create an undifferentiated humanity; he established two genders to complement each other ... and the *imago* is relational."<sup>23</sup> The two authors' convictions brought back the understanding that marriage was put in place for the companionship of two beings of relational equality.

This research has already interpreted that the creation in Genesis 2 was not another second creation. Moses here filled in the details of the creation record in Chapter 1. This was a detailed explanation of the declaration in Chapter 1:26, 27. It explained in full the establishment of the marriage affair. God created humankind male and female. The parallelism in Genesis 1:26, 27 had special significance. This "threefold parallelism of the members in this verse is suggestive ... of the jubilation with which the writer contemplates the crowning work.... It defines two parts of the same which must complete each other mutually."

Further still, Chapter 2:18-21 detailed the creation of the woman and the establishment of marriage. The Creator started with creating the male. When He (the Creator) brought all the animals and the fowls of the air to the man and asked him to name them, He was putting him (the man) in a situation where he would realize the need for a being like

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<sup>22</sup>Millard J. Ericson, *Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 525.

<sup>23</sup>G. K. Beale and D.A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 58.

himself, thus establishing relational intimacy. This researcher proposed that the other being was within the man himself as was indicated in Chapter 1:26, where the plural ‘them’ was used. The repetition of the plural ‘them,’ in verse 28 seemed to imply that the ‘man’ who was created in the divine image was both male and female. Had the Creator made the woman from some other material, marriage would not have been a union and a fusion.

The pairing of the two genders should not be taken lightly. This was the mystery that gave marriage its uniqueness. This was not a casual recording, but a deliberate emphasis to show that the two could not live happily and contentedly without the other. Marriage therefore, was a unique union that blended two persons (male and female) into a new unity. Their male and female characteristics were “designed physically and emotionally to complement each other in establishing a new completeness of life.”<sup>24</sup> To complement was not to merge. It was to fill up and complete. This signified that both the man and the woman, though full human beings, had deficiencies in their relational dimension that only the counterpart could fill up. So God’s design was not for the two personalities to merge or to obliterate their individual differences.

### **Marriage as a Union of Three Beings**

To fully experience the comradeship, marriage should be a union of three beings: God, Man, and Woman—cushioned in friendship. God is the Initiator of marriage. He created husband and wife, so He loves them both. He is their Friend. The husband should also be a friend of God and of his wife. The wife should also be friend of God and of her husband. In this triangle lies the true lasting friendship and relationality of marriage.

If this triangle was to pay the desired dividends there should be a deliberate and conscious surrendering of the husband and the wife. It necessitated daily and hourly self-

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<sup>24</sup>John C. Howell, *Equality and Submission in Marriage* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1979), 35.

sacrifice and renunciation for the benefit of both. David and David recognized marriage as “the ultimate human connection in which two people commit themselves fully and truthfully to each other in a lifelong journey of deep sharing, mutual respect, and growing intimacy.”<sup>25</sup>

Companionship in the marital affair called for complete and mutual vulnerability. When there was total commitment in the home, husband and wife encouraged one another to share their inner struggles and fears as well as their joys and triumphs freely and openly. When such an atmosphere prevailed, burdens were lightened. The ‘we-ness’ that was at the beginning of their relationship developed into the ‘one-fleshness’ that God intended. Each partner did not control or overpower the other, but became “the complement of the other, enjoying spiritual equality.”<sup>26</sup>

The animals were created male and female as mates. On the other hand, the woman was not Adam’s mate. Had that been the case, she would not have been sufficient for man’s emotional and spiritual needs. As it was, the being that then stood before him was “suited to and matching him, a helping being in whom, as soon as he sees her, he may recognize that she is his from his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”<sup>27</sup> This was why his excitement overpowered him. Here stood another ‘Adam’—a female one. In her he saw himself: He then blurted with ecstasy: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2:23). “Thus God planned for a man and woman to be more than

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<sup>25</sup>David J. Atkinson and David H. Field, eds., *The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 565.

<sup>26</sup>D. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 52.

<sup>27</sup>“Eve,” *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary* (Bibleworks-Version 7.0.020w: PC Software).

mates.”<sup>28</sup> They were to be intimate counterparts with one another within the confinement of marriage. God created for man the exact desire of his (man’s) heart. This was the suitable companion he had yearned for, one “with whom he could be intimate, not an assistant whom he could dominate.”<sup>29</sup>

There was some sphere that should not be overlooked in the man’s poetic ecstasy. The man also recognized that the new creature, his other self, had a different morphology from his. He also knew that she had been created after him, but he was never worried about that. Neither did he envision any opportunity for superiority or inferiority. In marriage, “husbands and wives are called to a co-partnership of equality in difference.”<sup>30</sup> A satisfying marriage affair needed to continue to grow steadily from strength to strength with the couple accepting each other’s differences mutually.

Another blessing of marriage was procreation. This could be deemed as one of the divine attributes God gave to humanity. “One of the most precious and sacred ministries of married life is that of bringing little children into the world.”<sup>31</sup> This power to procreate was committed to both husband and wife. He who made them male and female “blessed them and ... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ...” (Genesis 1:28). According to this text, God pronounced of a blessing upon the couple after He wedded them. Above all this, the relational equality came to its utmost height of fulfillment in procreation. It was through this that the beneficent Creator shared with

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<sup>28</sup>Tim F. LaHaye, *How to be Happy Though Married* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1989), 4.

<sup>29</sup>Diana S. Richmond Garland and David E. Garland, *Beyond Companionship—Christians in Marriage* (Eugene, Oregon: Wpf and Stock Publishers: 2003), 28, 29.

<sup>30</sup>Atkinson and Field, 566.

<sup>31</sup>Stephen F. Olford, “God’s Masterpiece” in *The Marriage Affair: The Family Counselor*, edited by J. Allan Petersen (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1971), 19-22.

humanity some of His characteristics in order for our progenitors to populate the earth with beings that had the stamp of their God and Father. This blessing remained with humanity even after the Fall.

### **Some Seemingly Hazy Texts on the Relational Equality**

This project has thus far explored the views of both Seventh-day Adventist theologians and non-Seventh-day Adventist theologians. Their views agree that in marriage there is an exclusive relational equality that God intended should exist between the husband and the wife. God established the marriage of Adam and Eve in Eden as the pattern for all human marital relationships. Nonetheless, the contemporary age is confronted with a variety of marital forms and choices. The discussions in the seminars revealed that there were numerous other variations in the interpretation of some biblical passages that deal with the husband-wife relationship. Some of these passages were brought up and compared with the position expounded in this project.

### **The Creation Order: Adam Was Created First, then Eve.**

In Genesis 2:7, the Bible elaborated the creation of the man (male). The creation of the woman came a little later as recorded in chapter 2:21, 22. She was created as a helper to the man. In this vein, a view of primogeniture seemed to be provided that gave the man an advantage over his wife. In their book, Garland and Garland cited that

Stitzinger ... first notes that man was created before the woman. Second, the man was designated 'Adam,' the term used also to describe all humankind. Because the man is given this name rather than the woman suggests to Stitzinger that he occupies the position as head.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Garland and Garland, 27.



Among other things, Stitzinger further posited that Adam was appointed to leadership and authority before Eve's creation without his wife's involvement, he named his helper Eve, and God confronted him when they sinned (and yet it was Eve who sinned first).<sup>33</sup>

From the biblical point of view as chronicled in this project, this researcher came up with contrary notions from Stitzinger's. First, God had purposed to create man male and female (Genesis 1:26, 27), as we saw in the Hebrew construction, but He had to start from somewhere. He did not just spoke the man into being as He did with the lower forms of life. He fashioned him with His own hands. In the human understanding of such an act, God had to have a starting point. In His prerogative, as recorded in chapter 2:7, He decided to start with the male. In starting with the man, God was laying the foundation for all marital relationships. As detailed earlier, the research also showed that the woman was in the man by reason of the plural personal pronouns used in the declaration in chapter 1:26-28. God must have revealed to Moses how He had done it. Thus this information penned here had nothing to do with chronology.

Secondly, the texts that cover the creation narrative seemed not to indicate that God designated the man 'Adam.' Genesis 5:2 recorded that God "called their name Adam in the day when they were created." Thus He named both the male and the female species of humankind 'Adam.' Up to this point in time, "Adam is not truly a personal name in Hebrew, but a collective noun that may be translated humankind."<sup>34</sup>

It is in chapter 2:19 that the reader of the Scriptures meets the name 'Adam' referring to the man. This text, however, does not inform us who decided to name him 'Adam.' Perhaps this was a contribution by the author of the narrative. Humanity carries with it a lot of cultural presuppositions, beliefs, and cultivated behaviours that are socially transmitted

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>34</sup>Aecio E. Cairus, 210.

from generation to generation. One such behaviour is the naming of people and things. In this perception, Moses must have decided to break the monotony of repeatedly referring to the new creature ‘man,’ and began to call him ‘Adam.’ It is true that the man named his wife Eve. This was after the Fall. Until this time, “both male and female understood themselves in relation to their Creator.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Eve’s Position**

Another contention stemmed from Genesis 2:18: “And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him.*” This paper considered this text as the zenith of the mutuality and relationality of the marital relationship. However, the human mind might perceive in it the subordination of the woman to the man. This can be expected since in many instances, a helper role presupposes servanthood, submission, and subordination.

As already pointed out in our discourse, such thinking seemed to be ignited by inherited cultural overtones. In this declaration, the Creator was just echoing the thought that had been going on in the man’s mind. Creation had finished in Genesis 1. Humankind had already been made male and female. This is so because Moses, by inspiration, made a summary statement when he said recorded that “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31). He further stated that on the seventh day “God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Genesis 2:2). It goes without saying that these texts are very straight forward. There are no ambiguities at all. Creation, including the man and the woman, was complete in six literal days. On the seventh day, God instituted the Sabbath rest, completing the seven-day cycle of the week.

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<sup>35</sup>Flowers, 51.

The project revealed earlier that God did not speak humanity into existence. Had He done so, the intimacy and mutuality of marriage would not have been there. Animals do not need the marriage affair in order to produce according to their kind. As a consequence, God worked in such a way that the man and the woman should originate from one source. So He formed the male with the female within him. When the desire for a companion was ripe, He dissected the male, took a rib near his heart, and built the female. Thus how marriage was instituted. Adam man was first formed, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13) out of the man and for the man (1 Corinthians 11:7-9). Eve was made after Adam, and out of him. Her “finer susceptibilities and more delicate organization, makes her ‘the glory of the man.’ If man is the head, she is the crown ... to her husband. The oneness of flesh is the foundation of the inseparable marriage union of one man with one woman” (Malachi 2:15; Matthew 19:5).<sup>36</sup>

### **Paul’s View on Headship and Submission**

The key passage most quoted in regard to headship and submission is Ephesians 5:15-33. A cursory reading of it seems to pose that this passage defines the headship of the husband, and the submissiveness and subordination of the wife. This puts the husband in control of the affairs in the home. The research on this passage seemed to reveal to the contrary. In its context, the passage reiterated the concept of mutual submission and subordination.

Paul began his discourse by encouraging the Christians to live a life worth of their calling as opposed to that of non-believers. He exhorts them to exercise unity and mutuality in all their relationships, “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (verse 21). Then he explained this by using the illustration of Jesus and the Church. He admonished the women to be subject to their husbands in the same way that the Church was subject to Christ

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<sup>36</sup>“Eve,” *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary* (Bibleworks-Version 7.0.012g: PC Software).

(verse 22). In the original Greek text, “wives” is not the subject of the verb “be subject.” The verb was supplied from verses 18b-21, where Paul challenges the believers to be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns ... and *be subject* to one another out of reverence for Christ” (emphasis supplied). The idea in the passage then was

not simply a demand for the wife to assume her divinely ordained role of underling. Her submission to her husband must be viewed as part and parcel of the Christian calling. Mutual submission is evidence of being filled with the Spirit and is expected of everyone regardless of age, station, or gender.... What is pertinent is that the wife is not asked to be servile before her husband or to knuckle under to his will. She is not the husband’s vassal, and marriage is not servitude to the wife.<sup>37</sup>

After this challenge to the wives, the apostle turned to the husbands. He commanded them to love their wives; “even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” (verse 25). According to him, male headship meant male servant-hood. “When there is a problem in the home, it is the man’s responsibility to seek a solution.”<sup>38</sup> This called for willing sacrifice for the sake of his wife and children. It added up then that “the touchstone of the husband’s relationship to his wife is ... to be Christ’s nurturing love....”<sup>39</sup> He must nourish her. In verses 29 and 30, Paul advised the husband not “to love his wife as he loves his own body, but to love her as his body. As one flesh (verse 31), the two have become a part of each other.... The dichotomy of superiority/inferiority was erased completely.<sup>40</sup> Male leadership was indicated in the injunction that wives should be subject to their husbands ‘as to the Lord’ (verse 22). The simile, however, precluded male superiority. “The relationship of love

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<sup>37</sup>Garland, 33, 34.

<sup>38</sup>Dov Heller, “Principle of Love #3: You Shall Not Hate Your Friend In Your Heart,” *7 Steps to Lasting Love: How to Stay in Love the Rest of Your Life*, accessed 4 July, 2009, <http://www.aish.com/f/m/48943661.html>.

<sup>39</sup>Garland, 37.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

regards the spouses as an equal, any chain of command and authority is destroyed.”<sup>41</sup> So headship, submission, and subordination are biblical roles, but relational at the same time.

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<sup>41</sup>Calvin, 732.

## CHAPTER 4

### A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

#### **A Brief Synopsis of Malawi**

The Republic of Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland. It is bordered by Zambia to the northwest, Tanzania to the northeast. Mozambique surrounds it on the east, the south, and the west. The country is separated from Tanzania and Mozambique by Lake Malawi. Its size is about 118,484 square kilometres. Of these 24,000 kilometres are covered with water. Its population is more than 13,912,265 (in 2009). Its capital is Lilongwe. The biggest city is Blantyre. The name Malawi comes from the Maravi, one of the original Bantu tribes to inhabit the area.<sup>1</sup>

Malawi had a very small population of hunter gatherers before waves of Bantus began entering from the north around the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Although most of the Bantu continued south, some remained permanently and founded tribes based on common ancestry. By A.D. 1500, the tribes had established a kingdom that reached from north of what is now Nkhotakota to the Zambezi River and from Lake Malawi to the Luangwa River in what is known Zambia.<sup>2</sup>

The country was formerly known as Nyasaland. Dr. David Livingstone, on his second missionary journey into this country, saw the inland lake that ran alongside it on “on 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joyce Banda, “Malawi Geography and History”, Lilongwe: Malawi, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malawi>, accessed 13 July, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

September, 1859.”<sup>3</sup> He called it Lake Nyasa, and hence, Nyasaland for the land. It remained under native rule, but under Livingstone’s influence, British missionaries began to come into Nyasaland. As King Lobengula was being tricked by Cecil Rhodes, “the British occupation of the area west and south of Lake Nyasa was proceeding. This was the work of the British government, the African Lakes Company and the Scottish missionaries.”<sup>4</sup> The British government had a lot of contention with the Anglo-Portuguese, “this unsatisfactory situation ended in May 1891, when the British government took action: The Protectorate of Nyasaland.”<sup>5</sup> Dr. Harry Hamilton Johnston was appointed governor.

Then “in 1949, Britain had been attempting to establish a Central African Federation of North and South Rhodesia and Nyasaland. It came into existence in 1953, but ... was dissolved in 1963.”<sup>6</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1964, “Nyasaland ... became independent, dissolving the Federation of gained independence from the British rule and was renamed Malawi. Ngwazi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda became its first Prime Minister. On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1966, it became a republic state. Again, Ngwazi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda became its first President. During this time, many African countries were becoming independent of colonialism. Nationalism also was weakening. Inexperienced and untrained administrators in government procedure now were at the helm.

However, due to the fear “that the unity previously imposed by the Europeans could decline, and a possibility of a resurgence of tribalism, many African rulers believed that a one-

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<sup>3</sup>P. E. N. Tindall, *A History of Central Africa* (London: Longman Group, 1968), 93.

<sup>4</sup>R. D. Cornwell, *World History in the Twentieth Century*, New Edition (Burnt Mill, Essex: Longman Hose Publishers), 337.

<sup>5</sup>Tindall, 179.

<sup>6</sup>Agatha Ramm, *Europe in the Twentieth Century, 1905-1970* (Burnt Mill, Essex: Longman Group, 1984), 246.

party state was the answer.”<sup>7</sup> Malawi followed suit and for thirty years Kamuzu and his one-party—the Malawi Congress Party—ruled. Nonetheless, in 1994, Malawi became a democracy with Dr. Bakili Muluzi as its first president. He ruled for ten years. In 2004, Dr. Bingu wa Muthalika was unanimously elected and became the second president of a democratic Malawi,<sup>8</sup> with Joyce Banda as the vice president, becoming the first female to hold that portfolio.

The country is divided into three administrative regions: North, Centre, and South. These are further subdivided into a total of twenty-eight administrative districts. The nation is not homogeneous. It has over twenty-two Bantu peoples. The main tribes include the Tumbuka, the Tonga, the Nkhonde, the Lambya, the Nyachusya, the Chewa, the Ngoni, the Nyanja, the Mang’anja, the Yao, the Lomwe, and the Sena. There are also other migrants in noticeable percentages: South Asians, English-speaking, Mozambicans, Zambians, Nigerians, and others.<sup>9</sup>

### **Marriage Customs in Malawi**

Marriage is a bridging together of two people, two families, or two tribes, or two villages, or even two countries. “When a man and woman marry they enter into a covenant with each other, with society, and with God to be faithful to each other until death.”<sup>10</sup> Dr. Myles Munro

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<sup>7</sup>Cornwell, 364.

<sup>8</sup>Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryx, *Operation World 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition* (Carlisle, United Kingdom: Petemoster Lifestyle, 2001) 419-421.

<sup>9</sup>Banda, “Malawi Geography and History,” Lilongwe: Malawi, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malawi>, accessed 15 July 15, 2009.

<sup>10</sup>Eastern Africa Division, *Caring for Marriage* (Harare: Home and Family Service, 1984), 12.



concurred with this concept when he wrote that “when you marry someone, you marry more than just one person; you ‘marry’ an entire family, a complete history of experiences.”<sup>11</sup>

This is the more reason why the marriage covenant was not to be entered into lightly. It is a pledge meant to last a lifetime. It is a vow that “links the destinies of two individuals with bonds which naught but the hand of death should sever.”<sup>12</sup> With this perspective in mind, the wedding pledge is made in front of the two families from which the newlyweds belonged, relatives, and friends. These take special pains to stand up as witnesses. To wed is both the most basic of all human pledges, and at the same time the most sublime.

### **The Two Basic Clan Systems of the Bantu Society**

Malawian traditional marriage customs were divided into two main systems. The system to follow depended on the area or region in which the parties to be married come from. As pointed out above Malawians are descendants of a Bantu society. Thus in matters of conduct and culture, they mostly still maintain the Bantu roots. “There were two basic systems of clan organization: patrilineal and matrilineal.”<sup>13</sup> Tindall further observed that “in patrilineal clans, descent was reckoned through the father and ... and in the matrilineal system, decent was through the mother. These two systems prevailed in the day-to-day running of affairs. Power in the patrilineal clans was in the father’s hands. A brother of the chief or his son would always

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<sup>11</sup>Myles Munro, *The Purpose and Power of Love & Marriage* (Shippensburg, Pasadena: Destiny Image Publishers, 2002), 20.

<sup>12</sup>White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 340.

<sup>13</sup>Tindall, 69.

ascend to the chieftainship. In the matrilineal, power was vested in the mother's side. The mother's sister's son succeeded to the throne when a chief died.<sup>14</sup>

### **Matrilineal marriage custom**

The Southern and Central Regions follow the matrilineal customs, with the exception of the lower Shire, where they practice the patrilineal marriage. The matrilineal kinship system attaches considerable importance to women as the producers of the lineage. "Sometimes on marriage a man moved to his wife's village so that the clan group stayed together. Descent was reckoned through the mother. If the marriage broke up,<sup>15</sup> the children stayed with the mother's clan. It was their group too." Marriage could not be recognized as valid without the approval of the maternal uncles.

In this system, a young man and woman who had become of marriageable age and had consented to marry each other, took the matter to their marriage guardians respectively for approval. These guardians were the intermediaries (locally known as *ankhoswe*). Their role was to validate the marriage and act as go-betweens for the couple-to-be and the parents. They also played a very vital role in the preparations for the wedding.

In some instances, the bride moved to the husband's home. In such an event, arrangements were made and agreed upon by the intermediaries prior to the wedding. Such a marriage was called *utengwa* (a marriage in which the woman is taken to the husband's home village, or simply, "one who is taken") in the Central Region or *ulowoka* (one who crosses over)

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 71.

in the Southern Region. The wife was called *mtengwa* or *mlowoka* respectively.<sup>16</sup> No enormous payments were paid out in this customary marriage.

Normally a small amount, charged to in equivalent of the cost of three chickens, was paid to the bride's village headman. In the case of *utengwa*, the husband's side, in addition to the three chickens, gave the bride's parents a goat in appreciation for allowing their daughter to cross over from her village and stay at their son's village, with the understanding that the husband's clan would always treat her with utmost respect. The wife also would always bear in her mind that she was to assimilate herself into the customs of the husband. However, her ties with her original clan were never completely severed.<sup>17</sup> In this marriage custom the bride's mother's side wielded more power. The 'new family' was run mostly following the bride's traditions.

### **Patrilineal marriage**

The Northern Region and the lower Shire in the Southern Region practiced the patrilineal marriage system. The preparations in this system were the same as in the matrilineal. However, there were two contrasting features. The first dissimilarity was that the validity of the marriage rested in the control of patrilineal uncles. On marriage a wife always left her family group to be joined with her husband's people. Descent was reckoned through the father. The children

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<sup>16</sup>Florida K. Banda and I. D. Zaboloni, *Junior Certificate Chinyanja* (Blantyre: Jhango Publishers, 2000), 84.

<sup>17</sup>Traditional Marriage Customs, the researcher's indigenous background. This is tradition that is still practiced. The researcher comes from the Central Region, but was born in the Southern Region where his father was employed in a tea factory. In his day and age, parents used to sit together with their children and, through folklores and recitations, told their offspring their traditional roots.

belonged to the father's clan, and remained with the father when a marriage broke up.<sup>18</sup> The second contrasting characteristic was the payment of a dowry by the bridegroom's father or by the bridegroom himself, as the case may be, to the bride's parents or guardians. "The prospective husband gave a number of cattle to his father-in-law. This ensured that the children of the marriage belonged to the father's clan group."<sup>19</sup>

The 'lobola' system (paying of a dowry) was not deemed as buying the bride, but saying 'Thank You' to the bride's parents for the work they did in raising the daughter. Without this it became very difficult for the marriage to take place. Sometimes the girl's right to marry was dependent on the number of the head of cattle the man was to bring. As in the matrilineal, the go-betweens in this patrilineal system also played a major role in deciding how the marriage ceremony would proceed. In consultation with the bridegroom's relatives, they were the organizers of everything. When the marriage took place, the bride went to stay at the husband's village. The posterity belonged to the husband. The husband's cultural practices were the most powerful. In this understanding, the wife was to be assimilated into her husband's culture.<sup>20</sup>

### **Marriage Digressions**

Many marriages are traumatic and their relationship is like going through hell. The researcher believes that this condition must be precipitated by the missing dimension that we have discussed in the preceding pages. It seems that the traditional view of marriage has been

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<sup>18</sup>Tindall, 69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>20</sup>M. M. Chavura, "*Kusomphola*" and the Dowry System in Northern Malawi interview by author, Lilongwe: Malawi, 5 June, 2009.

warped and distorted by messages from the Internet, Hollywood, and other concoction of different cultures, “since the world today has been reduced to a global village. Through these pathways many people are trying to bring in what they think will make their relationships flourish.”<sup>21</sup> This research seemed to expose that self-interest and selfishness were the great motivations of all these terrible marriage aberrations. Some of these are reviewed in pages that follow.

### **Incest**

Incest may broadly be defined as sexual activity between two people who are considered too closely related to have such a relationship. Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee perceive incest as “the sexual abuse ... of children by someone significant to the child. ‘Significant might include ... a baby-sitter, a boyfriend of an old sister, as well as immediate family members.’”<sup>22</sup> Almost all crimes of this type in Malawi occur between a father and a daughter, or a step-daughter, or an uncle, and a niece. Interviews with seminar patrons revealed that most of these crimes went unreported, unless something drastic occurred. These further testified that incest had escalated in our times due to efforts by the perpetrators to get rich, or to get healed from HIV and AIDS.

Many times the medicine-man would dispense the herbs with the injunction that the husband sleeps with his daughter for the medicine to take effect. Some husbands claimed that sometimes this occurred just because the wife was being difficult on the marriage bed. Conversely, this paper underlines the fact that such an abuse is a result of marital inequality

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<sup>21</sup>Fritz Kadyoma, Francis Muraya, and Frank Mogaka, 39.

<sup>22</sup>Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston Burr Ridge, Illinois: McGraw Hill), 431.

between the spouses. Incest damages the child's budding sexuality.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, such children carry the burden of shame and guilt all their lives. Sexual intercourse with their rightful husbands or wives may even be hampered by their childhood memories.

### **Adultery and Fornication**

Adultery "generally is defined as sexual relations with a spouse with one other than his or her marriage partner."<sup>24</sup> Fornication concerns sexual intercourse between a married person and one who is not married. As documented earlier in this paper, the media has contributed tremendously to the current mindset and practice on diluting the lasting commitment and exclusivity of human sexuality.

Due to globalization, "people are now losing their identity.... Their cultural practices are changing as they emulate what others do in the rest of the world."<sup>25</sup> Culture might wink at these practices as acceptable, but the Bible strongly forbids this. "Flee fornication," it says. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18). Paul further states that God's will is that humans should be sanctified and "should abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

### **Polygamy**

This marriage practice can be defined as the custom of having more than one spouse at the same time. "According to traditional Christianity, the only acceptable framework for

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 438.

<sup>24</sup>Calvin B. Rock, "Marriage and Family" in *The Handbook of Seventh-day Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 2000), 736.

<sup>25</sup>Fritz Kadyoma, Francis Muraya, and Frank Mogaka, 39.

sexual relations is heterosexual monogamy—marriage involving two individuals, one male and one female.”<sup>26</sup> The deviation from this norm had numerous and varied reasons. In North Malawi, this system was advanced by the tradition they have about menopause. It is believed that a woman who engages in sexual intercourse after menopause may suffer from dropsy. It is therefore acceptable that the husband of such a woman will either have extramarital sexual activities or marry another woman. In some instances the old woman would ask her parents to give the husband a younger relative to marry.<sup>27</sup>

Another reason for a polygamous life was the desire for offspring. Marriage in the traditional thinking was first and foremost for procreation. In this consequence, a childless couple in the community was deemed a disgrace. Somehow, barrenness was almost always attributed to the wife. So to treat childlessness, the husband would marry another wife. The case of Elkanah in the Bible (1 Samuel 1:1ff) is a good example of our discussion here. In this Bible scripture, the sacred narrative shows the reader that Elkanah took another wife—Peninah—because Hannah had no children thus far. In other circumstances, where the wife had only girls, a husband would find another woman in the quest to have a male child.

A domineering, or nagging wife was also cause enough to drive out a husband into polygamy. This the husband would do in order to find a peaceful relationship. Several such cases stood out vividly in the research experiences. In such cases the blame would always rest on the wives. The researcher believes that these distortions and misconceptions come about because of the tradition that women were made to help the man., and not to control him, or suggest ideas of

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<sup>26</sup>Rice, 106.

<sup>27</sup>M. M. Chavura, interview by author.

home management to him. This would be so irritating to the husband and marrying a second wife was the only reasonable thing to do.

These issues are not specifically for Malawi only. In different places all over the world many cultures have departed from this norm. In all of the tribes in native Africa polygamy was permitted. Prestige and honour were the many reasons for this practice. Tindall observed that

chiefs and headmen often had numerous wives, but more humble men could usually afford a few.... Wives and children were a source of wealth and security for old age, and the possession of many wives and children, like the ownership of many cattle, gave a man social standing. Many children were a great asset in tribal life, adding to the strength of a clan group.<sup>28</sup>

Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee record similar happenings in their reports on the plight of women in chapters 9 through to 11.<sup>29</sup>

Our findings confirmed that polygamy is not an ideal setting for matrimony. Many women, some relating their own encounters, reaffirmed that the spouses in such multiple unions never experience true oneness and real intimacy. Struggles for supremacy and favour between or among the wives, bitter resentments, jealousies, manipulations, and alienations were mostly common. There existed no sense of belonging. The wives' imaginings of sensual pleasure and emotional satisfaction became just pipe dreams. The man himself was more of a slave than a husband in the effort to please the wives. Sibling rivalry was a regular part of household squabbles.

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<sup>28</sup>Tindall, 76.

<sup>29</sup>Susan Shaw and Janet Lee, 385-515.



## **Divorce**

The reasons for divorce are mostly similar to those of polygamy. Traditionally, it was almost always the husband who filed for divorce. This practice was an option for polygamy. The most common reasons were infidelity, the need for children, recurring deaths of small children, a nagging and domineering wife, financial squabbles and constraints, management of farm produce, and wife abandonment. However, the Bible does not recommend divorce. This is a tragic departure from God's idea.

## **Cohabitation**

Cohabitation is another departure from the biblical blueprint. This is “a relationship in which a man and a woman live together and regularly engage in sexual intercourse without being married.”<sup>30</sup> The triangle of ‘leave,’ ‘cleave,’ and ‘become one body’ (Genesis 2:24) cannot be effected in an arrangement like this. People cohabited for different and somehow strange reasons. The Browns stated that some who live together in this fashion were striving for independence. Some were trying to find the compatibility of the partner. Another reason is simply to find a substitute for marriage.<sup>31</sup> The problem with this habit is that the Bible does not condone marriage substitutes. Furthermore, marriage calls for responsibilities and commitments. The spouses who cohabit do not have “a mandate or duty to protect or respect such a union. For that reason the chances for permanency or depth in such relationships are slim”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Brown, 38.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 38, 39.

<sup>32</sup>Miroslav M. Kis, “Christian Lifestyle and Behaviour” in *The Handbook of Seventh-day Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 2000), 696.

## **Trial Marriages**

This is a situation where a man and a woman stay together as a couple just to test whether they are compatible or not. Their stand is that they want to be sure if marriage will work out for them before they make a commitment. They believe that this trial will help to solidify their relationship when they get married. Statistics, however, reveal that “the idea of living together before marriage reduces ... chances of divorce is a lie.”<sup>33</sup>

## **Data Collection, Findings, and Valuation**

### **Data Collection**

This project was the result of the many marriage seminars which the researcher did with his research assistant over several years. In the assignments they were always at a loss as they met with relational conflicts and dysfunctionalities in families. In their quest to help these families. This is when the research team decided to study God’s plan for marriage. They bought several books on marriage. In their superficial studies they discovered that Eden, the home of Adam and Eve, was permeated by trust, mutuality and equality. And this was God’s will. The distrust, control and distortion we see today are a result of sin.<sup>34</sup>

Then in 1993, the team was invited to attend a Family Ministries Leadership Seminar that was organized by the Malawi Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Participants were drawn from all the three fields of the Union. These were Family Ministries Directors and some district pastors. The researcher’s team saw God’s hand in this invitation, and decided to work hard so as to equip themselves for the challenges of dysfunctions in families.

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<sup>33</sup>Brown, 39.

<sup>34</sup>Jeffrey and Pattiejean Brown, *The Total Marriage: A Guide to Successful Marriage* (Grantham: Autumn House Publishing, 1999), 15, 16.

The initial seminar was held in August 1993. The guest facilitators were Harold and Nerma Drake, sent by the General Conference Family Ministries Department. It was held for one week at Lakeview Seminary in Central Malawi Field. Follow-up seminars also took place in 1994, 1996, and 1997. All these seminars were held at Lakeview. Different guest facilitators came in each of these years. Some of them included Elder Ron and Karen Flowers, Doctors Albert and Alberta Mazart, and Dr. Joel and Angeline Musvosvi.

After these leadership seminars, the research team practiced what it had learned at each leadership seminar. The researcher and his assistant experienced a new closeness in their relationship. As they encountered many family disputes, cases of spouse abuse and marital violence, rising rate of separation and divorce, and other related issues in their ministry, they were convinced that God had finally called them to a family ministry in a special way. It dawned on them that the marital problems came about because there was some elusive dimension that couples were trying to get hold of but it always eluded them. They knew what it was: the mutual and relational equality. “God established marriage as a permanent relationship, the union of two separate people ... into one flesh. The one flesh is not simply the ‘gluing’ of two people but the ‘fusion’ of two distinct elements into one.”<sup>35</sup>

So numerous seminars on different aspects of this ‘one-fusion union’ were conducted. The goal in these seminars was to collect as much data as possible on the cause of marital inequality and then disseminate the insights the researcher had discovered in the leadership seminars. The guiding maxim was: marriage is a call to unconditional commitment between two people—a man and a woman; it is not a contract, but a covenant.

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<sup>35</sup>Munro, 14.

A contract is something for something, a covenant is unconditional commitment. Many couples seem to enter into marriage with deep-seated difference in contemporary foundations of love, warped by the media. Dreams and visions of a happy married life are built on sandy foundations. The problems that come because of the shattered dreams of marital happiness and fulfillment are a tool for couples to come back to a covenant marriage in order to “restore God’s original purpose for the family, no longer exclusive, and inward-looking but inclusive, using the richness of the marriage relationship to benefit others.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Findings and Valuation**

This research revealed exciting and challenging revelations. It confirmed that throughout the years, marriage has had an undeniably very important role in our lives. It is the structural foundation of the family, tribe, the church, and nation; in fact it is a foundational institution to the whole society.<sup>37</sup> Socially, the family is the place where most people are raised. Here an individual’s identity and feelings of worth are established and developed. It is also the centre for the impartation of belief systems, love experiences, and other relational aspects on human life. It also acts as the theater for the transmission of the family’s values from one generation to another.

Gender, which encompasses a person’s social identity through “personality traits and behaviour that characterize us as men or women, largely acquired as learned behaviour as we grow up,”<sup>38</sup> is consciously and unconsciously learned in the family. As a building block, marriage creates long-lasting and permanent between individuals and kin groups. It weaves the

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<sup>36</sup>Brown, 17.

<sup>37</sup>Munro, 15, 16.

uniqueness and individuality of humanity together. In this vein, it becomes a necessary institution for the proper and efficient functioning of the society.

The exploration also confirmed the reality that the marriage dimension of human life is imperative. Firstly, human beings are social beings, taken after their Father, the Creator God. The Apostle Paul had emphasized the truth that we are sons and daughters of God when he, to the Athenians, he restated that "... in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For *we are also his offspring*" (Acts 17:28, emphasis supplied). This is why we have an inborn yearning for interaction with one another. These profound and binding yearnings for reciprocal love, respect, and affirmation from the opposite sex, find their full expression in marriage.<sup>39</sup> The family is also the right setting for handing down the heritage and moral values.

### **The Traditional Notion of Marriage**

During the marriage seminars, workshops, and couple interviews were order of the day. It was noteworthy to learn, especially from senior and old couples, that the traditional marriage was mostly advantageous to the husband. He had power, prestige, and independence. The family was his kingdom. He ruled everybody. His wife, or wives, did all the work and carried out a subordinate role. All his needs were met, including his sexual needs. It was only in marriage that sexuality was provided for with social approval.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, marriage also gave the wife her share of its delights. She gained a status that demanded some respect. Traditionally, society

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<sup>38</sup>F. Philip Rice, *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1990), 140.

<sup>39</sup>Flowers, 74.

<sup>40</sup>Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Perspective* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: 1985), 106.

honoured the wife and mother and despised the spinster. In this way, women were proud to belong to some husband. The marital status gave them a sense of achievement and affirmation.

Up and above everything else, marriage was for procreation. The community looked with disdain on a marriage that did not produce children. It was considered a failure. To avoid this, the relatives did all they could to have offspring. Traditional healers were consulted and traditional medicines were used. So in the traditional mindset both husband and wife accepted their roles and differences amicably. In fact, a husband who consulted his wife on family matters was considered a misfit. Even his wife would always encourage him to consult married men on issues of family matters, thus conceding that she was there to serve him.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Value of Traditional Marriage Questioned**

The seminar workshops also revealed that in spite of the benefits our progenitors enjoyed in the traditional marriage, the contemporary generation looks at this system rather disapprovingly. The traditional genre is now waning. A new paradigm is settling in. The Browns are in accord with the researcher's findings that marriage is becoming more pluralistic than solid and stable. Willfully, some couples choose to be childless. Furthermore, our day and age bears witness to same-sex unions, trial marriages, cohabitations, homosexuality, abusive parents, one-parent households, unmarried parents, and other numerous deviations to the traditional notion.<sup>42</sup> In these instances, the traditional belief of what marriage is or should be does not fit. Matrimony's firmness is now shaky and unstable. As such, traditional images and

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<sup>41</sup>Chief Chitera, "The Value of the Traditional Marriage," interview by author, Chitera Village, Chiradzulu: Malawi, 15 April, 2007. The chief was concurring with Village Headman Bandula during a workshop on Singleness and the Traditional View of Marriage.

<sup>42</sup>Brown, 32-40.

standards are less appealing. The sexually-bonded primary relationships are the unattainable ideals of the past.

### **The ‘Gender War’**

“Media has a lot of influence on the values and ethics of society. Some of the information relayed through television, radio, magazines, and other media has influenced the thinking of the contemporary generation.”<sup>43</sup> Most of the young seminar participants blamed traditional matrimony as responsible. They believed that marriage has made the woman a parasite. She is an absolute dependent. Her will power and personality have been incapacitated. Her imagination and social consciousness have been annihilated. In the dream to be someone respectable, the woman loses her personal worth and succumbs to the tyranny of a man.

In this manner, the contemporary seminar patrons deemed the traditional marriage to be a mockery on human character. It conceptualized that the traditional view was primarily a veil that hid underlying conflicts and violence to which wives were subjected by husbands. In their point of view, marriage was the ultimate source of social inequality. It denied opportunities to women that were extended to men, and limits freedom in sexual expression and selection of mates. In this setting then, the wife, the children, and all household workers are the husband’s servants.

### **Another Negative View of Matrimony**

Some seminar participants claimed that the traditional family did not contribute to social stability but continued to legitimize and perpetuate male dominance. As a result, the contemporary generation’s stance tended to postpone marriage until later in life. It was hard to

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<sup>43</sup>Fritz Kadyoma, Francis Muraya, and Frank Mogaka, *Junior Secondary School Life Skills* (Funzi Road, Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers, 2012), 41.

pinpoint why they pushed marriage to a possible future date. Some preferred a lifestyle of partnerships without marriage. Consequently, marriage was no longer considered socially significant as a rite of passage. From another perspective, marriage and the family are under mind-boggling attacks.

A concerned observer cannot help raising eyebrows and wince at what is happening in many marital relationships. It is sad to notice that many marriages in Malawi, and the world over, are in serious trouble. A rising percentage of them are simply falling apart. Divorce has now become socially acceptable. One local observer confessed that the number of ruined households and distraught children who are bereft of their fathers is staggering. Wives gaze in terror around the corner of tomorrow not knowing what to do to survive their plight. Marriage has no future. It beats a concerned mind to figure out how they will ever cope alone to face the foe. The institution is becoming obsolete.

### **Marriage Is Still the People's Choice**

Amazingly however, despite all the negative trends that have been explored above, and the many unmentioned odds against the marital relationship, it is common knowledge that people still choose to marry. The mushrooming of new marriages is proof enough that marriage is both appropriate and desirable. In Malawi, a life without marrying is completely strange. This may be equally true in many cultures. Marriage is esteemed as part and parcel of humankind's life.

The researcher's own experience may help to illustrate the point in question. The early days of his marriage were not as exciting as he had envisioned. His wife's grandmother had given her the values of a respectable woman in her tribe and what she had to expect in a good marriage. However, two of her brothers had very unsuccessful marital lives. The first born was



unfaithful to his wife. He would often get drunk and batter his wife. He then married a second wife because he claimed that the first wife was meeting his marital needs.

The second born took his own cousin as his wife. It seemed that the parents had arranged the marriage. Their relationship gave the impression that all was going well, but later the truth of it all surfaced. Quarrels and fights were the order of the day. Several years later, they divorced. The two little boys whom they had brought into the world went to stay with the parents of their mother (matrilineal marriage). They suffered greatly since the grandparents had no dependable means of getting finances.

These experiences impacted the researcher's wife indelibly. So she entered into her relationship apprehensively and unsure of what might happen in her married life. All this became clearer and clearer in her behavioral patterns as the days went by. One evening, couple sat down to plan the future of their marital life together. She poured out her heart and laid bare all her fears. When the husband asked the wife why she still wanted to get married in spite of all this, she explained that her grandmother had told her that the position of wife and mother were the only viable roles for respectable women in society. This was the traditional stance and it is still true even in this generation.

### **Response to the Perceived Problem**

All the information recorded above convinced the researcher that there was nothing wrong with marriage since it was originally ordained by the Creator. The dilemma was with the mindset. People needed to respond responsibly to these modern times. One of the ways to resolve the encountered and experienced conflicts was to hold family ministries seminars in order to disseminate the knowledge the researcher and his assistant had through those leadership training seminars and the experience they gained in practicing what was learned.

## **Implementation**

Resource materials for the marriage ministries seminars were the same that were handed out to the participants in the Union Leadership Seminars. These were contextualized to suit the local needs and challenges. The research team also used personal experiences and knowledge gathered in the quest to understand the mutuality and relationality of the marriage institution. The main theme of the seminars was “Back to Eden: A Guide to a Happy and Fulfilling Marriage.” This theme had a two-pronged vision. The first prong aimed at encouraging participants to simulate the biblical relationship that existed between Adam and Eve in Eden before the Fall. The second one was to induce couples and single parents to be positive about marriage and deny the current erroneous ideologies on gender equality and emphasize the relational equality and mutual submission of husband and wife.

The seminar facilitators were the researcher and his assistant, making a team of two members. Several series of lessons were formulated for one-week sessions. All these lessons were biblical, practical, and full of real life illustrations. Workshops and group discussions were included. The foundational base was God’s original blueprint of marriage: that of Adam and Eve. The Bible was used as the main handbook and resource manual. The team was convinced that if participants grasped the objectives of the seminar and practiced the lessons presented and discussed, marital violence with all other related matters would be minimized if not eradicated. Every problem or conflict would become a stepping stone to a closer walk into one-fleshness.

### **The initial series of the seminar**

The initial series included the following lessons (shown with the anchor texts only):



When the Divine Council Sat in Session (Genesis 1:26, 27).

➤ This lesson studied the creation of humanity. Theological implications of the anchor text were discussed with mutuality and relational equality as the backdrop.

✚ From One to Two and Back to One Again (Genesis 2:7, 8, 18-22).

➤ The focus was the institution of marriage. We discussed the creation of the male, why God stared with him, the reason for the man's first engagement (naming the animals), his aloneness, and God's 'solution.' The relational equality was fully discussed: two incompatible parts cannot relate equally.

✚ God's Prescription for Joy and Peace (Genesis 2:23).


➤ The initial reason for the institution of marriage was to banish humankind's aloneness. Marriage was established to bring joy and peace. It is a sacred gift from the Creator. Participants discussed whether or not this objective was being met.

✚ Two Suitcases ... or Three ... or One? (Genesis 2:24).

➤ Two of the three components that make marriage tick came out in this lesson. These are 'leave' and 'cleave.' Patrons discussed the problems couple encounter when we do not 'leave' and 'cleave.' To emphasize the fact that there can be no marriage without 'leaving,' we used an illustration of suitcases. The spouses carry their cultural baggage in their suitcases. Marriage is the third suitcase.

✚ Anger as a Friend (Ephesians 4:26, 27)

➤ This topic looked at the causes of anger and how to make these as stepping stones to a more satisfying relationship.

 The See-saw (Philippians 2:1-4).

➤ Through the illustration of the school playground see-saw game, this lesson discussed what couples could do to ‘throw away’ the baggage that acts as a roadblock to their mutual submission. Their baggage includes cultural traditions, educational disparity, and such like. Marriage is a call to sacrifice and the accommodating of one another.

 The Relational Glue (Genesis 2: 24, 25).

➤ In this discussion, the spotlight was on the third component of the ‘triangle of oneness.’ This makes marriage marriage—‘becoming one body’—with special emphasis on being transparent on a one-to-one basis.

### **The Seminar Patronage**

Towards the end of 1993, the seminar was presented in the church in the district the researcher and his assistant ministered. Appropriate announcements were made. Handbills were sent to the community. The next Sabbath evening, the seminar started. The patronage started small, but by the third day, the church was full. It was amazing. Many members of the community, who were not members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, also attended. The hunger for more that was discerned on the faces of the participants. This convinced the team that couples were looking for a more satisfying relationship in their marriages. A lot of ‘brave’ participants testified that the approach was revolutionary. The lessons tackled the real down-to-earth problems being faced by modern marriages. They requested for more of such seminars.

The impact of this initial seminar reached neighbouring districts. Through their pastors, the team was given appointments to present the same seminar in these districts. In 1996, the team I was appointed as Family Ministries Director of the South Malawi Field. This new position now gave it unrestricted opportunities to present the marital relational equality insights to the whole Field. Districts in the Central Malawi Field also invited the team to stage these seminars.

Between 1998 and 2001, there was a break. The team had to go to leave for further studies at Solusi University, Zimbabwe. When it came back, people still hungered for the presentations. It then forcefully dawned on the team that mutuality and relational equality was the missing dimension in contemporary marital relationships.

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

#### **Dimensions of Marriage**

##### **The Reality of Marriage Should Be Regarded as the “Tuning Fork.”**

Humans are social beings. This reality is the very essence of their natural composition. The man was made for the woman; likewise the woman, for God perceived that “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). From the study of the establishment of marriage, Cairus accepted that “an isolated couple does not fulfill all the requirements of for the social dimensions of man, but the creative procedure shows the importance of this dimension.”<sup>1</sup>

The reality then is that the couple’s sociality pervades every aspect of their interactions. Thus all their activities revolve around relationships, some of which are very extensive, complex, and diverse. This project attempted to discuss the reality of the marital union, some of its problems, and aberrations. In this chapter the researcher now proposes recommendations that, if followed, could give couples a more satisfying and fulfilling marital relationship as they try to move towards God’s ideal.

##### **Marriage Is a Social Institution**

The family—a result of marriage—“is the social unit where most people are raised, learn systems of belief, experience love ... and generally grow to be a part of

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<sup>1</sup>Cairus, 210.

communities and society.”<sup>2</sup> Although cultures vary considerably, the tendency to form social alliances or live in communities is part and parcel of human beings. This is so because the family—a result of marriage—“is the social unit where most people are raised, learn systems of belief, experience love ... and generally grow to be a part of communities and society.”<sup>3</sup> Sociologist J. Ross Eshleman also concurs with Shaw and Lee as he posits that marriage has a social dimension.<sup>4</sup> The Bible has also testified that marriage is as old as mankind itself. It is social since it defines “the rights, duties, and conditions required for a union of two humans of different gender.”<sup>5</sup> Because of its sociality, it sweeps across all people regardless of their persuasions in life.

It is not surprising then, to find that the history of humanity is replete with these social relationships. Society sees marriage’s fundamental purpose as the propagating of the next generation. In almost all cultures, this had been the whole reason for marrying.<sup>6</sup> Emotional feelings of love that a couple has for each other did not count very much. Chapter 4 exposed that in some arranged marriages, the bride and the groom never met until their wedding day. However, it is well to remember that marriage was established first and foremost for companionship—“It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Since there is a social dimension in the Godhead, as we discussed the ‘*let us*’ and the ‘*in our*’ of Genesis 1:26, 27 (cf. John 17:24), we may safely agree with Cairus that “meaningful existence for human beings

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<sup>2</sup>Shaw and Lee, 292.

<sup>3</sup>Shaw and Lee, 292.

<sup>4</sup>J. Ross Eshleman, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Kis, 690.

<sup>6</sup>Tindall, 76.

needed a social dimension. The short lapse with only one *adam* was intended to show him that he lacked a counterpart....”<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew *’ezer*, ‘*helper*’ is “the key for understanding the meaning of the woman as ‘fit or him,’ opposite to him,’ or corresponding to him.”<sup>8</sup> If we look at marriage as an institution in which the man and the woman are mutually equal, and that they were created relationally in the similitude of the Godhead, and that both of them are co-regent rulers, then we will be able to surmount the obstacles that come in our way as we journey into one-fleshness.

### **Marriage Is a Spiritual Institution**

The social facet of marriage does not go deep enough in terms of origin and establishment. Marriage is multi-faceted. To agree that it is social and then just leave it at that is short-changing it. This research has established that marriage is God-ordained. It was set up for the good of humanity. Humans are spiritual beings created in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27). In this vein, Kis who pragmatically said that

primarily, and most important, marriage is an intimate and personal relationship where both adults consent to lower their guard, permitting access to their innermost physical, psychological, and spiritual being. In marriage both are willing to become vulnerable.<sup>9</sup>

The Genesis record informs us that God made man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). The researcher believes that since God *is* a Spirit (John 4:24), He invested Himself spiritually (His likeness) into the man through this act of breathing into the man’s nostrils. Thus God was instilling in mankind His very nature. Nichol seems to concur with this idea when he says that

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<sup>7</sup>Cairus, 210.

<sup>8</sup>Garland and Garland, 28.

<sup>9</sup>Kis, 690.



“the image was most evident in terms of his spiritual nature. He became ... a living being, endowed with a free will, a self-conscious personality.”<sup>10</sup> With this background, the researcher believes that marriage is indeed spiritual because the parties that make it are spiritual beings. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that both the sociality and spirituality of the marriage institution have one origin: God. Accepting this thinking then will enable troubled marriage unions to consult the Manufacturer of this institution for insights into resolving whatever is amiss.

### **Marriage Has a Physical Entity**

The text in Genesis is clear when God “blessed them... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:28), He was zeroing on the sexual union of marriage. He also declared that for the sake of the marriage union, the man shall “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh,” (Genesis 2:24). The blessing and the declaration assert that the man and woman would “supplement each other *physically*, socially, and spiritually”<sup>11</sup> (emphasis supplied). The physical element is the ‘becoming one body’ aspect. Sex is God's invention. When He observed on that sixth day of creation that everything he had made was very good (Genesis 1:31), He included the sex dimension. Apart from other hints and references here and there in the Bible, the Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) reaches the “highest, most beautiful and poetic affirmation of the goodness of sex as God’s gift to men and women.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Nichol, 216.

<sup>11</sup>Garland and Garland, 29.

<sup>12</sup>Student’s Life Application Bible: New Living Translation, *Sex—Why Is God So Narrow-minded?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 648.

The ardent student of the Scriptures may discover that sex is good and powerful. “God created us as sexual beings. Sexuality is built into our very core as humans ... and he meant for us to enjoy it. This is why He made it pleasurable.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it is only in the confinements of marriage that the “Bible places the function of sexuality in the context of fellowship, intimacy, and complementation.”<sup>14</sup>

Marriage is the only appropriate environment for this explosive force because the couple is loving, supportive, and committed. When the spouses affirm each other, treat each other as equals, and believe that there is more to marriage than just the physical pleasure, then the violence and abuse will have no room in their marital affair. Even infidelity as a way to fulfill sexual desires will not come into their mindset. They will see any problems as stepping stones to higher fidelity and will always consult the Author of sex (God) whenever they meet with challenges.

### **Sin Disrupted the Mutuality and Relational Equality in Marriage**

When sin entered, the mutuality and relational equality of the two genders was disrupted. When they sinned they went into hiding. God came down to meet them as usual (Genesis 3:8), they were not at their usual place of encounter. When God “called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?” He answered but finally blamed his wife.(Genesis 3:9,12). So God, in “describing the results of sin, rather than what ought to be,”<sup>15</sup> introduced the man’s ruling his wife, a lot of other consequences (Genesis 3:16). Each person’s duty became pronounced.

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<sup>13</sup>Munro,227, 229.

<sup>14</sup>Cairus, 210.

<sup>15</sup>Brown and Brown, 15.

The marriage union began to suffer from the quest for personal gratification. The tendency to exploit or dominate another became rampant. Unlike other thinkers, this researcher stand with those promoters of the idea that when God told the woman that her husband would rule over her (Genesis 3:16), He was only pronouncing the result of their choice to sin and not cursing the pair. However, the man took advantage of the situation. He seized the supremacy and started controlling the world around him.

### **A Call to Revisit Eden**

Judging from the media—newspapers, the radio, the television, and the Internet—this researcher believes that we are living in an era of an upsurge of cultural mixture and social changes. Globalization and modernity have created some tension and conflict between the traditional mode and the modern mode of the marital relationship.<sup>16</sup> Due to this impact, Malawian marriages and families are going through troublous experiences. These societal changes have brought a marriage revolutionary that has adversely affected societal norms in general and the marriage institution in particular.

### **Hope amid the Storm**

Although the outlook seems perplexing and gloomy, this researcher perceives that the adversities are stepping stones to the restoration of the beauty and oneness of marriage. Many modern marital problems seem to have come because people are trying to reconstruct this deep and far-reaching relationship without consulting the Designer. In this manner, they are grappling alone, and without direction.

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<sup>16</sup>Kadyoma, Muraya, and Mogaka, 39-41.

The best thing to do is for marriage partners to stop in their tracks and reconsider their ideologies. Let them revisit Eden and discover how our progenitors related to each other. Then they will discover that the besetments before them are a clarion call to them to take their besetments, disagreements, and all the negative trends in their matrimony to Him.

### **God Is the Never-failing Partner and Mediator**

The Bible has revealed that marriage is not of human devising. It is God's idea. As such, it is spiritual. When the husband and wife accept this truth, they are thus admitting that humanity has somehow debased the gift that God gave. Then they will ask for pardon, healing, and reconnection. The good news is that the God who designed marriage is the divine Partner in the relationship. Whenever husband and wife include Him in their relationship, His presence will always be with the couple.

In marriage there are several triangles. We discussed one of these on 'leave,' 'cleave,' and 'becoming one body.' Another one is made up of 'God,' 'Husband,' and 'Wife.' These three are the partners that make marriage. God is the Initiator. He is the never-failing Mediator and Friend. Marriage is an institution cushioned in friendship. In Malawi, elders admonish the newlyweds that '*ukwati ndi anthu awiri*' (marriage is composed of two people only). But this is partially true.

Marriage has three partners: God, husband, and wife. Where this triangular relationship exists in marriage, there will be joy and happiness. The husband and the wife will always refer their challenges to their compassionate Benefactor and Comforter. Whenever they err, He will come to them, pick the fragmented and broken parts, fit them together, and make the couple whole again. He will then show them how to live a more satisfying marital life.

## **The Gospel Redeems the Marital Union**

The Creator implanted in humans the component of rationality. This was His desire when He divinely purposed in His heart to make man in the likeness of Godhead, the Source of the relational equality. With the entrance of sin, this godly dimension was distorted and twisted. The relationality still existed, but in the similitude of Satan. Matrimony was permeated with selfishness, self-exaltation, and tyranny.

After showing our parents the consequences of their choice, God graciously promised them that a Deliverer would come to rescue them from the curse of sin (Genesis 3:15). The pledge was made right in the midst of our parents' disobedience. In the fullness of time, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman ... to redeem them (Galatians 4:4, 5).

### **What to Do with the Cultural Baggage and Presuppositions**

Ellen White reiterates that although "marriage has been perverted by sin; it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty."<sup>17</sup> In line with this sublime truth, the couple should firstly weigh the ideologies of the 'new wave' and discard that which differs widely from the Designer's blueprint. Secondly, the husband and wife should discard all pre-conceived ideologies of cultural baggage and accept the biblical view of the essence of their humanness.

The traditional way of relating to one another in matrimony had its advantages, but it was structured in the similitude of marriage after Sin. In the traditional setting, the husband had the obligation to support the wife, and the wife had the duty to serve. The husband had to provide for his wife and the children. The wife had to maintain the home, fulfill her husband's sexual needs, bear him children, and rear them. This entailed domination on the husband's part; subordination

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<sup>17</sup> White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 64.

and subservience on wife's part. This was completely contrary to what God, the Creator of marriage, had envisioned in His plan.

God's vision was depicted in the Edenic setting. The husband and wife complemented and completed each other. Though anatomically different, they were functionally equal. They were satisfied with their biological make up and their home responsibilities. The husband's headship was to protect, provide, sustain, and sacrifice for his wife and children for love's sake. The wife's role was that of assisting her husband. They worked together for their own mutual benefit. They were queen and king, reigning co-regently in their home and in their God-given work of overseeing the bounties of the earth. They were no obstacles that caused inequality. They felt and enjoyed the richness of a deep, intimate friendship.

Today's marriage affair can live this Edenic model. The couple will see themselves as partners in the most sublime relationship that ever existed on earth. They will base their matrimony on mutual love and respect, not on power struggle. Both husband and wife will value the other with high regard (Philippians 2:3). They will practice lowliness of mind and avoid strife. They will use their personal abilities and achievements to build one another and their relationship. Decisions will be made by mutual agreement.

Such a lifestyle demands complete emptying of self for the sake of the other. When growing up, each person encounters their tribe's cultural customs, superstitions, and presuppositions. The society also has its contribution. All these accumulate together and are built up imperceptibly into the individual's personality. When they wed, husband and wife carry this disposition baggage with them into the marriage union.

In order to start experience Eden, they need to bring their baggage, lay it open before one another, and throw away all items that can hamper the growth of their relationship as God

ordained it. This is not a day's work. It will take a long time—the whole lifetime.<sup>18</sup> But in so doing, they will have started reaching towards God's ideal for marriage. They will be striving to blend together.

They will discover that the one cannot live without the other. Their mutuality will grow in leaps and bounds. They will enjoy doing household chores together, according to their abilities. The woman will help in the running of the home just as the industrious wife depicted in Proverbs 31:10-29. The man will indeed cherish his wife and call himself blessed.

### **Both Spouses Will Be Constrained by Unconditional Love**

Marriage was instituted for humanity's good—all humanity. When a man marries because he loves and cherishes the woman of his heart's desire, he will treat her as he treats his own body (Ephesians 5:28, 29). In fact the woman is his other self, "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (Genesis 2:23).

When this frame of mind prevails in the home, unconditional love will be the compelling factor in all things pertaining to each other. The husband will always initiate love toward his wife and the wife will respond accordingly. Her personal beauty or any other attributes will not effect his decision to act in love toward her. When things go wrong, and they are bound to in this sin-sick world, he will remember to correct with understanding and with grace.

Abuse and violence will not even enter into his mind. He will not molest and mutilate limbs. He will remember that humanity is prone to err. Events may be that one day he will be in the wrong also. Husband and wife should strive for mutual submission and not live like beasts of

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<sup>18</sup>White, *The Adventist Home*, 105.

the jungle. Communication and the spirit of forgiveness should be the rule in the household. They will humbly submit themselves to one another.

### **The Innermost Circle of Marriage Is Sacred**

The husband-wife relationship is exclusive. “The basic Greek word for ‘marry’ or ‘marriage’ is *gameo*, which really means to ‘fuse together.’”<sup>19</sup> It is a relationality of seeming tension. Two completely different individuals complement each other and contribute to the unity of the relation. They are propelled by the dominant yearning for continuous and intimate companionship with each other.

Marriage is made up of several circles. The inner and first circle is what is called the sacred circle—where we find the husband, the wife, and God. The couple should not allow any interference whatsoever from any of the occupants of the outer circles. They should weigh all the suggestions or advices from parents and other people, or elders. Let them reject politely any of these that act as roadblocks in their progress towards full partnership and intimacy. While they have influence and control in and over the other circles, they guard jealously their sacred circle.

In their quest to get optimum benefits that marriage offers, they should be loyal and respectful to one another. Each spouse should trust the other and exercise confidentiality. They should build one another and never permit sarcasm, or negative feelings find a place in one’s mind regarding the partner. Belittling one another in public and discussing the sacred circle’s experiences, or secrets, with other people is to be avoided at all costs. Whenever there is need to seek advice, they should consult people they trust.

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<sup>19</sup>Munro, 19



When other prevalent forces or traditional axioms press upon them, they should always consult each other and their God. They should never follow the whims of society as a measure to run their companionship. Marriage calls for a life of constant sacrificing, surrendering, and building up if it is to succeed. The original blueprint as discussed in this paper should always be their point of reference.

Let the spouses remember that aging is part of life in this world. When we are getting older, some of the physical beauty loses its luster.<sup>20</sup> Husband and wife may not look as attractive to each other as in their younger days. This is no reason to be dissatisfied with each other and cast eyes on other seeming beautiful woman or man. They should still maintain their covenantal commitment.

They should let *philos*, *eros*, and *agape* love to rule. *Philos* love is sentimental, emotional, and friendship love. It is passionate and attracted by physical appearance. *Eros* love is sexual love. Sexuality is in the very composition of humanity. Put in by the Creator, it was intended first and foremost for pleasure—as the glue for the bonding process of two individuals that adored each other. *Agape* love is unconditional—the divine love which the Apostle Paul elaborates in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. It does not seek its own because it is unselfish. It never fails. It never ends. It always sees the good in the loved one. These three types of love should be the springboard to the couple's bonding. Through them the couple should relive those physical marks and the inner character that pulled them together to fall for each other at the beginning. Though some of the beauty and comeliness may change and erode away with the passing of years, the three types of love discussed will be the master key and glue that will keep the couple going.

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<sup>20</sup>Student's Life Application Bible, 1150.

## **Husband and Wife Should Affirm and Empower Each Other**

Husband and wife are weighted with different predispositions as they enter into marriage. These tendencies are a result of their humanness. The possible differences include those temperaments, cultural backgrounds, economic status, educational attainments, social attributes, and life values. The couple that dreams of higher heights in their matrimonial enterprise should always endeavour to plan that all these diversities contribute to the equilibrium, stability, and harmony of their relationality.

The Apostle Paul put it well when he admonished that “in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). When this is applied to marriage, then each of the two should not dwell on and enhance individual interests, but give priority to the interests of the other partner. This means that in their association, each one should cast away any *weight* or personal power that poses as an inhibiting huddle to the pleasantness of the marriage “game.” This *weight* could be aggressiveness, continual complaining and nagging, social status (including leadership position in the community or at work), selfishness, passivity, wealth/wealthy background, education, and such like.

Husband and wife should no longer aspire to exercise arbitrary authority, power and control because of any *plus* abilities. Neither should the passive and the less educated between the two be a pushover and a resigned follower. Instead, let the one who is at the advantage replace control and manipulation with the concept of empowerment. A relationship built on true love will be characterized by honesty, openness in communication, a greater commitment to truthfulness, and mutual and deeper sharing of feelings. Let each one of them recognize the

strengths and potentials their coming together has amassed and use these to affirm and develop each other. “Marriage does not lessen their usefulness, but strengthens it.”<sup>21</sup>

### **The Marriage Union Should a Journey into Oneness**

The principle of the stepladder is a better illustration for us to grasp this concept. Nancy Van Pelt posits that

Plato used a stepladder to illustrate growth in the marriage relationship. The two upright sides of the ladder stand for the husband and the wife, and each rung represents something that draws and holds them together in inseparable companionship. The lowest rung is physical attraction, and the highest rung, the pure love of God. Each rung ... depends on the other rungs and thus become important to maintain the unity of the ladder of a complete marriage.<sup>22</sup>

The researcher saw this ladder to be the kind that is used to climb high heights. This is made in such a way that the base is wider at the apex is narrower. It is constructed in this way for steadiness so that the climber will not fall as he/she climbs higher and higher. This is how it is with marriage. The husband and the wife are the two uprights of marriage. They are wider apart at the beginning of their union as far as relationality and mutual growth are concerned.

This is a given because even if the two believe that they are compatible, they are still miles apart due to the different background and predispositions we discussed earlier on. The researcher wants to reiterate that marriage is a voyage into one-fleshness. As their relationship grows the couple moves closer and still closer towards each other just as the rungs in the stepladder. This is the process of ‘leaving’, ‘cleaving’ (gluing), and ‘becoming one body.’

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<sup>21</sup>White, *The Adventist Home*, 102.

<sup>22</sup>Van Pelt, 16.

When everybody else is dispersed soon after the wedding celebration, and the couple is rested, they should now put their heads together and look into the possible challenges that loom ahead of them. They should first and foremost establish the habit of talking things together. This is the fabric that they will use in building their marital affair. This is communication at its deepest level.

In Malawi there is an adage that says “*kumdziwa munthu nkulinga utakhala naye.*”<sup>23</sup> Literally, this means that ‘to know someone is to live with them.’ It is common knowledge that many times a man and a woman marry before they have fully known each other. This is true whether the acquaintance has taken a long time or not. The adage still stands even when the pair was seriously and adoringly courting each other. This is so because before they began to live together, they were doing their very best in their own sphere in order not to offend one another. So their true colours become apparent now that they are married. So marriage is a call to growing together into equality in difference.

It is hard work, but where mutuality reigns supreme and there is God, the Designing Partner, everything is possible. The couple should bear in mind that there is almost no model marriage to emulate. This relationship grows through the surmounting of the challenges encountered on their togetherness journey. The tempests, trials, and adversities are the mortar that they should use in building their union. They are the bricks and the cement.

### **Conclusion**

This research has revealed that “marriage is a mutual, exclusive, lifelong, one-flesh union between a husband and wife characterized by fidelity, truth, trust, love, commitment,

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<sup>23</sup>Ken Kalonde and Prisca Kachigunda, *Malawi Senior Secondary School Chichewa* (Capital City, Lilongwe: Sunrise Publications, 2002), 44-47.

and growing intimacy.”<sup>24</sup> The contemporary generations are crying out for the revisiting of the way we do marriage. Through actions, the media, and by word of mouth, there is a continual assault that something should be done quickly to emancipate the prevailing situations in society.<sup>25</sup> All this has been put on stage consciously and unconsciously by the negative trends taking place between couples within the confinements of the home. It seems that the modern destructive and loose morals are a result of the gradual loss of the traditional tenacity that was upon this institution.

### **Globalization Has Its Impact**

The development has brought together almost all the nations of the world into one village. Most of the customs of different nations seem to have been mixed into one cauldron.<sup>26</sup> The result is the eruption of strange mores and behaviours. In this way, cultural customs and traditions which were the bulwark and fabric of society have been watered down. The outgrowth is that the modern society expects much more of marriage in the way of companionship, emotional fulfillment, mutual growth in personal identity, and progressive levels of intimacy.

The tentacles of this globalization have also reached the local communities in Malawi. One of the outcomes is the confusion between ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality’ in relation to marriage. According to them ‘gender,’ whatever work husbands do in the home that is culturally and socially believed to be women’s work. To the contrary, this research seems to unearth that

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<sup>24</sup>“Marriage,” David J. Atkinson and David H. Field, eds. *The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup>Garland and Garland, 27-30.

<sup>26</sup>Roselyne Mukachi, Mbugua Mumbi, and Fritz Kadyoma, *Junior Secondary School Life Skills* (Funzi Road, Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers, 2012), 41.

‘gender’ incorporates the acquired behaviours that characterize members of the society as male and female. We can earn these personality traits as we grow up. Additionally, it is also possible to unlearn them or acquire new ones depending on the environmental circumstances.

### **Our Challenge Is to Admit and Accept the Paradigm Shift**

Our challenge today is to admit that the change we are experiencing has come to stay. The best thing for us is to take it as a challenge to improve the trend in marriage. The notion of ‘gender equality’ as advanced by the feminists cannot work. The right approach is for husband and wife to work together to overcome the results of the Fall. Both men and women must return to their God-given positions as shown in the original design for marriage.

The way to go is neither through the patriarchal mode, nor the feminists’ approach, but mutually as modelled in Eden before Adam and Eve sinned. The husband and the wife must live their life as partners in a marriage enterprise that will benefit them both. This is what this research calls the ‘mutuality’ and ‘relational equality.’ This is attainable because it is what was there in the Eden marriage. The researcher believes that it safe from the study of the biblical evidence to conclude that man and woman were created by God to be equal partners in marriage, and live together as coheirs, and thus destroy the hierarchical concept in their relationship.

### **The Marriage Relationship Was Altered after Sin’s Entrance**

The entrance of sin altered everything in the world, including matrimony. Pain, sorrow, and alienation became part of the household. The man’s and woman’s roles were distorted and affected. The harmonious relationship was gradually becoming bitter and disappointing. The heaviest blow fell on the woman since her desire would be to her husband and he would overrule her. History has witnessed the fulfillment of all this. The ‘curse’ has been so twisted that the

woman seems to be created with substances that are inferior to what God had used to create the man. It is no wonder that the feminists have considered that enough is enough. They claim that men are arbitrary, dominating, and arrogant.

### **God Redeems Marriage**

The text in Matthew 19:4-6 gives us a glimpse into the passionate heart of God. In responding to the question the Pharisees asked Him in regard to marriage and divorce, Jesus challenged them by taking them to the beginning. “What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (verse 6). Although Satan had succeeded in distorting the marriage union, even to the point of destroying the relational equality of the first marriage, he did not completely obliterate it. God had established it upon Himself. No power could and can dissolve it.

No sooner had Adam and Eve sinned than God came to reinstate the relationship. He followed the guilty pair, and showed them a way back to each other and to Himself, their Father. This was the way of confession and forgiveness. He graphically demonstrated how Jesus would come to redeem them and marriage through the shedding of His blood. What God has purposed to do comes to pass. When He killed the animal from whose skin He made them aprons, the shed blood of Jesus was represented and effected there and then. In this manner, their relatedness was not only to be patched, but to be overhauled and renewed. In God’s heart, matrimony stood as it had never been soiled; for whatever is in Christ Jesus, in a new creation. The “old things are passed away ...; behold all things become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### **The Mutuality and Relational Equality Are also Renewed**

When the clock of God’s prophecy (Genesis 3:15) struck the hour, Jesus Christ, the Saviour, was manifested to redeem humankind and what it had lost. For three-and-a-half years,

He showed humanity the way back to the Father. He performed His first miracle—in inaugurating His ministry—at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). Thus His presence that day reaffirmed the sanctity of the marital relationship. In His classical conversation with the Pharisees as quoted above, He proved to them that God had not liquefied marriage. He elevated the women’s status and showed that they were also beings of worth. He “did not assault the existing social structure of marriage directly, but presented ... perspectives that would alter human hearts and reshape marriage from the inside,”<sup>27</sup> thereby reinstating the mutuality and relational equality in marriage and the family.

Today, God is calling upon all wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. This is a call to the Edenic submission (Genesis 2). Eve found satisfaction in obeying Adam, just as Jesus exalted His Father by being submissive to His will. Submission in Scripture is not subservience, as is commonly understood, but a willing response and a loving assistance by the spouse. God is further commanding husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. True headship, leadership, and authority are depicted in sacrifice. Husbands will head the households well if they do in the manner Jesus loved and led His church. He served it and sacrificed His life to redeem it and present it faultless before His Father. In the same way, the husband is called to the head of this one-flesh relationship the love and sacrifice, always being aware of the basic relational equality that exists between him and his wife.

The task of this project was not an attempt to convert the reader to the writer’s faith. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. The burden was to appeal to all members of the Central Malawi Conference in particular, and all people in all walks of life, to follow the original design of marriage whose ingredients are companionship, mutuality, and relational equality: these are the

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<sup>27</sup>Flowers, 82.



healing balm of marital inequality. Marriage is a life-long bond between two people who have equal value and distinct roles. It is “God’s holy and sacred idea. He performed the first wedding in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15-25), thus setting up guidelines for all people to follow.”<sup>28</sup>

Marriage has roles and responsibilities. These roles were first mentioned in Genesis when God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion....And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15). So Adam and Eve were both given the responsibility to rule the earth, power to procreate, and abilities to care for their *garden* home.

The study has also showed that to establish marriage, God made Adam first and delayed somehow before He created Eve. In the interim, He gave Adam the work of naming all the animals. This He did not do to let Adam exercise his God-given prerogative to rule but to engage him in a work that would help him realize the emptiness of his aloneness.

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<sup>28</sup>Student’s Life Application Bible, 1150.

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