

**AFRICAN INDIGENOUS CHURCHES AND POLYGAMY IN THE  
CONTEXT OF HIV and AIDS: THE CASE OF THE *MUTIMA*  
CHURCH IN ZAMBIA**

**BY:**

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## Declaration

This dissertation, unless specified in the text, is my original work. I therefore declare that I have not submitted this dissertation for any other purposes at any other university or institution.

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13<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Date

As Supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

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Signature of Supervisor

13<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Date

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late sister, Mulenga Masaiti, who encouraged me to carry out my research in the *Mutima* Church: and my children Chali and Kasuba. Mulenga, you are a brave woman.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“God, give us more light in this world; Scatter our darkness; Let your healing spring up with the dawn; In the darkness around us; Let this study be a still vision of light.” I thank God for all the strength and guidance in writing this dissertation about polygamy and HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church in Zambia. I am grateful to the Church of Sweden for providing funds and support, since I became part of the HIV and Aids Special Focus programme. I would like to thank Dr George Mukuka for providing me with extra funds. My special thanks also go to Nancy Adams for her unswerving support and belief that I would eventually produce this piece of work.

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I am most grateful to my children, Chali and Kasuba for waiting patiently for me whilst I complete my studies. I want to extend my thanks to many women and men in the *Mutima* Church in Chimwemwe Township in Kitwe, who gave me more information on some aspects of life and theological teachings of the church.

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## ABSTRACT

Women in the *Mutima* Church in Zambia have for some years had the highest HIV rate in the church, but because this is one of the African Indigenous Churches (AICs), not much is known about the behavioural and other risk factors that predispose these women to the virus. One of the reasons is that some members of the *Mutima* Church cannot make their own decisions when getting married. The church founder makes marital decisions for some of the church members. This problem raises serious questions for HIV health practitioners, activists and some of the church members. Informed by some of the *Mutima* Church members that HIV testing in their church is not considered a norm, this dissertation demonstrates theological teachings on polygamy and HIV and Aids employed by the church founder.

In this dissertation, some church members from the *Mutima* Church were asked to describe and explain what polygamy and HIV and Aids meant to them and how they theologically perceived and understood them. While the major results indicate that polygamy in the *Mutima* Church contributes to the spread of HIV and Aids, the other new research findings are that the *Mutima* Church members' theological understanding on polygamy is that it is a blessing from God; and that HIV and Aids is a punishment from God. These responses are analysed and discussed in this dissertation.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AICs - African Initiated Churches

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ANERELA+ - African Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected  
by HIV and AIDS

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

PLWHA – People Living with HIV and Aids

PLWH – People Living With HIV

STIs – Sexually Transmitted Infections

UCZ – United Church of Zambia

UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund

WHO – World Health Organization

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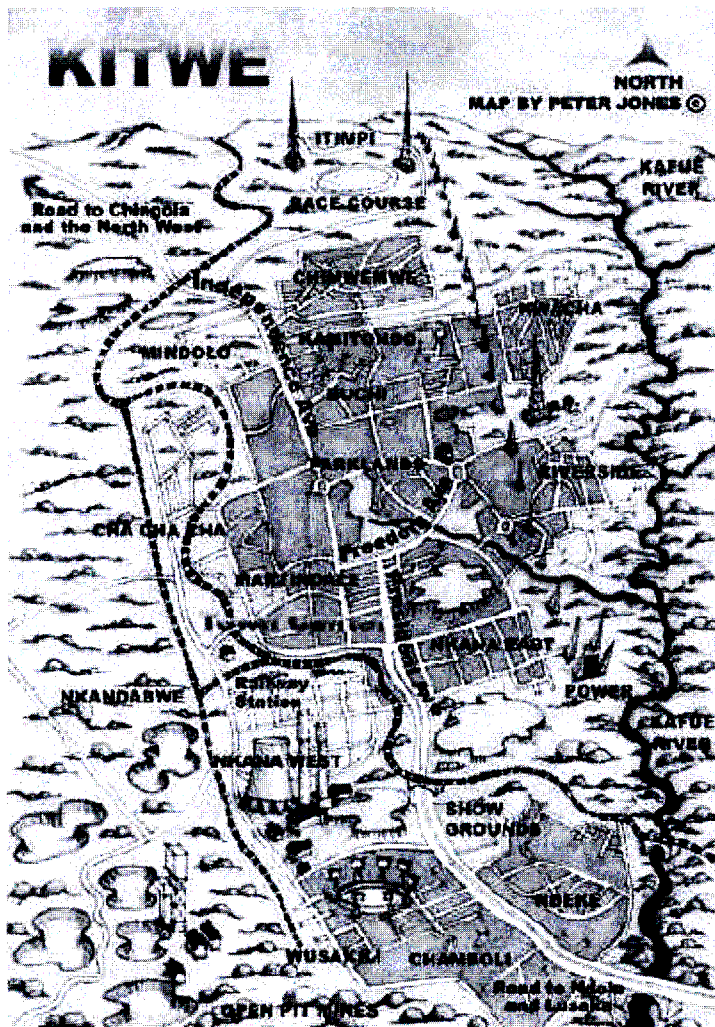
APPENDIX I

MAP OF ZAMBIA SHOWING THE LOCATION OF KITWE<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> HIV and AIDS in Zambia – The Epidemic and its Impact  
<http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm> accessed 20 June 2006.

## MAP OF KITWE<sup>2</sup>



The area marked • indicates the location of *Chimwemwe* Township in Kitwe town.

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<sup>2</sup> “Zambia- the real Africa”

<http://www.zambiatourism.com/welcome.htm> accessed 16 July 2005. Site created in 1997.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HIV AND AIDS CRISIS IN ZAMBIA

#### 1.1 Background

The dissertation highlights the dangers posed by polygamous marriages to contracting HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church of Zambia, which is one of the country's African Indigenous Churches (AICs). The *Mutima* Church uses some theological arguments from the Bible to justify polygamy. This chapter thus introduces the study on HIV and Aids in the Zambian context.

The chapter highlights the HIV and Aids crisis in Zambia. The chapter will examine the relationship between HIV and Aids and some social factors such as gender, poverty and polygamy. I will argue that these are some of the factors that contribute to the spread of HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church. The relationship between HIV and Aids and the factors involved are deeply embedded in the socio-economic and behavioral context and these require a closer examination. The chapter will also highlight some of the HIV responses offered by the Zambian government, the Roman Catholic, Methodist and the *Mutima* Churches on the prevention of the HIV and Aids epidemic in the country.

The study is important considering that the area under study is “the third-largest town in Zambia”.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the risks of HIV infections in the larger towns of Zambia are often higher than they are in smaller towns.

A brief description of the outline of the dissertation's chapters is also given in this chapter.

#### 1.2 Zambia: Profile

Zambia is a landlocked country. It is situated on the southern part of Africa. “At 290,566 sq. mi (752,614 sq km) it is the 39<sup>th</sup>- largest country in the world (after Chile)...”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kitwe. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitwe> accessed 27 November 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Zambia: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/zambia> accessed 20 July 2006.

Zambia is situated on a high flat land. Much of the land in Zambia is fertile. Many people live on subsistence farming and fishing. The country has nine provinces. These are Luapula Province, Lusaka Province, Central Province, Southern Province, Northern Province, Eastern Province, North-Western Province, Western Province and the Copperbelt Province.

The Copperbelt and Lusaka Provinces are the largest industrial cities in Zambia. The Copperbelt Province, in particular, has been known for its richness in minerals, which has attracted many people from rural areas to migrate to Lusaka (the capital city) and the Copperbelt to look for employment. "It was estimated by the Population Reference Bureau that 40% of the population lived in urban areas in 2001".<sup>3</sup>

Research shows that: "...there are four major rivers that either run through Zambia or form the country's borders: the Kafue, the Luangwa, the Kwando and the Zambezi".<sup>4</sup> In addition, there are four big lakes such as Lake Mweru, that is on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo; Lake Tanganyika that shares a border with Tanzania; Lake Bangweulu and Lake Kariba that are on the border with Zimbabwe.

### **1.3 Zambia: Population Estimates**

According to the 2003 United Nations population estimates, Zambia had 10,812,000 people and this placed the country at number 73 in population among the 193 nations of the world. The United Nations also estimates the annual population growth rate for the years 2000 to 2005 to be 1.16%. In 2002, the population density was 13 per sq km (34 per sq mi). During 2003, it was recorded that only 3% of the population was over 65 years of age, with another 48% of the population under 15 years of age.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Zambia: Population. <http://www.nations.encyclopedia.com/Africa/zambia-POPULATION.html>, accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Zambia: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/zambia> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Zambia: Population... July 2006.

The population of Zambia consists of 73 different ethnic groups with many languages. The predominant languages are *Nyanja* and *Bemba*. English is the official language of the country and the predominant religion is Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

Among the provinces, the highest population estimates were recorded in the capital, Lusaka. According to the United Nations population estimates, “Lusaka had a population of 1,577,000”<sup>7</sup> in the year 2003.

#### 1.4 Education in Zambia

Zambia has a three level education system: primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Primary education consists of the first seven years, followed by five years of secondary education. Tertiary education is the last stage of education in Zambia. Research on Zambia shows that:

There are two universities: University of Zambia (UNZA) and Copperbelt University (CBU). They normally select or invite the brightest students to attend courses there. The introduction of fees in the late 1990’s has made this quite hard for some, although bursaries do exist from the state.<sup>8</sup>

For this reason, many young people who complete high schools with lower results find difficulties in securing places at the two universities. In urban areas, there are a wide range of schools, while in many rural areas such as Isoka in the Northern Province of Zambia, there may only be one or two primary and no secondary schools. Accordingly:

In 2001, a nationwide survey found that just two-thirds of primary-school-aged children attended primary school, and less than a quarter of those aged 14-18 years attended secondary school”.<sup>9</sup>

In addition it is estimated that:

A much larger proportion of rural (21%) than urban (6%) women have no education. Forty-four percent of men and a third of women have some secondary education.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Preliminary Report for the 2000 Census of Population and Housing Population Count*. Lusaka: Central Statistical Office. 2000. p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Zambia: Population... 20 July 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Zambia: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/zambia> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>9</sup> “HIV & AIDS in Zambia – The Epidemic and its Impact”. <http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>10</sup> “*The Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey 2000*: Ministry of Health Central Statistics Office. 2002. p. 4.



As a result, the Zambian Ministry of Education has recognized the importance of introducing “Children’s Grants”<sup>11</sup> which are meant to cater for school fees for orphaned and underprivileged children.

#### **1.4.1 HIV and Aids in Zambia**

Statistics from UNAIDS/WHO on Zambia reveal that, “One in every six adult is living with HIV; 98,000 people died of AIDS in 2005... 710,000 children are AIDS orphans”.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, a study on Zambia has shown that:

At the end of 2003, UNAIDS/WHO estimates that 16.5% of people aged 15-49 years old were living with HIV or AIDS. Of these 820,000 adults, 57% were women. Young women aged 15-19 are around six times more likely to be infected than are males of the same age.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, more women in Zambia are infected with HIV than men. This is due to lower levels of education that hinders them from acquiring more knowledge about HIV and Aids. However, report from the Global AIDS Programme in Zambia states:

Only 9.4 percent of women and 13.8 percent of men in Zambia have even been tested for HIV. Despite limited HIV testing, it is estimated that 17.8 percent of women and 12.9 percent of men are currently infected.<sup>14</sup>

It is unfortunate that HIV testing centres in Zambia are not enough, but it is important to note that even though they are not enough, there are not many people who consider HIV testing as a serious issue. Research in Zambia has shown that, “Just 8% of Zambian adults have volunteered to be tested for HIV and know their status”.<sup>15</sup> Many people in Zambia have been reluctant to go for HIV testing because of fear of being stigmatized. Moreover, some people believe that “knowing their status is of no advantage – especially if they are unlikely to receive antiretroviral therapy”.<sup>16</sup> Some people who have gone for testing have been unable to access drugs. “More than a quarter of adults do not even

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<sup>11</sup> HIV & AIDS in Zambia – The Epidemic and its Impact”. <http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>12</sup> ‘UNAIDS/WHO 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic’. <http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>13</sup> HIV & AIDS in Zambia – The Epidemic and its Impact”... 20 July 2006.

<sup>14</sup> ‘The Emergency Plan in Zambia’<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/gap/countries/zambia.htm> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>15</sup> “HIV & AIDS in Zambia – Prevention and Care”. <http://www.avert.org/zambia-aids-prevention-care.htm> accessed 18 November 2005.

<sup>16</sup> “HIV & AIDS in Zambia – Prevention and Care”...

know where they can go for HIV tests”.<sup>17</sup> As a result, many people in Zambia are ignorant of issues relating to HIV testing and this increases the risk of the infected people transmitting the virus to those that are not infected. This usually occurs when people living with HIV are not aware of their status and as a result, they spread the virus to many people before they become ill.

## 1.5 Gender and HIV and Aids

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan has argued that “in many societies, gender norms and expectations keep women uninformed about their bodies and sexual health.”<sup>18</sup> Gender disparities between men and women in Zambia are some of the factors that contribute to the high risk of HIV infection. The majority of the women are infected by their husbands because they do not know their rights to negotiate for safer sex. Annan has observed that power imbalances between men and women reduce women’s choices of negotiating their relationships with men and choices to determine if and when to have sex as well as to negotiate for safer sex.<sup>19</sup> Annan continues to argue that:

In some regions, HIV-infected men coerce young girls into having sex with them because they mistakenly believe that having sex with a virgin cures AIDS. Powerlessness and inequality make a woman less likely to know how to protect herself from infection and, if she does know, less likely to demand condom use or seek reproductive health services.<sup>20</sup>

The socially constructed roles that are attributed to boys and girls in every society become more harmful when girls get married and are expected to serve their husbands. Phiri agrees with Annan when she states “Girls learn from their mothers that they were created to serve their brothers. Boys also grow up believing that they were born to be served by girls and women”.<sup>21</sup> This provides an easy ground and opportunity for many women to fall prey to their husbands. Furthermore, the *Zambian HIV/AIDS Epidemic Report of 2004* concurs with Phiri by stating:

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<sup>17</sup> HIV & AIDS in Zambia – Prevention and Care”...

<sup>18</sup> Kofi, Annan, A. “Girls. HIV/AIDS and Education”.

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Girls\\_HIV\\_AIDSandEducation\\_\(English\)\\_rev.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Girls_HIV_AIDSandEducation_(English)_rev.pdf) accessed 29 January 2007. Published by UNICEF. 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Annan, K. A. “Girls. HIV/AIDS and Education”... 29 January 2007. Published by UNICEF. 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Annan, K. A. “Girls. HIV/AIDS and Education”... 29 January 2007. Published by UNICEF. 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Phiri, I. A. “African Women of Faith Speak Out in an HIV/AIDS Era” in Phiri, I. A., Haddad, B., Masenya, M. (ngwana’ Mphahlele). (eds.). *African Women, HIV/AIDS, and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003. p. 9.

Inequality and power imbalances between women/girls and men/boys in our society heighten the vulnerability of females to infection. In Zambia, women are often taught from early childhood to be obedient and submissive to males. In sexual relations, women are usually taught not to refuse sex to their husbands, regardless of whether the husband has other partners or is unwilling to use condoms.<sup>22</sup>

Added to these gender inequalities is the fact that many women in the *Mutima* Church do not go for higher education and this makes them more vulnerable to contracting HIV. However, the Zambian government has recognized the importance of introducing gender policy in schools and in institutions. The Zambia HIV/AIDS report states that: “Zambia adopted a National Gender Policy in 2000 to address gender imbalances”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, any programme that deals with gender equality is also seen as control measures to HIV and Aids. The United Nations Secretary General’s envoy on AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis, visited Zambia in July 2006 and observed that even though Zambia has introduced ‘Gender Policy’ in many institutions and schools, there is no surety that Zambian women are protected from sexual violence. He remarked that:

What is missing in Zambia is that the country has to have interventions to ensure women are protected. Women are becoming an endangered species on earth. As long as gender inequality continues, we will not be able to subdue the pandemic.<sup>24</sup>

Since gender inequalities between men and women contribute greatly to the spread of HIV and Aids in the country, it is important to include as many women as possible in the HIV and Aids agenda. The HIV/AIDS epidemic report states that “gender mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS issues is a central element in the fight against the epidemic”<sup>25</sup> This also means that, “...implementation of the National Gender Policy will require that all socio-economic policies, programmes, plans, projects, and the national budget are gender responsive”.<sup>26</sup> There is, therefore, a need for an inclusive response to combat HIV and Aids that considers community initiatives and the people’s culture. The socially constructed roles between men and women are human made and can be changed.

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<sup>22</sup>“The Zambian HIV/AIDS Epidemic Report” In the *Supplement to the 2000 Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey: Explorative Research Work on Community Perceptions About HIV/AIDS*. 2004. p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> “The Zambian HIV/AIDS Epidemic Report”... 2004. p.39.

<sup>24</sup> Mildred Mpundu. “UN Secretary General Envoy on AIDS Visits Zambia” in the *Times of Zambia*. 29 July 2006.

<sup>25</sup> “The Zambian HIV/AIDS Epidemic Report”... 2004. p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> “The Zambian HIV/AIDS Epidemic Report”... 2004. p. 39.

Moreover, it is often said that poverty has also contributed to the spread of HIV and Aids in Zambia.

## **1.6 The Impact of HIV and Aids on Zambian Families**

Statistics from the National Central Statistic show that 80% of the rural people are poor and 60% of the urban people are poor. The report further states that 70% of female headed households are poor compared to 57% of male headed households.<sup>27</sup> Many female headed households in Zambia are caught up in a web that is further reinforced by poverty in times of HIV and Aids crisis.

As a source of income, some girls and women agree to have sexual intercourse with men in exchange for money so that they may sustain their families. In the process, the women may end up contracting HIV. Furthermore, some women are forced to leave their jobs in order to care for their ill husbands or relatives. Girl children are also advised to stop going to school in order to assist their mothers in taking care of the sick. Poku perceives women and girls as subjects of both sexual exploitation and abuse. Commenting on the same, Poku asserts that:

Women may have to give up jobs and income-earning to care for a sick spouse or relative. The burden of caregiving falls primarily on women, and that burden carries over into dealing with the possible loss of assets to relatives upon the death of a husband. Girls tend to be withdrawn from school earlier than or rather than boys, to assist with caregiving,...There are widespread anecdotal reports of men seeking every younger girls for sexual purposes...on the assumption that the girls are not HIV infected...<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, HIV and Aids has a negative impact on caregivers, whether males or females head the household.

### **1.6.1 Definition of Poverty**

In Zambia, poverty levels vary from urban areas to rural areas. As such, even the definition of poverty varies from context to context. In Zambia, poverty can be defined as a lack of education, social, cultural, economic, and religious involvement. This means

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<sup>27</sup> *Zambia National Statistics Paper*. National Central Statistics Office (CSO) on Poverty Reduction. 2002. p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Poku Nana, K. *AIDS in Africa: How the Poor are Dying*. Malden. Polity Press. 2005. p. 99.

that the quantity and quality of essentials such as water, food, health facilities, religious integration and employment that people have access to will be very low.

The links between poverty and HIV and Aids need to be recognized. Alan Whiteside and Clem Sunter have argued that it is not clear whether Aids is a result of poverty, but that “what is clear is that AIDS increases poverty”.<sup>29</sup> In Zambia, HIV and Aids have continued to affect various households as the people who are relatively less well-to-do are the most infected and affected. According to Whiteside and Sunter:

Where workers who are too ill to work are retrenched or medically boarded, they lose most of their benefits. Ultimately, they have to rely on the state or their families. State hospitals recognize that they are neither the appropriate location nor can they provide care for the people with AIDS. These patients are discharged to be cared for at home which places an extra financial burden on the households. People living in urban areas may return to their rural homes when they fall ill, but they can no longer access health services there.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear from the above that HIV and Aids, poverty and gender are intertwined. While some people leave their jobs to care for their ill spouses, some people are returned to their rural homes where accessibility to therapy is inadequate. In this situation, many women whose spouses fall ill become vulnerable as they try to find some alternative means of looking after their children.

## **1.7 Demographic and Background: Kitwe**

The location of this study is Kitwe. Therefore it becomes necessary to understand the characteristics of Kitwe. Geographically, Kitwe lies in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. It is situated in the “South West of Nkana Mine”.<sup>31</sup> It is located “...at a mean altitude of over 1295m, between latitudes 12° and 13° South of the Equator and longitudes 27° and 29° East”.<sup>32</sup> In addition to this, “Kitwe is about 350km north of

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<sup>29</sup> Alan Whiteside, and Clem Sunter. *AIDS: The Challenge for South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers Ltd. 2000.p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Whiteside, A. and Sunter, C. *AIDS: The Challenge for South Africa...* 2000. p. 92.

<sup>31</sup> Kitwe: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kitwe> accessed 15 April 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Kazimbaya Senkwe, Kambole Michael Sankwe & Jos Frijns. Improvement of Refuse Collection in Kitwe. (A Participatory Approach). 1999.  
[http://www.ihs.nl/downloads/sinpa%20publications/sinpa\\_downloads\\_pdf/1999%20Zambia-kitwe%20ImproveRefuseCollection.pdf](http://www.ihs.nl/downloads/sinpa%20publications/sinpa_downloads_pdf/1999%20Zambia-kitwe%20ImproveRefuseCollection.pdf) accessed 15 April 2006.

Lusaka”.<sup>33</sup> The town is divided into two regions: the mine area that is a controlled area and a municipality controlled area. Both areas are available for human settlement. Much of the municipality’s area is used for agricultural production.

The estimated population of Kitwe in 2003 was 439,000. This compares with other towns such as Ndola (376,000); Mufulira (176,999); Chingola (186,000) and Kabwe (210,000).<sup>34</sup>

In addition, Mallen Baker has estimated that Kitwe “...has a population density of 557 persons per square kilometre”.<sup>35</sup> He goes on to note that:

The district covers a radius of 737 square kilometres and is very centrally connected to all the other districts in the Copperbelt given the good communication network – both roads and telecommunication”.<sup>36</sup>

The central location of Kitwe encourages a constant movement of people in and out of the town particularly for trading activities. The major source of income for most households is employment in the mines and municipality, petty trading and agriculture. Hence, it is argued that even “agriculture, from which the vast majority of Zambians make their living, is also affected by AIDS”.<sup>37</sup>

Research by John Kapesa has shown that the HIV and AIDS epidemic have worst hit Kitwe and Mufulira.<sup>38</sup> Kapesa records that hospital statistics in Mufulira and Kitwe record that five miners die with AIDS related illnesses each month.<sup>39</sup>

In Kitwe town, many of the women are wives of ex-miners, traders, bus drivers and church ministers. There are a small percentage of people that are employed as miners,

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<sup>33</sup> *Preliminary Report for the 2000 Census of Population and Housing Population Count*. Lusaka: Central Statistical Office. 2000. p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Zambia: Population. <http://www.nations.encyclopedia.com/Africa/zambia-POPULATION.html>. accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Mallen Baker. ‘*Corporate Social responsibility- what does it mean?*’ <http://www.mallenbarker.net/csr/csrfiles/> 2002. accessed 14 September 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Mallen Baker. ‘*Corporate Social responsibility...?*’ 2002. accessed 14 September 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Rob Noble. “HIV and AIDS in Zambia: The Epidemic and its Impact” <http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm> accessed 20 July 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Mufulira is also one of the mining towns in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia.

<sup>39</sup> John, Kapesa. “Mopani spearheads HIV/AIDS campaign with drama” in the *Times of Zambia*. 12 November 2005.

and the majority of them are men. This is due to the privatisation of the Copper mines by the Zambian government. Anne Mumbi, who did research on the Corporate Social Responsibility in Kitwe argues that the privatisation of the mining sector is based on the belief that business can play a role in facilitating people's well being and enhance the quality of life when they have access to basic necessities of life.<sup>40</sup> However, as a result of the country's privatization of the mines and other leading companies, many people have been left destitute. More and more people in Kitwe are becoming destitute due to the ever-mounting economic hardships, and unemployment.

Women in the *Mutima* Church and in society are found to be desperate for marriage owing to the prevailing social and economic conditions. In some homes, women both work and look after the families especially in cases where their husbands are unemployed. But it is also an open secret that many married women, who are working in some companies, have extra marital affairs at their work places. This is often because of the lack of care and love from their husbands who tend to have many secret lovers as well.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, many men who bring their products to sell in town co-habit with other women while their wives in the rural areas are looking after the family. The exposure to multiple sex partners increases the levels of contracting HIV in Kitwe.

### **1.7.1 Chimwemwe: Population and Economic Background**

Kitwe has a number of townships. These are:

- (i) Riverside and Nkana East –Low Density
- (ii) Buchi and Wusikile – High Density
- (iii) Bulangililo and Ndeke Village – Medium Density with Bulangililo being a Basic Site and Service Area
- (iv) Chimwemwe – High Density
- (v) Ipusukilo -Informal settlement.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Anna Vondo Mumbi. *Corporate Social Responsibility and the Church in Copper belt: A Case of the Kitwe Pastor's Fellowship's Level of Knowledge and Involvement in Holding Mining Organisations Accountable*. Unpublished Article. 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Helen Adekunbi Labeodan. "Sexual Cultural Practices and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in Amoah, E. Akitunde, D. & Akoto, D. (eds.). *Cultural Practices and HIV/AIDS: African Women's Voice*. Accra: SWL Press. 2005. p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Senkwe, B. K., Kambole, M. Sankwe & Frijns, J. Improvement of Refuse Collection in Kitwe. (A Participatory Approach). 1999...

Among these Chimwemwe is of much interest to this study because I have lived there for nine years. Moreover, very little attention has been given to the role of men and women in the transmission of HIV in Chimwemwe.

Chimwemwe is a municipality-controlled area. The population is estimated at 14,000 people. The township hosts several governmental and private primary and secondary schools.<sup>43</sup> English is the official language used in all the primary and secondary schools in Chimwemwe. Although there are a number of secondary schools such as Chibote Girls High School, Muchinga High School, and Chimwemwe High School, the level of education of most of Chimwemwe's residents is low. This is because many people do not succeed in moving on to grade ten after writing their grade nine examinations. Therefore, very few people have either completed grade twelve or done any tertiary training. The majority of the people in Chimwemwe are unemployed. Some people work for the municipality while others mainly engage in low income generating activities<sup>44</sup> as well as farming.

The *Bemba* is the main ethnic group in Chimwemwe. There are other small ethnic groups such as the *Aushi*, the *Bisa* and the *Lamba*. Chimwemwe Township has several Christian denominations such as the Roman Catholic, the United Church of Zambia and the Lutheran, and the *Mutima* Church.

Chimwemwe Township has only one health facility. Although there may be adequate personnel, there is usually a lack of adequate drugs, equipment and physical infrastructure. These conditions make it difficult for personnel to cope with patient's demand for drugs and other health facilities. The Zambia Ministry of Health reported in 2003 that, "In terms of health, the district [Kitwe] has high malaria infection rates and respiratory infections due to air pollution. The HIV prevalence level stand at 26.6% and this is among the highest in the Province".<sup>45</sup> Partly owing to its high population density, Chimwemwe Township has a high rate of HIV exposure especially amongst young

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<sup>43</sup> "Population of Chimwemwe – Kitwe". <http://www.bioline.org.br/request?rh03008> accessed 28 January 2007.

<sup>44</sup> World Health Organisation: Gender and Health. 2003. *Gender and HIV/AIDS*. Geneva: Department of Gender and Women's Health.

<sup>45</sup> Zambia Ministry of Health Report. *Zambia National Health Accounts 2002 Findings*. Lusaka: Government Printers. 2003. p. 4.



women. An increasing number of people are engaged in practices that deepen the levels of HIV and Aids in Chimwemwe.

### 1.7.2 HIV and Aids in Kitwe

Benezeri Kisemba, *et.al.* have done a thorough research on multiple sexual relationships in Kitwe. They have pointed out that:

Kitwe has more of the character of a huge, mining camp, than of an administrative, commercial and manufacturing centre... The traditionally polygamous Bemba are the largest ethnic group in Kitwe, and recent increases in wages and salaries make it possible for *Bemba* men to support more than two wives in town, although the polygamy rate in general remains low.<sup>46</sup>

Although Kisemba *et.al* argue that the polygamy rate in general is low in Kitwe, some men who are married in monogamous relationships also have extra sexual partners. Worse still, many families are still highly polygamous. Some members of the *Mutima* Church, for example, still have up to four wives and this widens the chances of HIV and Aids infection.

The question therefore arises: How is the Church responding to the challenges and constraints that it faces in its attempt to transform the grim conditions that the people of Kitwe find themselves in? In the following section therefore, I shall identify and analyse the responses of the three churches to HIV and Aids in Chimwemwe township of Kitwe. These churches are: the Roman Catholic, the Methodist and the *Mutima* Church. I chose these three churches because I am very familiar with them.

A number of factors that explain why some women in polygamous marriages are at high risk of HIV exposure can be identified. These include the inability of some women to negotiate for safer sexual practices. Sonja Weinreich and Christoph Benn have observed that in a situation where the husband has more than one sexual partner, there is usually a lack of acceptance by the man to use condoms. They state that:

For many women, above all in Africa, the greatest risk factor for HIV infection is that they live in a polygamous relationship in which the husband

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<sup>46</sup> Kisemba, B. *et.al.* *African Christian Marriage...* 1998. p. 91-92.

has more than one partner, and at the same time they are not in a position to either refuse sex or insist on the use of condoms.<sup>47</sup>

I agree with Weinreich and Benn's views, considering that polygamy is not only practiced in the *Mutima* Church, but in the wider Zambian society as well. Weinreich and Benn's work is critical because it explores the practical ways in which, among other things, HIV and Aids can be transmitted; provides knowledge on sexuality and Aids; and suggests how HIV can be prevented.

Although the *Mutima* Church does not talk openly about the causes of the deaths of its many members, HIV and Aids has greatly affected the Church. As such, this reality motivated my research into how polygamous marriages expose partners at high risk of contracting HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church of Zambia. Furthermore, according to Pamela Young, "Women's feminist experience exposes a patriarchal theology for what it is, half a theology, and judges it accordingly".<sup>48</sup> It is for this reason that my interest, as an African female theologian, compels me to expose the patriarchal theology that I experienced in the *Mutima* Church. I hope this study will help many women and men in the *Mutima* Church to become aware of the dangers posed by polygamy to contracting HIV.

### **1.7.3 The Roman Catholic Church in Chimwemwe Township**

As the government of Zambia struggles to cater for its people, more people are turning to Churches for help. In its attempt to eradicate poverty and prevent the spread of HIV and Aids, the Roman Catholic Church in Kitwe, particularly in Chimwemwe Township, has introduced HIV and Aids awareness programmes.

The Roman Catholic Parish missionaries arrived in Kitwe in 1940.<sup>49</sup> In 1960, the Chimwemwe Parish was established. By 1996, the Roman Catholic Parish in Chimwemwe was the first church to introduce HIV and Aids awareness programmes, for

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<sup>47</sup> Sonja Weinreich and Christoph Benn. *AIDS – Meeting the Challenge: Data, Facts, Background*. Geneva: WCC Publications. 2004. p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> Pamela, D. Young. *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology: In Search of Method*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. 1990. p. 67.

<sup>49</sup> There was an HIV and Aids Awareness Campaign on 21 July 2006 at the Roman Catholic Parish in Chimwemwe Township. Father Francis Chisenga was addressing the *Chimwemwe* residents on this day.

both the adults and the youth in the town. At least once every several months, there are HIV and Aids campaigns that are run by the church. The members of the Roman Catholic Church visit some people that are living with HIV and Aids in their respective homes; they also provide food relief services to the poor and have opened an orphanage. The Roman Catholic Parish has also started different projects in and around Kitwe in an attempt to eradicate poverty and provide employment for some people. For example, a project called “Education is the Way to Success” at St. Joseph’s Parish in Chimwemwe has been initiated.

#### **1.7.4 The Methodist Church**

The Methodist church is the umbrella name for the United Church of Zambia (U.C.Z.) and it came into being on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, 1965, at Mondolo, Kitwe”.<sup>50</sup> After the arrival of the Roman Catholic white missionaries on the Copperbelt in 1940, church leaders began to plan for a United Church:

In 1945, the Church of Scotland congregations (of the Northern Province) came together with the London Missionary Society congregations (of the Northern and Luapula provinces) and a number of African congregations of the Copperbelt, to form the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (C.C.A.R.).<sup>51</sup>

The new Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia began to serve the church in Zambia and to help in the planning for church union. The UCZ was then established. UCZ has many congregations throughout the country; of which the Chimwemwe Congregation is one of the biggest.

The Chimwemwe Congregation, like the Roman Catholics, also provides food relief services for poor people in remote areas. In addition, the Congregation has established a secondary school for both local and non-local pupils. An HIV and Aids awareness programme has been introduced as one of the courses that are run by the church at this school. The course teaches adults and the youth how people contract Aids, the differences between Aids and HIV and how to care for someone who has AIDS.<sup>52</sup> There are also

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<sup>50</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ *The Life of a Christian: A TextBook for Catechumens*. Ndola: Mission Press. 2001.p. 90.

<sup>51</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ *The Life of a Christian:...* 2001. p. 90.

<sup>52</sup> Rrekgetsi Chimeloane. *MacMillan AIDS Awareness Programme: To Be Like Suzgo*. Lusaka, Zambia: Macmillan Publishers. 1996. pp. 19-21.

HIV and Aids clubs, where members from the Roman Catholic Church and from UCZ, meet to discuss issues about the pandemic.

### **1.7.5 The *Mutima* Church**

Despite the many branches that the church has established throughout the country, the *Mutima* Church has only one branch in Chimwemwe at Jambo-Jambo. This is a remote area and the branch was established in 1989. According to the interview with Liless, one of the female priests, the *Mutima* Church at this branch provides shelter and food for destitutes. However, the *Mutima* Church in Chimwemwe has not fully adopted anti-HIV and Aids strategies.

Although the *Mutima* Church has introduced youth programmes, where the young people meet every Saturday to learn about various concerns, issues such as HIV and Aids are not taught to them. This is the reason why not many members have learnt about HIV and Aids. Furthermore, HIV and Aids awareness is not on the agenda because it is believed that the epidemic is a result of people's promiscuity. The church is more concerned with issues of dogma and marriage than HIV and Aids education.

## **1.8 Outline of the Chapters**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the HIV and Aids crisis in Zambia. The chapter gives the profile, population estimates on Chimwemwe Township, Kitwe and Zambia. The focus in chapter 1 is on the HIV and Aids crisis in the Zambian society.

Chapter 2 explores the preliminary literature study; the research problem and objectives; hypothesis; theoretical framework and it defines culture, polygamy and HIV and Aids. It gives brief discussion of HIV transmission is given before the conclusion.

Chapter 3 examines polygamy as an African concept of marriage. It explores issues that contribute to polygamy in various African societies. The chapter also highlights male and female theologians' theories about polygamy and HIV and Aids.

Chapter 4 discusses African Christianity with a view to exploring some of the reasons that led to the formation of African Initiated Churches (AICs). The formation of the *Mutima* Church in Zambia and its theological teachings on marriage will also be discussed.

Chapter 5 examines the research design and methodology that has been used in this study in detail.

Chapter 6 presents and analyses the findings of the God's Blessings Marriages in the *Mutima* Church.

Chapter 7 examines critically the theology of the *Mutima* Church and proposes a theology of HIV and Aids that can give life in its fullness to the members of the church.

Chapter 8 concludes the whole study. It comments on the issues that have been explored in this study and gives some recommendations to the *Mutima* Church.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the background to the context under study. I have discussed that although Chimwemwe is a high-density area, the gender norms practiced there contribute to the higher risk of HIV exposure. This is because generally, men in Zambia are given a higher position in society as well as in the church. This has contributed to the vulnerability of women from sexual abuse at homes and in the wider society.

The chapter has also discussed the link between gender, poverty and HIV and Aids. The chapter outlines how some denominations such as the Roman Catholic are responding to the HIV epidemic in Chimwemwe.

In the following chapter, I will discuss an overview of the preliminary literature study and the research problem. The chapter offers a definition on culture, polygamy and HIV and Aids.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the following: the preliminary literature study; the research problem and objectives; hypothesis; theoretical framework. Additionally, it defines culture, polygamy and HIV and Aids. A brief discussion of HIV transmission is given before the conclusion.

#### 2.2 Preliminary Literature Study

Much of the literature that will be used in this study examines issues of HIV and Aids, polygamy, the Bible and African culture. The literature will give us insights that will enable us to highlight relationships between polygamy and HIV and Aids of the *Mutima* Church.

African women theologians view polygamy as an institution that increases the oppression of women by men in some societies. They have observed that polygamy only favours the interests of men and makes them feel superior to women. A theologian like Musimbi Kanyoro, who has studied some of the oppressive structures practiced in African culture, warns that some African men do not only own property, but women as well. Kanyoro relates “African culture” to “Christianity” and writes that “Here the church, too, has found itself in a dilemma”.<sup>53</sup> She observes that there are many theological debates surrounding polygamy in the African Christian Church. A case in point is the *Mutima* Church, which has its theological understanding based on the Old Testament texts such as Genesis 29 and 30 respectively. Kanyoro further advocates that:

Polygamy has been the basis of the exploitation of women and children’s labor because polygamy is justified as a means of enhancing the productivity of property for the man. Polygamy also depicts women as weak and in need of constant protection of men.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Musimbi, M. A. R. Kanyoro. “Engendered Communal Theology: African Women’s Contribution to Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” in Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube. *Talitha cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2001. p. 172.

<sup>54</sup> Kanyoro, M. A. R. “Engendered Communal...” 2001. p. 173.

Kanyoro considers polygamy as an oppressive structure that dehumanizes and exploits women. The justification of polygamy undermines women's ability to make their own decisions and denies them the right to enjoy life in its fullness. Therefore, the majority of African women theologians oppose polygamy, because it makes women inferior and reduces them to property owned by men. African women theologians, like Kanyoro, are taking measures against such oppression by conducting Bible studies and re-reading the Bible with gendered eyes that consider women in their own contexts.<sup>55</sup>

John Mbiti, a male African theologian has studied a variety of African cultures and has attempted to show some commonalities amongst these cultures. In his publication, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti outlines the reasons why some African cultures like the *Namwngas* of Zambia, still practice polygamy and the consequences that arise from these practices. He concludes that:

I am not discussing whether polygamy is right or wrong, good or bad: I am simply presenting the facts and attempting to appreciate the thinking and experience of those involved in polygamous situations.<sup>56</sup>

Although Mbiti is trying to be careful in stating whether the practice of polygamy in some African cultures is good or bad, my opinion is that his concluding statement shows that it is not easy for one to be involved in research on polygamous marriage. Although he may seem not to be in support of polygamy, his writings show that he understands elements of African culture that are mostly patriarchal.

Benezeri Kisemba, Laurenti Magesa and Aylward Shorter also offer a preliminary framework for this study. Their work deals with the definition of polygamy and its functions from an African perspective. They have looked at the "Socio-economic causes and effects of polygamy"<sup>57</sup> in many African countries, including Zambia. Moreover, Kisemba, *et al.* have explored the conflict faced by the church and other theologians on the issue of baptizing and readmitting polygamists in the Christian church. They argue that allowing a polygamous man to divorce his other wives so that he might be baptized

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<sup>55</sup> Kanyoro, M.A. R. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. London: Sheffield Academic Press. 2002. p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> John Mbiti, S. *African Religions & Philosophy*. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers. 1999. p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> Benezeri Kisemba., Laurenti Magesa., and Aylward Shorter. *African Christian Marriage*. Limuru: Kolbe Press. 1998. p. 88.

and partake of Holy Communion is not the right solution at all. They further offer what they call “The Limited Toleration of Polygamy and the Levirate”<sup>58</sup> to the Christian church, where they outline some suggestions for the inclusion of polygamists in the Christian church. Among other issues, Kisemba, *et al.* has observed that:

On the same conditions, cases of Christians who have lapsed into polygamy, or who have entered into leviratic unions under social or economic pressure or the burden of childlessness, should be treated with equal consideration and sympathy and even be readmitted to Communion if these plural unions cannot be dissolved without grave hardship to those concerned.<sup>59</sup>

The above quotation does not focus on women, but is based on the interests of polygamous men. It continues to deny barren women their rights to enjoy monogamous marriages. This means that a married woman should enjoy life in its fullness when she is the only one married to one man. It also forces widows to accept marriage to the brothers of their late husbands. This is an unjustifiable solution for women, as the ideas are based on male dominance and influence in the Christian Church. Such male ideas will thus continue to control the minds and rights of many women to the extent that women will find it more difficult to experience what their male counterparts have achieved.

Gaskiyane in his publication, *Polygamy: A Cultural and Biblical Perspective*, gives a detailed account of the possible solutions with regard to what the church’s action plan should be in dealing with people converting to Christianity from a background of traditional polygamy. He notes that the church’s advice that a husband divorces his other wives and remains with one is an un-Christian way of dealing with marriage problems. Instead, he offers the idea of “prayer, counseling, teaching the Word of God about marriage and God’s view of women and their role in the church...”<sup>60</sup> as a better solution towards the church’s campaign against polygamous marriages.

I agree with Gaskiyane on his recognition of God’s view on women and the equal roles that they should be given in the Christian church. However, what Gaskiyane has not tackled in his book on polygamy is the wider existence of HIV and Aids in today’s context where women, either in the church or in the wider society, are the most affected

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<sup>58</sup> Kisemba, B., et.al. *African Christian...* 1998. p. 115.

<sup>59</sup> Kisemba, B. et.al. *African Christian...* 1998. p. 115.

<sup>60</sup> Gaskiyane, I. *Polygamy: A Cultural and Biblical Perspective*. Carlisle: Piquant. 2000. p. 63



and infected. This is therefore the aim of this dissertation; to find out what the implications for believing in the practice of polygamy in the context of HIV and Aids are.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, advocates against the practice of polygamy both in the church and in African society. In her publication entitled, *Daughters of Anowa*, Oduyoye argues that women who are in support of polygamy have become custodians of polygamous cultural practices. According to Oduyoye:

Women supporting [polygamy] also maintain that it provides “more children for a man” and that [polygamy] is better than a husband having extra-marital relations with girlfriends.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, in the *Mutima* Church, some women who are involved in polygamous marriages maintain that such marriages help men to have more children, which is a sign of security for their marriage. It is important to note that some women support polygamy. For instance, in the *Mutima* Church, women are sometimes given the go-ahead to find a third or fourth wife suitable for their husbands. As a result, African women theologians’ concerns about marginalized women become very important in that they help us to further explore some of these harmful and oppressive structures and initiate plans of action. I conclude this section by stating John Oliello’s commendation of African women theologians’ efforts:

In particular, the contribution of African Women Theologians adds flavour to our discussion considering that this has been an exclusively male debate where they have been scoring their own goals without giving a chance to the female voices on an issue where they would best contribute.<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, women’s voices have not been included on the male agenda for a long time, especially in the church. Women have started breaking the silence by speaking out so that their voices are heard and included on the male agendas. Similarly, the debate about the practice of polygamous marriages in the *Mutima* Church has mainly a male one, as women appear to be pushed into the system and become the property of men.

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<sup>61</sup> Mercy, Amba, Oduyoye. *Daughters of Anowa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1995. p. 145.

<sup>62</sup> John, K. Oliello. *The Gospel and African Culture: Polygamy as a Challenge to the Anglican Church of Tanzania-Diocese of Mara*. University of KwaZulu-Natal. MTh Unpublished Thesis. 2005. p. 5.

### 2.3 Research Problem

The background to the research problem is based on the statistics in Zambia that “...about 89,000 people died of AIDS in the year 2003,”<sup>63</sup> and an awareness that having multiple sexual partners increases a person’s risk of contracting HIV and Aids. The questions that need to be asked are: (a) What are the implications of the widespread belief within the *Mutima* Church that polygamy does not actually contribute to the spread of HIV and Aids? (b) What does it mean to be a Zambian woman, married in a polygamous relationship and belonging to the African Indigenous Church (AIC) in the context of HIV and Aids?

Based on my experience of the *Mutima* Church, polygamy appears to influence the spread of HIV among its members. Therefore, the study asks the following questions:

- What are the members’ basic beliefs about marriage?
- To what extent are the members of this church knowledgeable about HIV and Aids?
- What is their theological interpretation of HIV and Aids?
- Do the members perceive the practice of polygamous marriages as high-risk behaviour in the spread of HIV?
- Has their perception of polygamy changed as a result of the spread of HIV and Aids?

Having outlined the sub-questions, it becomes necessary to examine the objectives of this study, which are:

- To find out the members’ basic cultural and religious beliefs on polygamous marriage;
- To examine the members’ knowledge of high risk activities and how they are related to the spread of HIV;
- To examine their theological interpretation of HIV and Aids;
- To assess their views on the spread of HIV and the practice of polygamous marriages.
- To investigate whether or not the members of the *Mutima* Church perceive the practice of polygamy as high-risk behaviour in the spread of HIV.

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<sup>63</sup> HIV & AIDS in Zambia. <http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm> accessed 18 November 2005.

## 2.4 Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis guiding this study is that the members of the *Mutima* Church are not aware that their practice of polygamous marriages makes them vulnerable to the spread of HIV due to the prevalence of unprotected sex with multiple partners.

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

Since this study is located within Christian and African worldviews using gender as a tool of analysis, it acknowledges the fact that when Christianity was introduced in Africa, it did not find a spiritual and cultural vacuum.

Churches like the *Mutima* Church are a product of a rejection of Western culture as well as the acceptance of the Christian message within the African cultural and belief systems. It is for this reason that African Theology acknowledges African culture and religion as some of its sources. However, African women theologians question the uncritical acceptance of African culture as a source for defining theology in Africa.

According to Kanyoro, “It is not enough simply to analyze culture without reference to the people who maintain the culture and on whom the culture impacts”.<sup>64</sup> This is the reason why a *gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics* is being used in this study because it addresses issues of culture and religion, and is at the same time, critical about them from a gender perspective.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, scholars like Kanyoro have advocated a gendered analysis of African culture, religion and Christianity. She has argued that an analysis of African culture and religion from a gendered perspective reveals how traditions are formulated and who benefits from the construction of cultural practices that oppresses women.<sup>66</sup>

## 2.6 Defining Culture

The term culture has a variety of definitions. Generally, culture relates to a particular context where people live and are socialized. It shapes people’s worldviews, ideas, practices, beliefs, language, customs and rituals into a similar pattern. These are later

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<sup>64</sup> Kanyoro, M. R. A. “Engendered Communal Theology: ...” 2001. p. 164.

<sup>65</sup> Kanyoro, M. R. A. “Engendered Communal Theology:...” 2001. p. 164.

<sup>66</sup> Kanyoro, M. A. R. “Engendered Communal Theology...” 2001. p. 163.

passed on from one generation to the other. In African societies for example, each society has its own way of communicating messages that mean life to its people. According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditioning elements of further action.<sup>67</sup>

As products of action and conditioning elements of further action, it means that human beings influence culture and it also influences the way human beings think, talk and do things. Some Zambian cultures such as the *Namwngas* and *Mambwes*, who are part of this study, practice polygamy as conditioned by their cultural systems. Therefore, Zambian women and men in these cultures are custodians of polygamy as a cultural element. Some of the justifications for such marriages are that a man gains respect from society when he has many wives and many children because this is a sign of wealth.

## 2.7 Definition of Polygamy

Polygamy is the term used when one person is married to two or more women or when one woman is married to two or more men. According to Mbiti:

Technically the term ‘polygamy’ should mean what its Greek components imply, and that is, marrying ‘many’ (wives, husbands...). But in popular usage it is applied to mean the state of marriage in which there is one husband and two or more wives. This should be referred to as ‘polygyny’....<sup>68</sup>

In relation to the above, Kisemba, *et.al.* explain that, “the word “polygamy” is a generic term, referring to either kind of plural union: the single husband with several wives, the type of union called polyandry”.<sup>69</sup> For the purpose of this study, the term polygamy will be used throughout to refer to the union of one man with two or more wives.

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<sup>67</sup> Kroeber, A. L. and Kluckhohn, C. *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Second Edition. 4 Com-Dyn.* The Catholic University of America: Gale Publications. 2003. p. 426.

<sup>68</sup> Mbiti, J. *African Religions ...*1999. p. 142.

<sup>69</sup> Kisemba, B. *et.al. African Christian...* 1998. p. 85.

## 2.8 Defining HIV and Aids

Many people are infected with HIV, and not with Aids. Aids is a syndrome, it is not a virus. According to the UNAIDS' Editors' Notes: "HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus) is what ultimately causes AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)".<sup>70</sup> Therefore, in this study, I will be referring to the virus by writing the full expression of HIV. HIV is found in the body of human beings. It is:

"...found in body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. It is passed on from one person to the other and is primarily linked to: transmission through sexual intercourse; infected blood (e.g. Contaminated blood transfusions or unsterilized needles and syringes) mother-to-baby transmission (childbirth, breast feeding)."<sup>71</sup>

Since sexual intercourse is one of the factors that contribute in transmitting HIV, it is important to note that in Zambia, certain cultures like the *Bembas*, *Mambwes*, and *Namwangas* maintain that parents cannot discuss issues of sex with their children. This makes many girls abandon their parents' homes when they fall pregnant out of wedlock because it is an embarrassing situation for a pregnant girl to be under the custody of her parents in Zambia. Cultural norms maintain that women should learn in silence and that "anything related to sex and reproductive organs is taboo, so child sexual abuse is rarely reported to the authorities".<sup>72</sup>

## 2.9 Modes of HIV Transmission

Anyone can be infected with HIV through blood transfusion, by sharing syringes with someone who is living with HIV; from mother to child (this is when a pregnant woman who is HIV positive passes the virus to her unborn child); from unprotected sexual intercourse (this is when one person has with many sexual partners and does not use a condom); using the same toothbrushes can also allow the virus to spread through cuts in the mouth; as well as using the same razor blades with someone living with HIV.<sup>73</sup> However, Barnett and Whiteside view sexual intercourse as the primary vehicle for the

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<sup>70</sup> UNAIDS: Joint United Nations Programme On HIV/AIDS. *UNAIDS' Editors' Notes for Authors*. 2006. p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Sol, Jacob. *The Methodist Response to HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa: Strategy and Implementation Plan*. Pietermaritzburg: Connexional Task Force on HIV/AIDS. 1997. p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Lindiwe Nkhutha and Thenjiwe Mtintso. "Gender, Culture, Religion and HIV/AIDS" in *Gender and HIV/AIDS: A Training Manual for Southern African Media and Communicators*. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand. 2002. p. 73.

<sup>73</sup> Khomanani Red Ribbon Resource Centre. *HIV and AIDS: Prevention, Care and Treatment*. Soul City: Jacana Media. 2004. p. 7.

transmission of HIV and Aids in South Africa and they rank this as the most responsible one for many infections such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). They contend that in Africa, “The vast majority of HIV infections are the result of sexual transmission”.

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The report by World Health Organisation observes that many more women than men in the world are living with the virus because of their biological nature. They reveal that:

It is much easier for a woman to contract HIV from sexual contact with a man than it is for a man with a woman. This is thought to be because women have a larger surface area of mucous membrane exposed during sexual intercourse, and also because they are exposed to a larger quantity of infectious fluids (semen) than men”.<sup>75</sup>

The fact that there are many women who are infected with HIV in Africa forces this dissertation to examine why some women in the *Mutima* Church still enter into polygamous marriages.

Nana Poku in his publication entitled *AIDS in Africa: How the Poor are Dying*, has explored the socio-economic context of Africa’s vulnerability to HIV and Aids. He has extensively assessed the politics of domestic and global response in many African countries, including Zambia. He considers the beliefs that people have about polygamous marriages as dangers that put people at high risk of contracting HIV and Aids in Africa.

According to Nana:

The need for men to have sexual variation, and the assumed polygynous nature of man, were the two main reasons why men cannot be satisfied with one woman. It is generally believed that men are biologically different from women in their need for sex and, as such, should have unlimited sexual freedom while a woman is expected to have only one partner.<sup>76</sup>

In Africa, particularly in Zambia, men’s sexual roles are different and more respectable than that of women. This is because some men are allowed to two or more wives whilst a Zambian woman would be considered to be a prostitute if she has many sexual partners.

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<sup>74</sup> Tony, Barnett and Alan, Whiteside. *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2002. p. 38.

<sup>75</sup> World Health Organisation: Gender and Health. *Gender and HIV/AIDS*. Geneva: Department of Gender and Women’s Health. 2003.

<sup>76</sup> Nana, K. Poku. *AIDS In Africa: How the Poor are Dying*. Malden. Polity Press. 2005. p. 74.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the preliminary literature study, the research problem, research hypothesis, theoretical framework, a brief outline of the research design and methodology, and the outline of the chapters. I have briefly defined polygamy and HIV and Aids and I have explained some of the modes of the HIV transmission in Africa.

The following chapter outlines polygamy, as an African concept of Marriage. It seeks to reveal the reasons why polygamy is practiced in some parts of Africa. It explores issues that contribute to polygamy in various African societies. Chapter 3 also outlines both male and female theologians' theories on polygamy and HIV and Aids.

## CHAPTER THREE

### POLYGAMY: AN AFRICAN CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines polygamy as an African concept of marriage and examines the reasons why it is practiced in some parts of Africa. The formation of African Indigenous Churches (AICs) by various church founders is also discussed. Some theories on polygamy and HIV and Aids proposed by both male and female theologians will also be discussed in this chapter. These issues will be discussed as a background to this study of Indigenous Churches and polygamy in the context of HIV and Aids.

Since the *Mutima* Church falls under the African Indigenous Churches, hereafter (AICs), it is important to put the polygamy discussion within the history and doctrine of these churches. AICs are mainly churches that broke away from Mission Churches such as the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, with a view to retaining an African ethos based on African religion and culture.

What follows in the section below is a brief discussion on the concept of polygamy as a form of an African marriage.

#### 3.2 Polygamy: A Form of Marriage in African Societies

As discussed in Chapter 2, the practice of one man marrying many wives (polygyny or polygamy) is accepted as normal practice of marriage in many African cultures. Oliello, a church leader in the Anglican Church of Mara Diocese in Tanzania, has done research on polygamy in his own church and states that:

...African culture includes marriage and procreation and the moment we touch on marriage in African societies we must acknowledge polygamy as a form of marriage that has been one of the cornerstones of African culture for quite some time.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, the polygamists are accepted and baptized in the Mara Diocese but are denied leadership positions and the taking of Holy Communion. Oliello perceives this as the

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<sup>77</sup> Oliello, J. K. *The Gospel and African Culture*....: 2005. p. 30.



church's tolerance of polygamy, which also results in the subordination of women in the church.

### 3.2.1 Issues that Contribute to Polygamy in African Societies

Gaskiyane offers a crucial perspective on polygamy in traditional cultures. He points out that one of the reasons for polygamy in African traditional cultures is "...the greatest desire to have children, especially male children to be heirs of property".<sup>78</sup> This allows for the continuation of the extended families. Gaskiyane also offers religious reasons for polygamy as perceived by various denominations such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is commonly called the Mormons. The Mormons believe that "the bearing of a large number of physical children brings eternal blessing and that such families continue together forever in Heaven".<sup>79</sup> The members believe that God blesses polygamy. Similarly, in the *Mutima* Church, the members believe that polygamy is initiated by God and is a blessing from God.

Adrian Hastings in his study on African Christianity and on polygamy explores many issues that contribute to polygamous marriages in Africa. In short, Hastings notes that both men and women are involved in the initiation of polygamy. According to Hastings:

The immediate reasons for doing so may be many: the prestige of a chief or rich man, the barrenness of a first wife, the provision of help for a wife who is getting older and has to cope with a large family, the duty of providing for the widow of one's brother, additional labour in the family plantation, more sexual intercourse-particularly where the custom is for women to abstain from intercourse for a long period after childbirth.<sup>80</sup>

Confirming Hastings' position, the *Namwungas* of Zambia believe that a man's economic situation is one determinant as to whether he is liable to have a second or more wives. This also applies to some *Bemba* Chiefs of the Northern Province of Zambia. Eduardo Labrecque who researched extensively on the *Bemba* chiefs and societies states: "Chiefs marry many or less as they wish. They may marry three natural [*sic*] sisters from one family".<sup>81</sup> In addition, childlessness may lead to divorce or allow that woman's husband to marry another woman if she is found to be barren.

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<sup>78</sup> Gaskiyane, I. *Polygamy:...* 2000. p. 15.

<sup>79</sup> Gaskiyane, I. *Polygamy:...* 2000. p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> Adrian Hastings. *African Christianity: An Essay in Interpretation*. Southampton: The Camelot Press Ltd. 1976. p. 45.

<sup>81</sup> Eduardo Labrecque. "*Beliefs and Religious Practices of the Bemba and Neighbouring Tribes*".

For example, the late Chief *Nkula* of Chinsali District<sup>82</sup> had five wives. The power of the Chief lies in how many wives he may have as this proves his strength and wealth. “Polygamy is a sign of wealth and prestige. As marriage customs of chiefs are quite different from those of ordinary people, they must be considered apart”.<sup>83</sup> It is also believed that the more children a woman has, the more her body wears out. As a result she becomes old and fails to perform household chores by herself. For this reason, an extra wife would be required. Since the chiefs in Zambia are in possession of vast acres of land, they own farms and other fields near the palace, it is believed that it is important for them to have five or more wives so that the more children they have, the more the labour force there is on their farms.

There is the issue of controlling women’s sexuality within the *Mambwe* culture where I belong. Labrecque explains that when the woman gives birth, the husband “...must abstain for a full year from the complete marriage act with this wife”.<sup>84</sup> This is because the *Mambwes* believe that breastfeeding mothers are not supposed to engage in sexual intercourse with their husbands. This is in order to prevent the baby from suffering prolonged dry coughs that may lead to death. During the breastfeeding, other wives will be performing their duties with the man until another one gets pregnant again.

Furthermore, Kisemba and Magesa state:

Polygamy also catered for the childless union and offered a kinder solution than that of divorce when a wife was barren. Polygamy helped to stabilize the institutions of marriage and the family through multiple marriage alliances with several families. It helped to tighten the bonds of society and broaden the circle of relatives and associates.<sup>85</sup>

As will be shown in Chapter 6, the reasons why the *Mutima* Church practice polygamy are: childlessness; sororate (in this case, where two or more sisters are married to one man); wealth, the need for additional labour, women abstaining from intercourse when they are breastfeeding to avoid becoming pregnant every year; and to provide assistance for an older wife.

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[http://bmoz.org/downloads/Beliefs\\_29\\_0608.doc](http://bmoz.org/downloads/Beliefs_29_0608.doc) accessed 16 June 2005, 1934.

<sup>82</sup> Chinsali is also one of Zambian districts in the Northern Province.

<sup>83</sup> Labrecque, E. “Beliefs and Religious Practices of the *Bemba* and Neighbouring Tribes”...

<sup>84</sup> Labrecque, E. “Beliefs and Religious Practices of the *Bemba* and Neighbouring Tribes”... 1934.

<sup>85</sup> Kisemba, B., Magesa, L. & Shorter, A. *African Christian Marriage*... 1998. p. 86.

It is also believed that polygamy, especially in the *Mutima* Church, brings together the man's family and the families of his wives. This creates a bond between the family of the man and that of his wives. However, despite all this, some women and men who are involved in polygamous marriages in the church, still engage in extra-marital affairs to satisfy their sexual needs because they will not have been satisfied by their partners.

### 3.3 Different views on Polygamy and HIV and Aids: Male Theologians

Ali Mazrui in his research on *Christianity and Islam in Africa's Political Experience: Piety, Passion and Power*, reveals that HIV and Aids is not prevalent in Muslim areas where polygamy is widely practiced. He states that:

WHO [*sic*] estimates that the number of people infected with HIV in North Africa and the Middle East is probably about 75,000 people—a small figure compared to the estimates of 8 million infected adults in sub-Saharan Africa. At least some AIDS workers believe that Islam may be playing a role in checking AIDS transmission because of “strong religious and cultural taboos about sex”.<sup>86</sup>

The argument for this is that the Islamic law (Quran) governs those who are both in monogamous and polygamous marriages. For instance, research has shown that though Islamic law allows a man to marry up to four wives, he can only do so if his first wife is infertile; or if he is able to take care of them; or if he marries women who are considered social outcasts. It is not, as many believe, meant to be for the sexual gratification of men.<sup>87</sup>

Literature on the practice of polygamy in Muslim societies reveals that polygamy does not tend to contribute significantly to the spread of HIV and Aids. It also reveals that there is “...low incidence of HIV prevalence in Muslim countries”<sup>88</sup> even if polygamy is highly practiced. It is argued that this is because laws from the Quran surround polygamy in the Muslim society:

...AIDS is not a controversial subject at all. In fact, HIV/AIDS issue fits in perfectly with Islamic principles of morality. There are detailed directions in the Quran and Hadith (the traditions of the Prophet) about character and

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<sup>86</sup> Ali, Mazrui, A. “Christianity and Islam in Africa's Political Experience: Piety, Passion and Power” <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/maa01/> accessed 13 November 2006. 1996.

<sup>87</sup> Noshaba Hussein “Polygamy law set for challenge” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/791263.stm> accessed 26 November 2006.

<sup>88</sup> “Islam and AIDS”. <http://www.indianngos.com/issue/hiv/islamandaids.htm> accessed 22 January 2007.

sexual conduct, fidelity in marriage, rights and duties of husband and wife, the provision of easy divorce, the rights of children to good health and upbringing...<sup>89</sup>

In Muslim societies, abstinence is widely emphasized. Engaging oneself in illegal sex is against the Quran law. While the above arguments may be true, it is important to note that HIV and Aids statistics in Muslim countries are not easy to come by. Furthermore, not every man who is a Muslim adheres to Muslim teachings about polygamy and sex.

In support of the argument that polygamy does not necessarily promote the spread of HIV, Sam Mcetywa argues that:

The AmaMpondo practice polygamous marriages. It would be a mistake to conclude that polygamy promotes the spread of HIV/AIDS because of the assumption that all such marriages are untrustworthy. Like any heterosexual marriage, traditional polygamous marriage is sacred, solemn and trustworthy. Tradition has laid down principles to protect such marriages from STDs and HIV/AIDS. Such rules are known by the whole society who monitor that they are followed. It is only when the rules are broken that such diseases can come in. Therefore it is not the practice of polygamy that brings HIV/AIDS but the misuse of tradition that has to be dealt with.<sup>90</sup>

The question that may arise is: Is HIV testing among the AmaMpondo a norm before people are married? For the *Mutima* members, this is not a norm.

Whilst Mcetywa does not believe that polygamy necessarily contributes to the spread of HIV, it should also be acknowledged that HIV and Aids thrive on the biological, sexual behaviour and gender differences between men and women in a sexual relationship. Where women in a polygamous relationship would be young and faithful, their husbands would be older and with more sexual experience. Society has not laid down principles and laws to observe older men's and younger women's biological differences. As a result, women in polygamous marriages, with little knowledge about their bodies, and their large surface areas of mucous membrane that is exposed during sexual intercourse, are more prone to being infected with HIV than men. In a society like that of the AmaMpondo, women are submissive to men. Therefore, the practice of polygamy among

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<sup>89</sup> "Islam and AIDS". <http://www.indianngos.com/issue/hiv/islamandaids.htm> accessed 22 January 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Sam, Mcetywa. "HIV/AIDS: A Traditional African Religious Perspective" in *The Journal of Constructive Theology*. 2001. Vol. 7. No. 1. p. 41.

the AmaMpondo favours the interest of men more than that of women and puts the latter at risk.

Philippe Denis in his article entitled *Sexuality and Aids in South Africa* begins by narrating a story on how a specific family can prevent the spread of HIV and Aids. He also shows how HIV and Aids affects the whole family by bringing out issues on orphaned children. He observes that silence on issues of sexuality is the rule that contributes to high HIV exposure in most KwaZulu-Natal families of South Africa. He perceives this as the reason why many teenagers are reluctant to go for Voluntary Counseling and Testing. Furthermore, Denis mentions that HIV and Aids is a gender issue.<sup>91</sup>

In Denis' argument, polygamy does not necessarily expose members to HIV infection. He argues that as long as members in a polygamous marriage practice safe sex within their cluster, they have slim chances of being exposed to HIV infection. According to Denis:

If none of the participants has a sexual partner outside the group, the chances of transmission of the virus are minimal. Similarly, polygamy is not dangerous – from an AIDS point of view – if the man limits his sexual contacts to his wives and the wives have no sexual activity outside the marriage. This could account, at least partly, for the relatively low incidence of HIV in predominantly Muslim countries such as Senegal and Mali.<sup>92</sup>

He suggests that polygamy can be considered to be safe in contexts where sexual activity outside of marriage is not a problem. In today's context of HIV and Aids, I cannot fully agree with Denis on his argument. Polygamy, in my opinion is safe when all the participants have been tested for HIV before getting married and the results are negative. Furthermore, Denis does not consider the biological differences and sexual orientation that may appear between men and women in a polygamous marriage.

Gaskiyane considers polygamy as “a cultural creation of mankind [*sic*] and an accommodation to the sinful nature of human beings”.<sup>93</sup> He is of the view that

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<sup>91</sup> Philippe, Denis. “Sexuality and Aids in South Africa” in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. Vol. 115. 2003. p. 67.

<sup>92</sup> Denis, P. “Sexuality and Aids in South Africa”...2003. 67.

<sup>93</sup> Gaskiyane, I. Polygamy... 2000. p. 64.

“polygamy is not the Will of God for his [*sic*] people”.<sup>94</sup> Polygamy is a social construct, which means that it builds on the existing beliefs and practices of people. However, he goes further in his publication to give a detailed account on how polygamy seems to be considered by God as a norm as well as a traditional practice of marriage.<sup>95</sup> He also feels that it seems God was in favour of polygamy in the Old Testament because “...God did not condemn polygamy as immorality but, in the Law of Moses, the polygamist was required to provide for each of his wives in all respects, including a normal sexual relationship (Exodus 21:10)”.<sup>96</sup> But in this HIV and Aids era, many men fail to provide for their wives.

Chippla Vandu’s views on *Polygamy in Nigeria* differ from Denis’ and Mcetywa’s views. He starts his article by examining the Islamic religion that permits polygamy. For Vandu, polygamy is a survival mechanism for men. He perceives it as an exploitation of women and children as many of them die due to a variety of diseases. He also condemns it as a practice that ignores the presence of women in governance and administration.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, Vandu concludes by stating that “HIV/AIDS is a problem in Nigeria, and the practice of polygamy is one of those cultural idiosyncrasies that assist in spreading it”.<sup>98</sup>

Oliello is of the opinion that many members of polygamous marriages do not tend to be faithful to each other. He asserts:

For according to my experience, fidelity is something rare to be found in polygamous marriages. I also don’t [*sic*] have faith in the traditional laws and rules surrounding fidelity in marriage as still effective especially in Mara societies.<sup>99</sup>

Oliello’s argument is based on real experience in his own church and country in Tanzania. This experience is even more critical in the face of HIV and Aids. This is because the church in the Mara Diocese is expected to raise its concern and speak against the practices of polygamous marriages.

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<sup>94</sup> Gaskiyane, I. *Polygamy:...* 2000. p. 64.

<sup>95</sup> Gaskiyane, I. *Polygamy:...* 2000. p. 30.

<sup>96</sup> Gaskiyane, I. *Polygamy:...* 2000. p. 30.

<sup>97</sup> Chippla Vandu. “Polygamy in Nigeria”. <http://bookerrising.blogspot.com/2006/08/chippla-vandu-on-polygamy-in-nigeria.html> accessed on 13 January 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Vandu, C. “Polygamy in Nigeria”... accessed on 13 January 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Oliello, J.K. *The Gospel and African Culture...* 2005. p. 84.

Walter Trobisch, in his book entitled *My Wife Made Me a Polygamist* has explored the consequences of polygamy in African culture. Writing from a white perspective, he observes that polygamy cannot be regarded as a safety measure towards adultery. Whilst it has been conceived as a cultural measure against birth control and prostitution, it is also a method of allowing adultery for both men and women. He points out that: “women married to polygamous men often live individually in adultery because their husbands, staying usually with one wife for a week at a time or with the favourite wife, are not able to satisfy them sexually”.<sup>100</sup>

Trobisch has proposed a Christian counseling approach to husbands and wives living in polygamous marriage whether in Africa or in the West. He gives a variety of reasons that make both men and women’s life difficult in polygamous marriages. Though he has not mentioned that adultery can lead to sexually transmitted infections, it is important to note that adultery contributes to the spread of HIV because of the risks arising from multiple sexual partners.

### **3.4 African Women Theologians’ Voices on Polygamy**

In her book entitled *Daughters of Anowa*, Mercy Oduyoye outlines the different life experiences of African women in today’s context, in relation to African religion and culture. She states that: “The fertility of the woman is the biological foundation of marriage and it governs male-female relations within the institution”.<sup>101</sup> Oduyoye considers procreation as an essence that safeguards African women in their respective marriages. In this regard, and with or without children, some African women are merely perceived as objects of men because they need to fulfill men’s desires. To this end, Oduyoye condemns polygamy as an institution that reduces women to instruments of men.

Musimbi Kanyoro in her research on how Africans understand the biblical terms ‘polygamy’ and ‘concubine’ in their own languages, notes that some texts are influenced by the person who is translating it. However, it is a question of whether to change the text

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<sup>100</sup> Walter Trobisch. *My Wife Made Me a Polygamist*. Canada: Inter-Varsity Press. 1971. pp. 31-32.

<sup>101</sup> Mercy A. Oduyoye. *Daughters of Anowa*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. 1995. p. 141.

according to one's cultural value system, so that people may understand it, or to translate the text in such a way that leads to misunderstanding.<sup>102</sup>

Kanyoro's argument is that the term 'concubine' cannot be distinguished from the word 'wife'. She argues that the Bible translators are unable to distinguish between wives and concubines in the context of the Old Testament. Kanyoro states:

I implied that the Old Testament had established procedures for marrying wives, but soon I found out that there were many other means by which wives were obtained. In some cases, wives and concubines were both obtained by the same means, such as war captives. Two major problems face the translator. On one hand, the concept of concubinage is completely foreign to some polygamous societies, and on the other hand, the Bible does not give enough information to enable the Bible translator to translate the word "concubine".<sup>103</sup>

Kanyoro struggles to find the reason why women were taken as second wives in the Old Testament times. In relation to African culture and practice, Kanyoro observes that women like Hagar, were reduced to mere instruments for meeting their mistresses' needs. She recognizes that even though Hagar bore children, they were not Hagar's children but Sarai's. Moreover, Kanyoro is not pleased with the voiceless Hagar as she points out that "...in today's idiom, one may say a disposable instrument".<sup>104</sup> This can also be in line with the way men misuse women's sexuality in polygamous marriages thereby infecting them with the HIV. What would have happened if Abraham was living with HIV in that context? Could Hagar have remained silent?

In the *Mutima* Church, the word concubine is not employed but the word helper in *Bemba impokeleshi* is used. *Impokeleshi* would be the second, third or fourth wife who has been married off in order to assist the first wife with house chores.

Going a step further, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike explains that in the Old Testament, there is no partnership in polygamous relationships, and women are like slaves working to enrich

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<sup>102</sup> Kanyoro, M. R. A. "Interpreting Old Testament Polygamy through African Eyes" in Oduyoye, M. A. and Kanyoro, M. R. A. (eds.). *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 2001. p. 99.

<sup>103</sup> Kanyoro, M. R. A. "Interpreting..." 2001. p. 96-97.

<sup>104</sup> Kanyoro, M. R. A. "Interpreting..." 2001. p. 95.



their husbands and masters.<sup>105</sup> She argues, “in many cases where polygamy is reported in the Old Testament, it is in a form of apology and criticism rather than exaltation”.<sup>106</sup> Nasimiyu-Wasike observes the evils of polygamy on the differences experienced by the biblical women such as Hagar and Sarai; Leah and Rachel. These evils include jealousies, and envy and argue that these are further observed within the children of these women.

Nasimiyu-Wasike brings this into today’s context by explaining that the church’s main concern is about polygamous men and not their wives. She contends that “...the teaching and practice of the church on marriage does not take into consideration the position of women, especially those who found themselves in a polygamous union”.<sup>107</sup> To this end, Nasimiyu-Wasike is of the view that the church is silent and has no blessings for women in polygamous relationships, worst of all, when they are found living with HIV. She argues that the presence of today’s women in the church and society is not being recognized. In reality, the *Mutima* Church’s teaching on polygamy is not at all convincing. The teaching bases its foundation on the fact that both men and women are created in God’s image; therefore they are both equal in the eyes of God. Yet, when one observes this with gender sensitive eyes, the *Mutima* Church does not re-consider the position of women, especially when the husband is promiscuous; he is only advised to marry a second or third wife to avoid promiscuity.

Esme Chombo, writing from an Evangelical and legal perspective, condemns the practice of polygamy because she views it as evil and dehumanizing women. This is because polygamy allows women to oppress their fellow women:

Polygamy is a legal, social and psychological evil that women of today need to address their minds closely and critically. Polygamy has thrived in our societies because of various reasons—greed, the permissiveness of our customary law, selfishness, exploitation of the women folk with the consent of the women themselves...<sup>108</sup>

In this respect, it is important to qualify the evil nature of polygamy when examined from a gender perspective, because it highlights unequal power relations between men and

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<sup>105</sup> Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike. “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique” in Oduyoye, M. A. and Kanyoro, M. R. A. *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 2001. p. 105.

<sup>106</sup> Nasimiyu-Wasike, A. “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique”... 2001. p. 109.

<sup>107</sup> Nasimiyu-Wasike, A. “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique”... 2001. p. 114.

<sup>108</sup> Esme, Chombo. “Polygamy”. In Mbugua, J. *Our Time Has Come*. Torquay, Devon: The Guernsey Press Co. Ltd. 1994. p. 57.

women and between women and women. Even though there is only one man in a marriage relationship, the man is more powerful and makes decisions for all the women. He also decides which woman he will have sex with on particular days or the first wife decides for him.

In view of the many devastating challenges that HIV and Aids have posed in our various countries, such as Zambia, some African women theologians have raised their concerns in their writings based on their own theological experiences, especially issues related to the spread of HIV and Aids.

### **3.4.1 African Women Theologians' Comments on Polygamy and HIV and Aids**

African women's theology calls on all the African women to examine the harmful cultural practices that dehumanize women in different societies. They condemn polygamy because many women who are involved in polygamous marriages do not celebrate their sexuality fully. African women theologians are of the view that women in polygamous marriages are treated as mere objects. Their husbands control their sexuality or the first wife controls the sexuality of the other wives.

Musa Dube has done extensive research on HIV and Aids. She observes that in many countries, including Botswana, women have no control over their own bodies. Some widows fail to refuse sexual practices because they will not be considered as cleansed and will be considered as outcasts. She also comments on the major problems of HIV and Aids. She notes that culture is embedded in us and that it is even difficult to protect faithful married women from being infected with HIV.<sup>109</sup> Dube, commenting on some of Tswana's cultural beliefs points out that it is believed that, "a man, like a bull, cannot be contained in a kraal. Having multi-partners among men/married males is natural and is to be expected by wives".<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, she quotes the UNAIDS 2001 on issues of men having multiple partners:

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<sup>109</sup> Musa Dube. "Adinkra! Four Hearts Joined Together: On Becoming Healing-Teachers of African Indigenous Religion/s in HIV & AIDS Prevention" in Phiri, I. A., & Nadar, S. (eds.). *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2006. p. 137.

<sup>110</sup> Dube, M. "Adinkra! Four Hearts Joined Together ..." 2006. p. 137.

In fact, research showed that “all over the world, men tend to have more sex partners (as well as extramarital partners) than women, thereby increasing their own and their primary partners’ risk to contracting HIV”.<sup>111</sup>

This is where I think polygamy contributes to the spread of HIV and Aids because some Zambian cultures like the *Namwangas* maintain that *Aonsi yakaapalika* meaning that a man cannot satisfy himself sexually with one woman. As it will be shown in Chapter 6, it is therefore surprising that even the women in the *Mutima* Church agree that men are not like women and cannot abstain from sexual intercourse for a longer period. This spearheads the spread of HIV in the church.

In concurrence with Dube, Phiri argues that the position given to women in African culture makes them vulnerable and contributes to the spread of HIV and Aids. Quoting Phiri:

...the truth is that African culture also encourages African men to continue to have sex with other partners apart from the ones that they are officially married to. In the context of this cultural practice then, heterosexual marriages, be it monogamous or polygamous, have a high risk of exposing African women to HIV/AIDS. The unfortunate part of it is that most married women know that their husbands have multiple sex partners but they are powerless to come out of the relationship or negotiate for safer sex.<sup>112</sup>

Phiri observes that it is not only polygamous marriages that pose a danger to women’s infection to HIV and Aids, but monogamous marriages too. In the *Mutima* Church, for instance, cultural, religious and socio-economic aspects silence some women in monogamous marriages.

Masenya also explains that some African cultural practices bring injustices to African women. She argues that, in this era of HIV and Aids, African women face some double-edged dilemmas because they fail to control their own sexuality for fear of breaking cultural taboos that maintain that women should be submissive to their husbands. This is

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<sup>111</sup> Dube, M. “Adinkra! Four Hearts Joined Together ...” 2006. p. 137.

<sup>112</sup> Isabel, Phiri. “African Women of Faith Speak Out in an HIV/AIDS Era” in Phiri, I. A., Haddad, B. Masenya, M. (ngwana’ Mphahlele). (eds.). *African Women, HIV/AIDS, and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003. p. 12.

reinforced by the men-friendly interpretations of the Bible.<sup>113</sup> Commenting further on the dilemma of culture and the Bible that is faced by some African women, Masenya states:

If she remains faithful to both, she will have no option but to engage in unprotected sex with her husband. In addition in this culture, like in many cultures of the world, large numbers of men do not take religion as seriously as their wives do. They may use the Bible as long as its interpretation helps to endorse the patriarchal status quo...Such men will not find biblical texts about fidelity in marriage appealing. Some may, for example, quickly embrace biblical texts endorsing polygamy.<sup>114</sup>

In support of Masenya, some African Christian men in the *Mutima* Church base their theological argument for marrying two or more wives on the Bible. They quote patriarchs such as Jacob who had four wives and Abraham who had two wives.<sup>115</sup> Whilst they find supporting evidences from the Bible, they do not look for any implications arising from the polygamous marriages.

Another African woman theologian, Constance Ambasa Shisanya, has observed that it takes both African women and men engaging in unprotected sexual practices to spread HIV. She argues that the worst situation in contracting HIV is in a polygamous marriage, where if one member is infected, many women get infected and this leads to many deaths. Emily Kawango quoted in Shisanya also states that, "A study among the Luo in Siaya District, for example, established that HIV/AIDS was prevalent in both [polygamous] and monogamous marriages".<sup>116</sup> Shisanya further contends that not only men are promiscuous and liable to infect their wives with HIV. To some extent some African women also engage in unprotected sex even when they are married.<sup>117</sup>

My opinion is that the situations some women find themselves in, and the lack of support from their polygamous husbands, force these women to engage in unprotected sex. In some cases, some younger wives feel that their older husbands are sexually inactive; or

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<sup>113</sup> Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele). "Trapped Between Two "Canons": African-South African Christian Women in the HIV/AIDS Era" in Phiri, I. A., Haddad, B. Masenya, M. (ngwana' Mphahlele) (eds.). *African Women, HIV/AIDS, and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003. p. 123.

<sup>114</sup> Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele). "Trapped Between Two "Canons": ... 2003. p. 123.

<sup>115</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell*. p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Constance Ambasa, R. Shisanya. "Socio-Cultural Vulnerability of Women to HIV/AIDS: A Theological Strategy to Transform Power" in Oduyoye, M. A. and Amoah, E. (eds.). *People of Faith and the Challenge of HIV/AIDS*. Ibadan: Oluseyi Press. 2004. p. 248.

<sup>117</sup> Shisanya, A. R. C. "Socio-Cultural Vulnerability..." 2004. p. 248.

maybe the older wife would not allow her husband to have sexual intercourse with the younger wife more often, because of jealousy, like in the case of Rachel's possessiveness over Jacob in the Old Testament.

Dorcas Akintunde also comments that while there are a number of African cultural practices such as circumcision, polygamy and tribal marks that enhance the spread of the HIV, gender inequalities, such as men believing they are superior to women, are major factors. To this effect, she points out that polygamy is the worst of all because an "infected man with multiple sex partners, may transfer the disease to his wives".<sup>118</sup>

In support of Akintunde, I would say that gender inequalities between men and women in some *Zambian* societies as well as in the *Mutima* Church contribute to the spread of HIV. This is because in many cases, as already observed, women cannot negotiate for safer sex. To this end, many women, whether in marriage or outside marriage, are either raped or forced into having unprotected sex by men who may be their husbands or close relatives. The perpetrators in many cases tend to be men living with HIV.

### **3.5 World Health Organisation's Theory on Gender and the Spread of HIV and Aids**

Polygamy and HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church are the main concern of this study. What are the major factors that drive the spread of HIV? To elaborate my understanding on the causes of HIV and Aids in this section, I will use the theory of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The *2003 Gender and Health: Gender and HIV/AIDS* report states that even marriage can put one at risk of contracting HIV and Aids. According to the report:

For many women, being vulnerable to HIV can simply mean being married. Social norms that accept extra marital and pre-marital sexual relationships in men, combined with women's inability to negotiate safe sex practices with their partners, make HIV infection a risk even in women who have only one partner in their entire lives. For such women, "remaining faithful" is no protection.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Dorcas O. Akintunde. "Dynamism in Culture and Values: A Desirable Trend in Combating Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS: The Yoruba Experience" in Oduyoye, M. A. and Amoah, E. (eds.). *People of Faith and the Challenge of HIV/AIDS*. Ibadan: Oluseyi Press Ltd. 2004. p. 90.

<sup>119</sup> World Health Organisation: *Gender and Health. Gender and HIV/AIDS*. Geneva: Department of Gender and Women's Health. 2003.

The difficulties involved in negotiating for safe sex, coupled with the inavailability of proper education for the women in the *Mutima* Church makes them more vulnerable to contracting HIV, even if many ‘young female priests’ have only one sexual partner. The focus on women has been so strong that it would be a mistake to discuss HIV and Aids or the practice of polygamy without including women. Therefore, WHO has identified women as the most vulnerable group to contracting HIV.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the significance of polygamous marriages in some African traditional societies. The views of African women and men theologians on the issue of polygamy have been discussed. It is clear that unlike some male theologians such as Mcetywa and Denis who perceive polygamy as safe from HIV exposure if it is practiced well, some women theologians such as Dube, Phiri and Akintunde note polygamy as one major factor that contributes to the spread of HIV and Aids.

In the following chapter, I intend to explore some of the reasons that led to the formation of African Initiated Churches (AICs). This will be done by first examining African Christianity in Africa. Furthermore, the formation of the *Mutima* Church in Zambia will be discussed as well as its teachings on marriage.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief historical background of African Christianity in as far as it sheds light on the topic under study. The chapter will also examine the historical background of the *Mutima* Church of Zambia and in the process study the rise of some African Initiated Churches. It will also explore some of the teachings of the *Mutima* Church on polygamy. This is important background for this study.

#### 4.2 Christianity in Africa

Christianity in Africa is shaped by African cultural and religious beliefs and practices as well as those from the Bible. Zambia, in particular, has a male dominated culture that also shapes the local Christianity. Nevertheless, many of the missionaries who introduced and expanded Christianity in Africa were devout, dedicated and honest men and women. One of the reasons given for the establishment of the Christian faith in Africa by these European missionaries was that the church should be regarded "...as the instrument of God's kingdom, the task of which was to destroy African culture, institute Western culture, and finally, to bring about a true culture which may be labeled Christian".<sup>120</sup> However this aim was not practical as the missionaries themselves came from different cultural denominational backgrounds.

As a result, some Africans who wanted to follow a form of Christianity that recognized the value of the African culture broke away from the mission churches to form their own churches, thus introducing African Initiated Churches as opposed to the mission churches.

##### 4.2.1 Mission Churches

Mission churches are those churches introduced in Africa by Christian missionaries, thus importing European culture, which often resulted in the suppression of African culture in the local churches. Idowu Bolaji in *Towards an Indigenous Church* mentions that mission churches are colonies of Rome, Canterbury, or Westminster or American Missionary

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<sup>120</sup> Oliello, J. *The Gospel and African Culture...*2005. p. 13.

Board.<sup>121</sup> Bolaji further explains that mission churches in Nigeria brought more than the Word of God. He argues that, “Apart from preaching the Gospel, they taught their converts or the adherents of the new faith to read and write, employing, of course, the only method known to them – that of Western education (English system mainly)”.<sup>122</sup> Thus they also introduced a new lifestyle in Africa. Furthermore, the predominant language that is used in the mission churches of Africa is English: even during baptism in mission churches, converts “...were given European or Biblical names...”<sup>123</sup>

#### 4.2.2 African Indigenous Churches

African Indigenous Churches are mainly controlled by black people. They aim to articulate the fact that Africans have their own religious and cultural agendas. These encompass ways of communion as religious people with their own cultural practices, values, and norms. Their theological arguments are based on the Bible and a particular reference to the cultural context of their areas. That is, they retain an African ethos based on African religion and culture. Kofi Appiah-Kubi in James Amanze states that AICs are:

...churches founded by Africans for Africans in our special African situations. They have all African membership as well as all African leadership. Some were founded by Africans in reaction to some feature of the Christianity of missionary societies; most were founded among those people who had known Christianity the longest.<sup>124</sup>

In addition, Makhubu argues, “...an African Independent or Indigenous Church means a purely black-controlled denomination with no links in membership or administrative control with any non-African church”.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, many AICs have no inter-religious links with the mission churches. With their own interpretation of the Bible, many Africans established African Indigenous Churches in many parts of Africa, with the goal of retaining some of the African cultural practices and to treat each other as equal.

John Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu II have pointed out that:

The acronym AIC may stand for a number of things: African Independent Churches, African Initiatives in Christianity, African Instituted Churches,

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<sup>121</sup> Idowu Bolaji. *Towards An Indigenous Church*. London: Oxford University Press. 1965. p. 5.

<sup>122</sup> Bolaji, I. *Towards An Indigenous Church...* 1965. pp. 4 -5.

<sup>123</sup> Bolaji, I. *Towards An Indigenous Church...* 1965. p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> James, Amanze. *African Christianity in Botswana: The Case of African Independent Churches*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press. 1998. p. 68.

<sup>125</sup> Makhubu, P. *Who are the Independent Churches?* 1988. p. 5.



African Indigenous Churches. Some would call them African Christian Initiatives. The Acronym specifies a category of church in Africa to be distinguished from “mission” or “historic” or “mainline” or “established” churches.<sup>126</sup>

Pobee and Ositelu distinguish between churches that were imported into Africa by missionaries such as the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran Churches, and the African Initiated Churches. Furthermore, Anderson is of the view that:

The term “African indigenous churches” has therefore also become inadequate, particularly because most AICs are not completely free from “foreign” influence and can’t [*sic*] be regarded as “indigenous” in any normative sense.<sup>127</sup>

Although Anderson prefers the term African Initiated Churches to African Indigenous Churches due to the reasons mentioned above, I will retain the term “African Indigenous Churches” because the church that is referred to in this study, the *Mutima* Church, is completely free from “foreign” influence. The *Mutima* Church incorporates some of the characteristics of the local people such as the practicing of polygamous marriages. Therefore, it has some of the cultural and religious aspects of its people built into its doctrine and practices.

#### **4.3.2 Formation of African Initiated Churches**

One of the main reasons that have been given for the formation of AICs is that missionaries misinterpreted the biblical message to Africans. For instance, some of the conditions that were laid down by the missionaries in mission churches did not accommodate some African cultural practices, such as polygamy. Those who practiced polygamy were either excommunicated or asked to divorce the other wives to remain with one wife in order for them to be baptized and to participate in the partaking of Holy Communion. On the other hand, when some African people learnt how to read the Bible, they found practices such as polygamy written in the Bible. Hence Makhubu notes:

The blacks were stripped of their customs, and in exchange were forced into a culture they could never embrace. When blacks read the Bible and found something about polygamy and circumcision they were puzzled. The very

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<sup>126</sup> Pobee, J. S. and Ositelu, II, G. *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: WCC Publications. 1998. p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> Anderson, A. H. *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc 2001. p. 11.

things condemned by missionaries were found right there in the Bible. The black leaders gave their own interpretation to those portions of the Bible which confirmed aspects of their culture and customs.<sup>128</sup>

In addition, the missionaries were always in full control of the African converts and interfered in their cultural practices as they condemned some of the cultural practices such as polygamy. To some Africans, this seemed to indicate that the God that was preached by the missionaries favoured only the missionaries and not the Africans. Due to this, some Africans started coming up with more flexible theologies and started forming African Initiated Churches. They were able to re-interpret the Bible since they found favour within it on the issues of polygamy and circumcision.

Pobee and Ositelu point out that some African churches broke away from the mission churches for a variety of reasons. They contend that:

Some AICs broke away from historic churches out of administrative or doctrinal differences...The church of Lord (Aladura) came into being as a result of Pentecostal resurgence which the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (Anglican) felt unable to countenance and for that reason expelled the men and women who eventually founded their own brand of AIC. Christ Apostolic Church of Nigeria was formed by a group who broke away from the Anglican Church as a result of doctrinal influence from a North American religious group.<sup>129</sup>

It is important to recognize that the cultural practices of the Africans were different from those of the missionaries. The African Initiated Churches mainly consisted of members from the same ethnic group and location. This allowed more African converts and membership in AICs. Some Africans like the founder of the *Mutima* Church, failed to adapt to the Western culture when they found out that they were stripped of almost all that belonged to them. They decided to retain their way of worship that includes singing, the beating of drums and dancing.

In his attempt to describe the significance of the formation of AICs, Anderson argues that an African Pentecostal movement "...often begins with an individual founder who has a spiritual experience, usually in dreams or visions, which is perceived as a divine

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<sup>128</sup> Makhubu, P. *Who are the Independent Churches?* 1988. p. 24.

<sup>129</sup> Pobee, J. S. and Ositelu II, G. *African Initiatives in Christianity*:... 1998. p. 2.

call and which results in a desire to proclaim a new message”.<sup>130</sup> However, Africans wanted to receive a clear spiritual message, in their local languages and contexts, which would touch both their hearts and their minds.

### 4.3.3 Messianic Churches

Messianic churches are those whose founder members profess that they are the black Jesus of Africa. Examples include Dona Beatrice’s Church mentioned below and the *Mutima* Church. Like Dona Beatrice, Chishimba also claims to be a messenger of God sent to seek salvation for the black people of Africa just like Jesus came to save the people of his time. Daneel affirms that:

Messianic churches essentially evolve from within the prophetic movements, the difference being that the founder leader in the former is elevated to messianic status. In such instances the attention of members is often captured by the eminence of the leader-his [*sic*] mystical powers, miracles and his [*sic*] mediation between God and his [*sic*] followers-to such an extent that he [*sic*] usurps Christ’s position, either wholly or in part.<sup>131</sup>

The *Mutima* Church falls under the category of a Messianic Church because the founder member has been elevated to messianic status. Its members claim that Chishimba, their founder of the church, has supernatural powers and that he is the mediator between them and God.

### 4.3.4 Prophetic Churches

Messianic churches can also be referred to as prophetic churches because they emphasize the founder’s mystical and prophetic powers. Churches like the *Mutima* Church claim to have both the messianic message and the prophetic message. According to Daneel:

The most outstanding feature among these prophetic churches is their special emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, manifested in “Jordan” baptism by immersion, speaking in tongues, prophetic activity of diverse kinds and faith healing”.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Anderson, A. “The Mission Initiatives of African...” 2000. p. 90.

<sup>131</sup> Daneel, M. L. “AIC Women as Bearers of the Gospel Good News” in *Missionalia*. 2000. p. ix.

<sup>132</sup> Daneel, L. “Rise of AIC Movements” in *Missionalia*. 2000. p. viii.

The *Mutima* Church has the Messianic message because the members believe that their founder is God's representative on earth. It also has the Prophetic message because the church founder appoints members who convey prophetic voices in the church.

#### 4.3.5 Spiritual Churches

Spiritual churches are sometimes referred to as prophetic or faith healing churches.

The prophet-healing" or "Spiritual" churches are churches that emphasize spiritual power. They are independent African churches with historical and theological roots in the Pentecostal movement...<sup>133</sup>

The spiritual churches are said to be more recent than the messianic churches. Many of the Pentecostal Churches are relatively recent spiritual churches.

Spiritual churches are different from messianic churches because some spiritual churches emphasize the ministry of healing in the power of the Holy Spirit and usually the congregants speak in tongues.

Before reporting on the *Mutima* Church in more detail, I refer briefly on the teachings of two other African Indigenous Churches that are also classified as Messianic churches: the Dona Beatrice Church and the Lumpa Church.

#### 4.4 Kimpa Vita: Dona Beatrice Church

Daneel explains that one of the reasons why Africans protested in Central Africa around 1700 is the way the Catholic Church was placing crosses, crucifixes and images of Christ everywhere.<sup>134</sup> As a result, a Congolese woman by the name of Dona Beatrice protested against the Catholic tradition on two features. According to Daneel:

First, the protest was against alien forms of Christian worship, accompanied by attempts to indigenise or inculturate Christianity in the African context; and, second, the protest was against oppressive colonial rule which eventually led to various forms of rebellion and/or identification with African nationalism.<sup>135</sup>

Quite often in some parts of Africa, political instability contributed to protests against Christianity. Therefore, Beatrice "...warned of the coming judgment on the Portuguese

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<sup>133</sup> Anderson, A. H. "*African Reformation:...*" 2001. p. 16.

<sup>134</sup> Daneel, L. "Rise of AIC..." in *Missionalia*. 2000. p. iv.

<sup>135</sup> Daneel, M. L. "Rise of AIC..." 2000. p. iv.

enemies and preached that Jesus Christ had been born in *Mbanza Kongo*, which she named Bethlehem...<sup>136</sup> Instead of being converted to follow a Christ-like figure like the one in the Gospels, the Portuguese people who were ruling Angola at that period introduced what Daneel terms “a “white Christ” which was more of human exploitation”<sup>137</sup> towards the Africans. Beatrice therefore affirmed that “Christ had called the African Priests and was on the side of black people...”<sup>138</sup> She claimed that she was a messenger sent by God to the *Bakongo* people and advocated for restoration and peace in the country. She was believed to be a healer, particularly for barren women, and the majority of women came to her for healing purposes.<sup>139</sup>

Anderson further explains that the followers of Beatrice were called Antonians because she claimed that St. Anthony had taken possession of her.<sup>140</sup> Beatrice died at the age of 22 when “she was arrested, tied, and burnt to death as heretic in 1706...”<sup>141</sup> after claiming that she conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. Her movement proclaimed “an anti-white or anti-colonial orientation” and included a sexist involvement.<sup>142</sup> However, it is important to note that Beatrice’s teachings against human exploitation did not allow the practice of polygamy in her church. It is also evident that being a woman, and church leader, Beatrice perceived polygamy as one of the human exploitations existing in Africa. Her perception is therefore different from that of the *Mutima* Church in Zambia.

#### 4.5 The Lumpa Church: Alice Mulenga Lenshina

The Lumpa Church is also one of the churches that were founded by a woman in the later half of the 20th century in Zambia. Alice Mulenga was attacked by cerebral malaria and after falling into a deep coma, she slowly regained consciousness. She later became known as Alice Lenshina after claiming that she had met the Saviour Jesus Christ, who sent her back to earth with a special message to the Bemba people of Northern Province in Zambia.<sup>143</sup> Anderson contends that Alice Lenshina was born in 1920 in the Chinsali

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<sup>136</sup> Anderson, A. H. “*African Reformation: ...*” 2001. p. 49.

<sup>137</sup> Daneel, M. L. “Rise of AIC...” 2000. p. v.

<sup>138</sup> Anderson, A. H. “*African Reformation: ...*” 2001. p. 49.

<sup>139</sup> Anderson, A. H. “*African Reformation: ...*” 2001. p. 49.

<sup>140</sup> Anderson, A. H. “*African Reformation: ...*” 2001. p. 49.

<sup>141</sup> Anderson, A. H. “*African Reformation: ...*” 2001. p. 49.

<sup>142</sup> Daneel, M. L. “Rise of AIC...” 2000. p. v.

<sup>143</sup> Hugo, F. Hinfelaar. *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992)*. New York: E.J. Brill. 1994. p. 72.

District of the Northern Province of Zambia. She was a member of the local Presbyterian Church and did her catechetical training there. She was favoured by many missionaries but a conflict started when she started baptising converts herself.<sup>144</sup>

Alice Lenshina's father was a polygamous man. He was a son of a junior chief Mukwikile; therefore he belonged to the royal family. Many male children from royal families in the *Bemba* culture are entitled to polygamy. It is said that because of his promiscuous exploits the children of his households suffered chronic poverty and neglect.<sup>145</sup> Hence, Lenshina's suffered from a severe disease. According to Anderson:

In 1955 she founded the "Lumpa" church, from a Bemba word meaning "excelling all others, most important". Lenshina's ethical teachings followed the strict Calvinistic fundamentalism of the Presbyterian missionaries. She preached against witchcraft and rejected traditional rituals, adultery, divorce, polygyny, tobacco, and alcohol. But Lenshina shunned the sacrament of Holy Communion, which she regarded as an ancestor rite, and only she was allowed to baptize converts.<sup>146</sup>

One reason Lenshina forbade traditional rituals such as adultery, divorce, polygamy and alcohol in her church was her experience of being brought up in a family where polygamy was practiced, and she had witnessed how her mother had been oppressed due to her father's irresponsibility.

In 1959, Lenshina had about 150,000 Lumpa members, which was the largest membership in Zambia.<sup>147</sup> By the time the United National Independent Party (UNIP) was formed in 1959, Lenshina had preached to her members that they should withdraw from worldly matters; even children were forbidden to go to school. According to Hinfelaar, "One may well regard the Lumpa settlements as revolutionary antistructures".<sup>148</sup> Lenshina was later imprisoned and given a restriction order without trial as there were always conflicting issues between the then UNIP government and her. She was released from prison in 1975 but put under house arrest in Lusaka. Lenshina died in 1978.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Anderson, A. H. "*African Reformation: ...*" 2001. p. 136.

<sup>145</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 73.

<sup>146</sup> Anderson, A. H. "*African Reformation: ...*" 2001. p. 136.

<sup>147</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 78.

<sup>148</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 78.

<sup>149</sup> Anderson, A. H. "*African Reformation: ...*" 2001. p. 139.

#### 4.6 The Sweetheart of Makumbi Church (Ba *Mutima*)

The Sweetheart of Makumbi (*UMutima Walowa Wa Makumbi*)<sup>150</sup> hereafter the *Mutima* Church was initiated by Emilio Chishimba Mulolani in 1951.<sup>151</sup> Makumbi is the *Bemba* word for the Nimbus clouds - the grey clouds that bring rain to earth. The *Mutima* members' belief is that during the rain season, every living thing on earth benefits from water: human beings, animals, insects and plants all benefit from the rain. "The Sweetheart means the Sweet Eternal Life of the Creator, which is everywhere, and inside every Spirit".<sup>152</sup> Therefore, the name 'Sweetheart of Makumbi' simply means "the period that God blesses the earth with water and every living thing benefits from God's gift of water".<sup>153</sup> In order to praise God through the rains, many *Bemba* people often name their children as Makumbi. Chishimba's stepfather was therefore named Makumbi, after the Nimbus clouds.

Chishimba was born in 1921 from a family of strong traditional *Bemba* Roman Catholic priests. Chishimba's mother, named Chilufya, had been previously married to a white trader called Stuart in Kasama and had two children. Stuart was later called to go for military service during World War I and Chilufya got married to a man called Mulolani from which marriage Chishimba was born.<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately for Chilufya, her former husband Stuart returned to claim her and his children but he rejected the black child, Chishimba. Stuart threatened to kill Chishimba. This struggle was resolved between Stuart and Mulolani. Stuart then disappeared again after some years and left Chilufya alone with the children. Chilufya then got married to a man called Makumbi, the traditional priest of a local shrine. She bore Makumbi five children.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 101.

<sup>151</sup> Gary Burlington. "Topography of a Zambian StoryLand".  
[http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/15\\_2\\_PDFs/03\\_Burlington\\_05-7.pdf#search='Mutima%20church%20in%20zambia'](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/15_2_PDFs/03_Burlington_05-7.pdf#search='Mutima%20church%20in%20zambia') accessed 20 May 2006.

<sup>152</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell*. p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Members of the Sweetheart of Makumbi. 24 July 2006.

<sup>154</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 101.

<sup>155</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 78.

In 1940, Chishimba, aged ten, was sent to a minor Seminary at Lubushi and then to the major Roman Catholic Seminary of Kipalapala in Tanzania in 1940.<sup>156</sup> At Kipalapala, Chishimba studied Scholastic Philosophy and Theology.

#### 4.6.1 Theological Development

Burlington, who worshipped with the *Mutima* Church members and even had an opportunity to interview Chishimba on his theological development, has done extensive research on this church.<sup>157</sup> He states that Chishimba:

“Broke away from the Roman Catholic Church when he realized that it would not honor his key teachings. Among these are his beliefs that Mary is the Saviour of Africa ...and that in *Mutima* thinking every individual human has both male and female natures since they are made in the image of an androgynous God”.<sup>158</sup>

Although Burlington has not outlined any teachings about marriage in the *Mutima* Church, he notes the emphasis of the *Mutima* teachings regarding male and female created in the image of God.

Moreover, during his studies at Kipalapala, Chishimba realised that the Roman Catholic missionaries’ teachings on God’s love and mercy were emphasised, but not practised openly to the students. In addition, Chishimba realised that the Bible has verses on issues such as circumcision and polygamy, but these were condemned by the Catholic missionaries. Therefore, in 1951, Chishimba saw himself as “the searcher for truth, (*ukufwaisha ichishinka*)”.<sup>159</sup> He was still a member of the Roman Catholic Church when he started preaching to the multitudes in the Northern Province of Zambia, basing his theological argument on the sacred heart of Jesus. The symbol for the sacred heart of Jesus paved its way into the teaching of Chishimba. It is from this time that the teachings of truth taught by Chishimba captured the imagination of a number of *Bemba*<sup>160</sup> people from the Northern part of Zambia.

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<sup>156</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 102

<sup>157</sup> Burlington, G. “Topography of a Zambian StoryLand”...1998.

<sup>158</sup> Burlington, G. “Topography of a Zambian StoryLand”...1998.

<sup>159</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 104.

<sup>160</sup> *Bemba* is one of the major tribes that is found in the northern part of Zambia.



Chishimba was given the name Peter, which means the Rock, based on Matthew 16:13. He claims that the same spirit of God that was with Jesus is the same spirit that God has poured into him. For this reason, Chishimba's members refer to him as the black messiah sent to the black people of Zambia by God because of God's fairness and love for black people. According to the *Mutima* Constitution:

The Visible Founder, 'An African simple man called Chishimba, by Baptism Emiriano, was on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of February 1951 inspired by the Supreme Spirit of God...In one of the following morning he was given the name Rock with the promise that the Lord would build a church on him'.<sup>161</sup>

According to the *Mutima* Church members, Chishimba is their visible founder because they are able to receive God's sent messages through him. Until this day, some members of this church refer to Chishimba as '*Chibwe*,' which means the Rock or Peter the Rock. Due to the fact that he believes he was inspired by the Supreme Spirit of God, the *Mutima* Church members believe that Chishimba also receives healing powers from God which he shares with his members. Chishimba does not personally heal his members, but God appoints healers through him. Some members in the church are traditional healers and sick members are referred to them. However, it is believed that Chishimba has supernatural powers and he mediates between his followers and God and that these supernatural powers also work through the traditional healers.<sup>162</sup> After consulting his supernatural powers, Chishimba will then find a solution for his members. It is important to note here too, that the *Mutima* Church members are taught to believe that whatever advice comes from Chishimba should not be taken lightly, but as hard or tough because Chishimba is 'Peter the Rock'. Therefore, whatever comes out of any rock is not light but hard. Chishimba is not treated, greeted or received like any other ordinary person in the church. The *Mutima* Church Constitution states that:

In greeting Peter, we refer to the way we visit the Chief of the area or are visited by him. In order to show love we donate some money then we greet. The same action is done by every sensible church member to Peter, before greeting, it is usually done inside the house, with a little ceremony.<sup>163</sup>

In order to make members aware that Chishimba is visiting a particular area, *Mutima* Church members receive him with an ululation upon seeing his 4x4 car parked outside a

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<sup>161</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 4.

<sup>162</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 6.

<sup>163</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 7.

church member's house. It does not matter who sees the car first, even if they are children, they have to raise their voices high when ululating. This is to inform nearby church members that Chishimba is in their area and at a particular house. After this, *Mutima* members then start making preparations such as collecting money for offering to Chishimba before greeting him. This shows the love and respect that the members have for their church founder.

If he visits a family house where there are family problems, Chishimba will ask about what will be going on in that particular household. Where conditions and circumstances allow, the *Mutima* members ask for permission from Chishimba to get married. This is when a man has found a woman he intends to marry. If Chishimba is not pleased with the couple, he would not allow the two to get married and will find another man for the woman and another woman for the man. Therefore, they believe, what comes out of the rock should always be obeyed.

Since he believes he has supernatural powers, Chishimba is able to tell his members whether God has forgiven them of their sins, or not, or to tell when a dead person's soul has been received in heaven or has gone to hell. *Mutima* members believe that Chishimba is in possession of the key to heaven as he also sits on the right hand of God's throne. So the *Mutima* members believe that Chishimba is able to identify the sins of a particular member and that confession is of extreme theological importance if one is to be a member of the *Mutima* Church.

#### **4.6.2 Chishimba's Teachings on Marriage**

The *Mutima* Church has a very thin church structure. Chishimba declares the structure of the church and emphasizes the 'Supreme Spirit' who is believed to be guiding him in everything. The *Mutima* Church's Constitution states that:

In this church there are no professional workers such as Popes, Bishops, Priests, Pastors, Evangelists, Ministers anointed with worldly oils like Aaron or the sons of Levi. The Members become priests beginning from Peter the Rock up to any active member through practising the attributes of God by his [sic] Supreme spirit...<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 5.

Neither male nor female priests in the *Mutima* church have had adequate education, hence it is not easy for them to make their own decisions whenever they are faced with a crisis. In times of crisis, the priests consult Chishimba who comes to their aid.

Chishimba also appoints the male and female prophets. The prophets assert that they are guided by Chishimba's supernatural powers. The prophets are followed by the priests, especially female priests (Chosen Priests) who are found in every congregation in the various parts of the country.

Ordinary male and old female priests come after the Chosen Priests. The church has deacons. These are allowed to marry only two wives like Lot. Many of the deacons are Chishimba's own children. More significant is the fact that Chishimba's children are supposed to be deacons. For this reason, if a female deacon gets married, she would have to accept another woman to be the second wife at a later stage "in order to assist the first wife with the house work such as looking after the children".<sup>165</sup> Lastly, among the entire church body, the male ordinary members are allowed to marry four wives like Jacob. Others can marry six wives like David while others can marry one wife if they wish.

Chishimba appoints his church priests-to-be and sends them to train for three years in their local church congregations. According to the Church's Constitution:

Those who work as Priests are appointed by Peter. Others who feel like becoming Priests should also consult Peter, the Visible Rock of the church to take a course for three years at their abode; then vow or take oath like the Priests.<sup>166</sup>

Neither male nor female priests in the *Mutima* Church are supposed to get married. "The priests do not marry in order to lighten their jobs as preachers sent here and there...they also practice celibacy, for virtue's sake".<sup>167</sup> It is interesting however, to note here that, even though young female priests are supposed to remain single, many of them have children with Chishimba. This is not an easy thing and it is not openly discussed by members of the church. This is held as Chishimba's spiritual gift from God that also guides him to have children with many young female priests. These children are many

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<sup>165</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 6.

<sup>166</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 6.

<sup>167</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell.* p. 6.

and are differentiated from other children in the church because they are referred to as ‘children of the Spirit’ or (*abana ba mupashi*).

This makes it more difficult for young female priests to negotiate for safe sex because they regard Chishimba as God’s representative on earth. It is believed that there is no way that a younger female priest can refuse to have sexual intercourse with Chishimba. Being one of Chishimba’s chosen priests is a blessing from God. However, the young female priests (Chosen Priests) are also respected in the church due to the function they perform in caring for Chishimba. They also have a special name that differentiates them from old female priests. They are referred to as Chosen Priests or (*abasano*). It is also difficult for the parents of the Chosen Priests too, because they cannot claim any bride price for their daughters. Contrary to this, male priests are not allowed to marry or have children.

The *Mutima* Church has approximately 115 congregations throughout Zambia.<sup>168</sup> In 1998 when Burlington was conducting his research with the *Mutima* members, the church had a core membership of about 5000 *Bemba* people.<sup>169</sup>

Education in the *Mutima* Church is not regarded highly. However, there are a few members who are educated. Many of the ‘children of the Spirit’ have not gone up to grade seven. Girls from this group are married off at an early age and boys are taught to be carpenters and drivers. Sometimes two girls are married off at the same time to one man. Since they regard themselves as “the chosen flock of God”,<sup>170</sup> the *Mutima* members claim that education is simply a materialistic aspect of life, while knowledge about God is more important.

Apart from the teaching that he is God’s representative sent to the Zambian people by God,<sup>171</sup> Chishimba places an emphasis on the concept of love as in Matthew 22:37 (“Love your neighbour as you love yourself”). They emphasise the sharing of material goods, food, oneness and that in the home both a man and a woman should be equal partners.

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<sup>168</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell*. p. 5.

<sup>169</sup> Burlington, G. “Topography of a Zambian StoryLand”...1998.

<sup>170</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell*. p. 7.

<sup>171</sup> Burlington, G. “Topography of a Zambian StoryLand”...1998.

Unlike Lenshina who disallowed polygamy in her church, Chishimba allows polygamy in his church. He teaches that polygamy:

Like any other marriage in the Old Testament times, for example, Jacob, Solomon and Abraham, is a blessing from God and not a curse. God blessed Abraham, Lot, Solomon, David and the others in the Old Testament, God also blesses the members of the *Mutima* Church when they practise polygamy.<sup>172</sup>

Chishimba claims that (*Efyo cali muntendekelo efyo caba nanomba efyo caba nenshita nenshita pe*) meaning ‘As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end’. Chishimba’s teaching on marriage states that (*umwaume lishinte, elo bana mayo masambo ye shinte*) meaning that “a man is like a stem of a tree; a stem always have many branches; without a stem branches cannot survive. Women are like branches which are supported by the stem”.<sup>173</sup> In addition, Chishimba teaches his members that God created human beings because of God’s love for humanity. Therefore, all human beings are God’s people. This means that women should not be possessive of their husbands and want to be married alone, but women should learn to share their husband’s love with other women, just like God shares God’s love with humanity.

Chishimba’s teachings on marriage focus on the importance of human sexuality. Hinfelaar declares that Chishimba’s primary concern about his movement was on the problem of sexuality. He asserts that, “In reaction to the Puritanism of the missionaries he [Chishimba] taught that the union of man and woman was a sign of divinity and that human sexuality was something to celebrate”.<sup>174</sup> Chishimba’s marital teachings attracted a lot of people such that to date, many men in rural areas and a few in urban areas join the church because they are polygamists. Hinfelaar asserts that, to the *Mutima* members:

...controlled ritual intercourse [is] an act of love and kindness. ....it [is] believed that the parental fluid, the blood of parenthood (*umulopa wa Bufyashi*) was a gift from God himself[*sic*] like the rain that were for the benefit of everybody the good and the bad.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *The Constitution of the Sweetheart of Nimbi in a Nutshell*. p. 7.

<sup>173</sup> I witnessed this in 1998 when Chishimba was sermonising a polygamous marriage in Kitwe, Zambia.

<sup>174</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 116.

<sup>175</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 108.

Marriage in the *Mutima* Church is not usually based on personal choice that leads to courtship and marriage. It is mainly the church founder Chishimba, who decides who marries who among the members. Prior knowledge of each other is not considered as a prerequisite for a couple to marry. It is believed that Chishimba has the spiritual gift to know who is suitable to marry whom. In the church, Chishimba also pairs married men to virgins, thus making the young girls become second, third or fourth wives. HIV testing is not a norm before a couple are paired. Hence the concerns of this study that such marriage practices have the potential of spreading HIV.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that the *Mutima* Church in Zambia has adopted some beliefs and practices of African culture and religion that incorporate a male dominated culture and also shapes the local Christianity. It is believed by the *Mutima* Church members that Chishimba has supernatural powers. Therefore, members of the *Mutima* Church believe that Chishimba knows how to pair husband and wife when it comes to marriage. The female and male priests in the *Mutima* Church are not allowed to get married as this will burden their workload. But it is an open secret that many young female priests do have children.

This chapter has indicated that the *Mutima* Church in Zambia falls under the African Indigenous Churches. The *Mutima* Church can be characterised as a ‘messianic church’ because the teachings in the church indicate that Chishimba has taken the place of Jesus Christ in an African context. Chishimba has since preached that polygamy in his church is a blessing from God, and it should be embraced.

In the following chapter, the research design and methodology are discussed in detail. I chose to conduct a field research in order to find out what the implications for the *Mutima* Church members’ belief in the practice of polygamy in the context of HIV and Aids are.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and research methods that were used in this study. The nature of the research required a qualitative approach to the study. This chapter explores the location of the study; dates of field work; selection of the study participants and their profile; construction and contents of the guiding questions that were used during the research. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the method used when applying the questions; the research methodology; the problems that were faced during the research; the limitation of the study; the research ethics and data analysis and storage. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

#### 5.2 Location of the Study

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study is located in Kitwe, one of the towns of the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. Kitwe is centrally connected to other towns in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. Since Kitwe covers the geographical area of a radius 737 square kilometers,<sup>176</sup> I concentrated my study on Chimwemwe Township that has a population of 14,000 people.<sup>177</sup> It is predominantly an agricultural area and many people are offered plots and farms by the local municipality. Moreover, accommodation in Chimwemwe is very cheap. Chimwemwe Township is important to the *Mutima* Church because it is highly populated and it maintains one of the famous worshipping centres called Jambo-Jambo, where its members hold big events such as wedding celebrations.

#### 5.3 Dates of Field Work

The field work was carried out from 20 to 31 July 2006. The first interviewees were two younger female priests who came to visit my sick sister. Both were interviewed on 20 July 2006. The next interviewees were the old female priests. They were interviewed on 22 July 2006. On 23 July and 24 July 2006 respectively, I interviewed two male priests. Two women who are in a polygamous marriage were also interviewed separately on 25

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<sup>176</sup> Baker, M. 'Corporate Social responsibility...?' 2002. accessed 14 September 2005.

<sup>177</sup> "Population of Chimwemwe – Kitwe". <http://www.bioline.org.br/request?rh03008> accessed 28 January 2007.

July 2006. The other two women who are involved in polygamous marriage were interviewed separately on 26 July 2006. A woman who is involved in a monogamous marriage was interviewed on 27 July 2006. I also had the opportunity, on 28 July 2006, to interview two polygamous men at different times. A woman who was once married in a polygamous marriage but is now divorced was interviewed on 29 July 2006. Finally on 31 July 2006, I interviewed a man who is involved in a monogamous marriage. All in all fifteen people were interviewed.

In order to avoid repetition in this study, the responses from the female priests, and from the ordinary women who are involved in polygamous and monogamous marriages are grouped together. There is also a separate response from the divorced woman. The responses from the male priests are grouped together, while the responses from the men who are both in polygamous and monogamous marriages are also grouped together.

#### **5.4 Selection of the Study Participants**

The selection of the study interviewees included a snowball sampling method. This was used to assess the specified individuals. The interviewees were chosen because they were considered as having information relevant to the area of study. In addition, the interviewees were purposely chosen because of their knowledge of the *Mutima* Church's teachings on marriage. They were approached either during their visitation to my sick sister or my sister would introduce me to some of the committed members in the Church. In turn the members introduced me to some other committed members. I had to build a good rapport with them because I needed to know if the interviewees were willing to be interviewed or not. I also made appointments and gave them an insight of what I wanted to interview them on.

There are approximately three hundred *Mutima* members living in Chimwemwe Township.<sup>178</sup> There are more female priests in the *Mutima* Church than male priests. In addition, the number of women outnumbers that of men. There are approximately 60% women in the entire church and around 40% are men.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> This approximation was estimated during an interview with Jack in July 2006.

<sup>179</sup> Hinfelaar, F. H. *Bemba-Speaking...* 1994. p. 73.



Out of the three hundred membership of the *Mutima* Church in Chimwemwe Congregation, only eleven members were supposed to be interviewed by using semi-structured open ended interviews. Initially, the selection of the interviewees was as follows: a) three priests consisting of two men and one woman; b) six members who are involved in polygamous marriages consisting of: two husbands with two wives each; c) a couple consisting of one husband and one wife. Each person was to be interviewed separately. With this division of participants, I intended to achieve three objectives. Firstly, to understand the *Mutima* members' theological understanding of polygamous marriages; secondly, to evaluate their theological interpretation of HIV and Aids; and thirdly, to acquire a more in depth knowledge of polygamy and HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church.

Instead of interviewing eleven members, fifteen members were interviewed. This included six church priests. Four of the priests were females and two of them were males. Two of the female priests belong to the 'chosen priests' and have children with Chishimba. There were also six members who are involved in polygamous marriages consisting of: two husbands with two wives each; a couple consisting of one husband and one wife; and a divorced woman who was once involved in a polygamous marriage.

I ended up interviewing fifteen members instead of eleven because, firstly, I am familiar with some of the other church members. For instance, there were four female priests that I have known since my childhood who agreed to be interviewed upon hearing about the aim of my visit. The first two female priests however, requested to be interviewed together, as they explained that nothing can be hidden in their Church. I accommodated their request knowing that these priests had 'children of the spirit' with Chishimba. It was also a way of allowing them to open up to me on issues of polygamy, since both of them have never experienced marriage in their lives, but are allowed to solemnise polygamous marriages in the absence of Chishimba.

The second reason for having more interviewees than planned was that, since almost all my interviewees were in support of polygamous marriages, I had to search for some members who had different views such as one divorced woman who had a negative attitude towards polygamy. Moreover, since this is a study on gender, I also had to

interview two male priests; two old female priests; two middle aged female priests; and two polygamous men in order to get their perceptions on polygamy and HIV and Aids.

### **5.5 Profile of the Participants**

Out of fifteen interviewees, ten were women and five of them were men. Their ages varied from 29-72 years old. For example, amongst the ten women, the oldest woman was 72 years old and the youngest was 29 years old. Only two of the women had gone beyond grade 12 and are now working. The rest did not go beyond grade 12 but went up to grades 4 to form 3. The age range for the five men was from 35 to 50 years old. Only two of them went beyond grade 12 and are now working. The other three are either carpenters or church priests.

### **5.6 Construction of the Guiding Questions**

The study questions were constructed, typed and printed on a sheet of paper.<sup>180</sup> This was meant to avoid repetition.

#### **5.6.1 Contents of the Guiding Questions**

This section provides an outline of the research questions that were asked during interviews with some members of the *Mutima* Church. The research questions were in four sections. Section one dealt with the demographic information of the interviewees. The name, age, gender and position of the particular members held in the church was investigated. This information was important for this study because it provided relevant information on how long one had been a member of the *Mutima* Church and their role in the church.

The second section focused on polygamy, culture and the church. This section was comprised of questions about the length of time a particular member had been involved in a polygamous marriage. Questions in this section also aimed to find out about the church's theological teaching on polygamy and whether there were ways in which polygamy dehumanizes women.

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<sup>180</sup> See Appendix 1.

In the third section, the intention was to find out the *Mutima* members' knowledge about HIV and Aids and how it is spread. The section focused on the *Mutima* Church's theological teaching on HIV and Aids. More crucial in this section are the questions that deal with women's vulnerability to HIV and Aids.

Finally, the fourth section had opening questions that tried to find out whether polygamy puts men and women at higher risk of contracting HIV and Aids. The section closes with the question: How can polygamous marriages be made safe from HIV?<sup>181</sup>

### **5.6.2 Method of Applying the Questions**

I chose to use the in-depth interview where people are subjected to detailed and inevitably less structured, encounter. It avoids that aspect of just getting information from the informant and forgets about him or her.

The face-to-face interviewing method based on guideline questions was employed. The method helped some members to be more interactive with me. As I had guiding questions, I realized that questions on the members' theological interpretation of HIV and Aids were answered before I could even ask them.

It was also a privilege for me to begin with two female priests who are some of Chishimba's 'chosen priests', because he was not available. Their closeness to Chishimba meant that their jurisdiction gave permission for me to conduct research with the other members of the church.

## **5.7 Research Methodology**

### **5.7.1 The Snowball Sampling Method**

As stated earlier, the study involved field work that "is appropriate when the research question involves learning about, understanding, or describing a group of interacting people".<sup>182</sup> Much of this field work gave me an opportunity to interview the *Mutima* members because I also listened, learnt, understood and was able to describe the interviewees' perceptions and views towards polygamy and HIV and Aids in the church.

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<sup>181</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>182</sup> Neuman, W. L. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1994. p. 331.

Therefore, in this study, two methods were used in order to collect data. Snowball sampling method and oral interviews were used. These are sociological methods of research that entail a process of systematically selecting cases for inclusion in a research project.<sup>183</sup> With this approach to sampling, I have applied the snowball sampling approach. Neuman clearly states that the snowball sampling methodology:

...is a method for identifying and “sampling” or selecting the cases in a network. It is based on an analogy to a snowball which begins small but becomes larger as it is rolled on wet snow and picks up additional snow. Snowballing is a multistage technique. It begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases.<sup>184</sup>

In addition, Blanche and Durrheim recognize that the sampling process “...is the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions about which people, settings, events...”<sup>185</sup> applied the concept of snowball or networking and this constituted primary data. Snowball sampling uses a middle person to introduce the interviewer to the interviewee, thereby initiating some trust. I was being introduced to some of the church members and as a result the circle became bigger making it easier for me to associate with many members. As such, the snowball sampling method enabled me to start with two female priests, who referred me to the older female priests. I was also referred to the male priests and the circle became bigger by the time I was through with my interviews. As stated above, I had to build rapport so I arranged to meet my interviewees before the actual days of having interviews with them. I had to make appointments and give them insights of what I wanted to meet them about.

The reason for choosing the snowball sampling method is that it gave an entry point into the church structure. It also created a situation where time was not wasted, and it built up confidence between the interviewer and interviewee.

### 5.7.2 Oral Interview

Oral interviews were also conducted. Philippe Denis states that the main purpose for oral interviews is to answer questions, to gain insights, to uncover and to improve the

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<sup>183</sup> Neuman, W. L. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative...* 1994. p. 199.

<sup>184</sup> Neuman, W. L. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative...* 1994. p. 199.

<sup>185</sup> Blanche, M. T., Durrheim, K. & Painter, D. (eds). *Research in Practice*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. 1999. p. 49.

knowledge of the past.<sup>186</sup> Through this method, the participants were requested to provide the background to their involvement in the church and their views on polygamous or monogamous marriages. They agreed on condition that their real names would not be mentioned.

A qualitative research method was also employed. James Macmillan and Sally Shumacher observe that:

Qualitative interviewing requires asking truly open-ended questions. Novice researchers often begin with what data they want to obtain and phrase questions in a manner that enables interviewees to infer the desired responses.<sup>187</sup>

Therefore, open-ended interviews were more preferable as a qualitative method because they made the participants express their views in a way that enabled me to observe the expressions of the interviewees.

## 5.8 Problems Encountered

During my field work, some of the members of the *Mutima* Church failed to open up, especially those that were born in the church and are still loyal to the church and are aware that some polygamous relationships in the church have contributed to the spread of HIV and Aids. My opinion is that they were suspicious about my intentions as a researcher. Those female priests who have 'children of the spirit' could not disclose information that may appear to criticize their church founder for fear of losing their membership.

Moreover, some members of the *Mutima* Church had difficulties giving their precise reasons for the practice of polygamy and acknowledging that there is HIV and Aids in the church. It was not easy for some *Mutima* Church members, especially the two old female priests and the male priests, to talk about sex openly. This is because of the age range, and because they also regarded me as their daughter. It is difficult in our *Bemba* culture to talk about sex because, as it is noted in Chapter 7, sex issues are a taboo. In *Bemba* culture, mothers cannot talk about sex to their daughters, only the aunties can do so. The

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<sup>186</sup> Philippe Denis. *Orality, Memory and the Past: Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2000. p. 2.

<sup>187</sup> James, H. Macmillan & Sally Schumacher. *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*. Singapore: Addison Wesley Longman. Fifth Edition. 2001. p. 446.

same applies to fathers, who are the most feared ones in the homes. Denis agrees with this when he comments, “the problem is that they usually look at sex in a defensive way: they tend to see it as a force that needs to be domesticated, contained, moralised”.<sup>188</sup>

In addition, the ‘chosen priests’, and old female priests pointed out that discussing the subject of the ‘children of the spirit’ is taboo. In *Bemba* language, they said “*Libwe lye shiku*” which in my own translation means “it is a taboo of a Rock”. They expected me to understand why the ‘children of the spirit’ is an off limit topic because I am a former member of the Church. Therefore, well aware that this is an ethical dilemma, and being a critical student of theology, I had tried to ensure that I would do nothing to cause harm to the members of the *Mutima* Church. As a result, I limited my questions to the members’ theological understanding on the practice of polygamy and HIV and Aids in the church.

The other problem was that literature of the *Mutima* Church is very scarce. It was difficult to access published documents in relation to the particular area of my study.

## **5.9 Limitation of the Study**

The first part on the limitations concerns the term ‘polygamy’. The term ‘polygamy’ that has been used throughout this study means a man who is married to more than one wife.

The second part on the limitations is the location of the study. The *Mutima* Church has got congregations throughout the country, but I have selected an area called Chimwemwe Township in Kitwe, which is in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. This is because I have lived in Kitwe for nine years and I am familiar with some *Mutima* Church members.

The third part on the limitations is on the *Mutima* Church members’ theological understanding of HIV and Aids.

## **5.10 Research Ethics**

Oliver states that, “There are, first of all, a range of situations where the participants in the research project may not be in a position to understand fully the implications of the

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<sup>188</sup> Denis, P. “Sexuality and Aids in South Africa” in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. Vol. 115. 2003. p. 75.

research”.<sup>189</sup> Some interviewees were told what the research was all about, and why, where, how, what and who, could be involved.

The interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided by signing ethical agreement forms. Furthermore, the interviewees asked if their names could be withheld; and this was assured. This means that the names that are appearing in the presentation of the findings are not the interviewees’ real names.

The study on polygamy in the *Mutima* Church is deeply rooted in the ethics of the research that is required by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Any information from other sources has been acknowledged to avoid plagiarism. It is my intention that I should not cause any harm, or ill feelings to the people I worked with in this research. I have also avoided the use of sexist language and opted for inclusive language to show an element of gender sensitivity in this study.

Any researcher needs to have respect for the interviewees just as the interviewees too, need to respect the researcher. In this case, interviewees were given assurances; for instance, they were told that there was no financial reward for participating in the research; that they could pull out whenever they felt like, and most of all they were assured that the results would be confidential. Dejong *et.al.* argues that “Confidentiality should bear that particular information or responses should not be publicly linked to any specific individual who did not participate in a study”.<sup>190</sup>

### **5.11 Data Analysis and Storage**

Data obtained from primary and secondary sources was collected compared and verified. An analysis was done in relation to the study’s hypothesis and the objectives. Since oral interviews were recorded in *Bemba*, the transcripts from the recorded data were translated into English. Data has been stored in a confidential place and will be destroyed and disposed of after the completion of this study.

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<sup>189</sup> Oliver, P. *The Student’s Guide to Research Ethics*. Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd. 2003. p. 22.

<sup>190</sup> Dejong, C. R. et.al. *Applied Social Research: Tool for the Human Services*. Second Edition. Orlando: The Dryden Press. 1990. p. 59.

## 5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the research design and methodology used in this study. It has outlined the nature of the qualitative method that has been used in this study. An outline of the research questions used during the interviews was also given. The research design and methodology used in this chapter was important for this study because although many articles, books and internet sources on polygamy have been written, not much has been tackled on the issue of polygamy in the *Mutima* Church in the context of HIV and Aids. Data was recorded in *Bemba*, transcribed in English and analysed according to gender, present age, educational background, and the year in which one was married.

In the next chapter, the study will seek to present and analyse the field research findings on polygamous marriages in the *Mutima* Church in the context of HIV and Aids.



## CHAPTER SIX

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON GOD'S BLESSING MARRIAGES

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present and analyse the findings on polygamy in the *Mutima* Church of Zambia in the context of HIV and Aids. The chapter will present the demographic information which will be classified according to samples such as age, gender, educational level and employment. This information will assist in the understanding of the relationship between the *Mutima* Church members' knowledge on HIV and Aids along with age, gender, educational level and economic status. The interviewees referred to polygamous marriages as "God's blessing marriages" because the *Mutima* Church regards polygamy as a gift from God. Therefore, in this chapter, polygamy will be referred to as God's blessing marriages.

More important in this chapter, is the discussion on the objectives and an examination of the argument that is proposed in the hypothesis of this study: Polygamy in the *Mutima* Church can be perceived as high risk behaviour for the spread of HIV and Aids.

#### 6.2 Responses from the Female Priests

The level of education of the two female priests range from grades 6 to 7. Grace Longwe is 42 years old. She studied up to grade 7 and was called into God's mission after she had failed to go into grade 8. Ruth Kamwili is 44 years old and stopped school in grade 6 because she had to obey God's calling. Both of them have 'spiritual children' with Chishimba and were both born within and grew up in the *Mutima* Church. They are referred to as 'chosen priests'. They both pointed out that their parents have been members of the *Mutima* Church since 1957. This has influenced Ruth and Grace's knowledge of polygamy as they understand it to be a gift from God through Chishimba. Their knowledge on polygamy is both cultural and religious. Ruth's views about polygamous marriages are that:

Polygamy in the *Mutima* Church is regarded as a marriage that is a blessing from God. I am 44 years old, and a product of God's blessing marriage. My father has four wives and I believe that it is both a cultural thing and a religious thing because it is also there in the Bible. My mothers do not fight

amongst themselves because they are taught as we all know, to ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself’.

It is possible that her father could have married the first three wives before he joined the *Mutima* Church and sought consolation in the Church. She has two younger sisters who were married to the same man. Their husband died and left them with several children. However, before the husband of Ruth’s two sisters died, he had abandoned his wives and went on to marry another woman before he died.

Ruth and Grace were of the view that “God’s blessing marriages do not dehumanize women in the *Mutima* Church”. One might suggest that the two chosen priests could not say anything to the contrary, because they believe that their church teaches love and togetherness.

On the contrary, the two older female priests, who were interviewed separately on 22 July 2006, had different views on God’s blessing marriages. The first was 72 year old Sharon Nkaka who has been serving in the *Mutima* Church since 1967: she is a mother of 6 and was widowed in 1972. She went to school up to Sub B, which is considered as grade 3. Secondly, there was 70 year old Liless Kasonde who was also interviewed on the same day on 22 July 2006. She has 7 children, was widowed in 1972, and joined the *Mutima* Church in 1974. She went to formal school up to grade 4 but her late husband made her attend night school classes up to form 3. Both Sharon and Liless are former members of the Roman Catholic Church. It is evident that both women found consolation in the *Mutima* Church because they could find a space to preach, something which is rarely allowed in the Roman Catholic Church. Both Liless and Sharon are priests in the church and as a result they are also Church Counsellors. Therefore, they are also aware of the difficulties that many women face in “God’s blessing marriages”.

While Liless correctly emphasized that “It is not polygamy as you people call it, it is God’s blessing marriages”, she also openly pointed out that this kind of marriage dehumanizes women in the church. Sharon explained that this is because:

The men do not pay any *lobola* when they are marrying these women. The law in the church is that both are created in the image of God, so women are given to men as a gift from God, just like Eve was given to Adam by God.

This makes many men want to join the church because there are no costs encountered during marriage.

It can be highlighted that as a female priest, Sharon struggles with some concepts of Zambian cultural and religious beliefs. She seems not to be in agreement with the teaching of the Church that states that a man should not be made to pay anything towards marriage as both are children of God. In Sharon's opinion, every man needs to pay *lobola* before he gets married. As a result, she is of the opinion that men dehumanize their wives because they do not pay *lobola*.

Liless' understanding of polygamy is that it is a good thing because it is also practiced in Bemba culture. According to her, it helps prevent men and women from becoming prostitutes. Yet she was of the view that some men in the church dehumanize their wives. She notes that:

God blessing marriage is one way of helping the women avoid becoming sex workers. It is also a way of helping the man not to have extra marital affairs, especially when one of the wives is breastfeeding, the man can have sexual intercourse with the other women in the marriage. It also encourages safe family planning for women, because in the *Mutima* church, condoms are not allowed because it is a sign of killing the unborn and encouraging the man to have more sexual partners outside marriage.

It is important to note that the two older female priests explained that there are "God's blessing marriages" in their own culture. Therefore, to them polygamy is both of cultural and religious significance because the Bible itself has some aspects of God's blessing marriages. The problem that these two female priests face is that men in the *Mutima* Church are not really taught how to treat their wives and only women are taught how to take care of their husbands.

Although practices in the *Mutima* Church such as God's blessing marriages are justified as being sanctioned in the Bible, other practices like 'no sex while breastfeeding' are drawn from the *Bemba* culture. The *Bembas* maintain that when a woman is breastfeeding, she should avoid sexual intercourse with her husband as this may cause the child to be unclean and might lead to death. When there is a death of a baby within the family, the elders will view it as resulting from sexual negligence of the parents. The *Mutima* Church has chosen to follow this cultural practice.

The four women married in God's blessing marriages were interviewed. These are not church priests. The first two women are married to a 50 year old man. Mary Kabimba, aged 45 years old, is the first wife. She has 8 children and went to school up to grade 7. She was married in 1983. The 35 year old Macushi Kabimba is the second wife. She has 4 children. She was married in 1990. She only went to school up to grade 9. Both of them have got stands at the market place where they sell food. These two women were interviewed separately on 25 July 2006.

Rita Bupe and Gwen Bupe are sisters and also married to a 48 year old man. Rita is the first wife. She is 43 years old and was married in 1985 and has 5 children. She completed her secondary education and did a secretarial training course. She is working as a secretary in one of the government institutions in Kitwe. Gwen is Rita's younger sister, and is the second wife. She is 38 years old and was married in 1991. She has three sets of twins. She only went to school up to grade 7, so she stays at home and looks after the children. Their husband is working as a lecturer at one of the forestry colleges in Kitwe. Rita and Gwen were interviewed separately on 26 July 2006.

During the interview with Rita, I asked her why she allowed her husband to marry a second wife, in fact, her own sister. Her response was that it is:

Because of two teachings in the church; to be meek and to be humble. If God has two ways, why should I as a Christian woman not exercise these two ways, especially women who are custodians of our homes and who receive visitors, like relatives of my husband. Even my fellow wives, I cannot live with them in the same house if I am not meek and not humbling myself... I am almost twenty years in my marriage you know that...?

Gwen, the second wife and young sister to Rita had a slightly different view to the same question. She admitted that because of her belief in (*Lesa*) God, she agreed to get married to her brother-in-law. She notes further that:

God knows what will befall us. It is not easy to live in the same marriage relationship with your own sister, but if one believes in God and has trust in God, there is really nothing wrong.

It is worth noting here that Gwen appeared to experience considerable difficulty with this question because of the way she constructed her answer. It led me to suggest that God's

blessing marriages is not always an easy or normal way of living for women. It has power imbalances even between women coming from the same family.

Like the female priests, all four of the women explained how important it is to 'love your neighbour as you love yourself' in God's blessing marriages.

### **6.2.1 Knowledge of HIV and Aids**

The understanding of the four female priests' of HIV and Aids is that it is an incurable illness. Grace, one of the younger priests, explained that although she did not believe that women are dehumanized in the God's blessing marriages, "the majority of the people who are suffering from HIV and Aids are women, even married women. In many cases, their husbands are the ones who are transmitting the virus to their wives".

Even though some female priests are of the view that the God's blessing marriages do not dehumanize women, it is certain that the majority of people who are infected with HIV are women. Two of the female priests reported that married women sometimes become promiscuous because of the needs of their children. This is because in many cases, the husbands do not provide their wives with food. The female priests pointed out that even Christians get infected with HIV when they disobey God's commandment. They argued that even people who are not promiscuous are infected by their partners who are not living according to God's rules. Commenting on this, Ruth said that:

Some are just infected with HIV by their partners because they cannot abide by the rules of respecting oneself, thereby involving oneself in unprotected sex. In our church, we say people who are able to abide by the church's teachings on marriage, find their own security starting from their own bodies, and their souls are not defiled...In many cases, God's children are supposed to be defended because they keep God's temples (bodies) clean.

This shows that the female priests are aware of how HIV is spread. The four women in God's blessing marriages had the same views about the spread of HIV and Aids.

When they were asked whether God's blessing marriages are practiced in their cultures, the four women acknowledged that this practice is not in their cultures. Macushi said that there are no God's blessing marriages in her culture. It is because of the church that she agreed to be involved in God's blessing marriages. She went on to say:

And also it is because I know that my God is meek and humble, why then should I boast over something which is not mine and who am I to imagine myself to be greater than God?

The *Mutima* Church places an emphasis on God's love, and the teaching to be meek and humble. To some extent, this is also a way of being submissive because for one to allow her husband to marry another woman, one has to swallow one's pride. Commenting on the Christian teaching on God's blessing marriages, Rita said:

As a Christian, a truly committed Christian, we are taught to 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'. So if I love my neighbour, I cannot fail to live with her or him under one roof. I can live with her or him until when God part us ways, or until death do us part.

Again, by emphasizing 'love', it is evident that the teachings of the *Mutima* Church on God's blessing marriages are based on loving each other. However, Rita concluded by saying that:

God's children are not supposed to differ or quarrel, even when you quarrel, you need to sit down and reconcile. God's children need to discuss issues together when they are faced with problems. I mean all of us in God's blessing marriages.

The question on whether God's blessing marriages dehumanizes women was met with some resistance on the part of the four women as noted when they said that whatever one wife does, is known by the other, even if the husband has to buy something, he has to inform the other women. Mary, who is the first wife, pointed out that:

You can just see for yourself... eh (*smiling at me*). There is nothing like dehumanizing women, because in fact, as wives, we approach our husband when he has gone wrong. For example, if he wants to buy something, he needs to start with me, the eldest wife, and then later on buy for the younger wife...

I acknowledge that this is a complex form of gender inequality where there is oppression of women by women because the older wife is the one who is in a position to dehumanize the younger wife if she chooses. What happens when the husband buys something for the second wife and not the first? I take this as one potential way of dehumanizing women because the younger wives tend to be passive and the older ones tend to make decisions for them. However, the younger wives did not accept that they were dehumanized by their husbands and fellow wives. Thus, while women from outside see it that way, the

women who are involved in God's blessing marriages perceive it positively and they support and strengthen the system themselves.

### **6.2.2 *Mutima* Church's Teachings on HIV and Aids**

In describing the *Mutima* Church's teachings on HIV and Aids, I quoted responses from female priests to avoid repetition because they all gave similar answers. Commenting on the church's teaching on HIV and Aids, Liless said that:

HIV and Aids is God's anger, that is what we are taught and that is what we believe. It is not different from the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah, and from the floods of Noah, it is only that it has come in a different way.

Ruth's response is not different from the above. According to her explanation:

There is too much evil in the world today. We do not know what weapon God has prepared to wipe out those who are going against God's rules. We believe that HIV and Aids is a weapon from God. God is angry with us because of what we are doing.

It was interesting and illuminating that all four female priests did not seem to see the weakness in the belief about God's anger when it came to people who are infected by their partners. While the female priests are of the view that HIV and Aids is God's weapon, they believe that only those who disobey God's rules are likely to die from this infection. One wonders where the God of love is in all of this: surely the God which we understand in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century does not have 'weapons' in the form of disease, rather he is a God of compassion, inclusion and unconditional love and acceptance of all of his children.

### **6.2.3 Polygamy and HIV and Aids**

The female priests are of the view that if all partners in God's blessing marriages fail to maintain their marriages according to the way they were taught, then they will be prone to HIV infection. In trying to defend God's blessing marriages in their church, one of the female priests, Grace argued that:

God's blessing marriages are initiated by God through our church founder. So since it is initiated by God, how can God's blessing marriages put men and women at a higher risk of contracting HIV and Aids? No, this can only happen if the members in God's blessing marriages are not faithful to each other. But in our church, we have never heard of people dying of Aids in God's blessing marriages. If members have trust in God in a God's blessing

marriage, and they believe that this is God's blessing marriage, they cannot contract HIV and Aids. So God's blessing marriages can also be made safe from HIV only if the members themselves love, trust and are faithful to each other.

The *Mutima* Church members believe that only those who are not abiding by the church rules would be infected by the HIV virus.

When the female priests were asked whether introducing HIV and Aids Awareness programmes in the church would be a good thing, Grace explained that they have youth programmes and that the Church already teaches its members about issues concerning HIV and Aids. She claimed that: "we have time to teach our own children and youth on all issues that relate to destroying their bodies, and we do not leave out the dangers of sexual intercourse outside marriage". Although they were interviewed on different days, Liless' response was in agreement with Ruth. Ruth said that: "I do not think the HIV and Aids programmes would be allowed in our church because I am assuming that the programme already exists. We always have a youth programme on Saturdays in every congregation throughout the country, and HIV and Aids issues are taught to our children".

This is not convincing because the female priests only pointed out that they teach the youth issues surrounding HIV and Aids. The question that still remains is; what about the adults? And where do they get the HIV information to teach their children? This seems to be dangerous because there are always new issues surrounding HIV and Aids. For example, there is the idea that HIV can be prevented if people have proper information.

They state that HIV and Aids occurs when one is not faithful and have many sexual partners. But they cannot see this in their Church. Their opinions are that it is more difficult for a man to go without sexual intercourse for a long time than for women. As a result, the Church allows men to marry two or more wives.

Like the female priests, the four women were also of the view that HIV and Aids is a sign of God's anger. They also could not see the importance of introducing HIV and Aids awareness programmes in the church apart from the ones that they already have at hand.



It appeared that they are so bound by the teachings of the Church to the extent that they think going beyond its teachings would mean that they are going astray.

### **6.3 Responses from a Woman in a Monogamous Marriage**

Felistus Kasengele whom I interviewed on 27 July 2006 is living in a monogamous marriage. She is married to Kangwa Kasengele. She is 29 years old and has 3 children. Felistus is a product of God blessing marriages. Her mother is a second wife. Her parents are members of the *Mutima* Church. Felistus completed her grade 12 and trained as a primary school teacher.

Although Felistus is not living in a God's blessing marriage, she suggested that the marriages contribute to the spread of HIV and Aids on certain conditions. She explained that:

Yes, they contribute to HIV and Aids because many young women are sometimes the ones who admire the older men in our church, especially if they see that the man is looking after his wife in a proper way. The young women even ask Chishimba if he can marry them to rich men. Sometimes Chishimba asks the women where they would want to go and get married. In this regard, the particular girl would have someone in mind already.

I would suggest that one reason for young women wanting to get married to older men might be because of the lack of proper education. The lack of adequate education has tended to deny some young women their rights to think about their future. For this reason, they resort to getting married to older richer men. The *Mutima* Church does not have proper resources for further education and as a result marriage is seen as the only solution to a better life. However, this does not mean that all the women who rush into marriage lead a happy life.

### **6.4 Responses from a Divorced woman**

I had the opportunity to interview a divorced woman on 29 July 2006. She was forced into a God's blessing marriage. The marriage however, did not work out because she failed to have a second child.

Mable Kabwe was born in 1970 in Kasama and went to school up to grade 4. Her parents are members of the *Mutima* Church and are in a monogamous marriage, where Mable is

their first child. Mable got married in 1990 to a 50 year old man who had children older than Mable. She became the second wife to Patrick Chulu and bore a son from the marriage. But as the years went by, Mable realized that she could not become pregnant again, while the first wife continued having more children. In the year 2000, things got worse as Mable was being blamed for not getting pregnant.

Mable condemns the God's blessing marriages, based on her experiences. She said she had no idea what happened in the God's blessing marriages until after her own experience. She argued that, "sometimes many women in the church are forced into God's blessing marriages whilst in actual fact it is not even God's intention". She explained that they are taught in the Church to be strong and tough, "even when you are faced with serious problems or when you are falling into a pit, they tell you to be strong". She wonders what kind of God this is that allows women to live in marriages that are not even healthy.

Mable later divorced from her marriage and has since met another man with whom she had another child. Even though Mable has a low level of education, she can see the dangers of HIV and Aids in the God's blessing marriages as well as in the church. She supports the idea of introducing HIV and Aids awareness programmes in the church. She argues that, "I think the members of the *Mutima* Church need to find a way in which they could accommodate the programmes on HIV and Aids awareness. There is too much immorality in the church". From her own experiences, Mable is able to see the injustices that arise in the God's blessing marriages. She agrees that HIV and Aids programmes should be initiated in the *Mutima* Church because what the youths are taught on Saturdays are just the doctrines of the Church and not about matters of sexuality and health.

#### **6.5 Responses from the Males: (Priests and Ordinary Males)**

I also interviewed Petros Chibwe and Jack Chewe, who are male priests in the *Mutima* Church. Petros is 39 years old, and Jack is 45 years old. Both priests were influenced by their parents who have been members of the *Mutima* Church since 1964 and 1966 respectively. Petros was interviewed on 23 July 2006 and Jack was interviewed on 24

July 2006. Petros and Jack are both carpenters and have stands at the township market place.

Kabimba Chanda and Gadina Bupe were interviewed separately on 28 July 2006. Kabimba is 50 years old and is the husband of Mary and Macushi. Kabimba went to school up to grade 9 and he is a taxi driver. His parents are not members of the *Mutima* Church and they are against the teachings of the Church. He joined the Church when he was 26. At that time he was working as a miner in the former *Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM)*. He is now a farmer.

Gadina Bupe, the husband of Rita and Gwen, was also interviewed on the same day. He is 48 years old and is a lecturer at a Forestry College in Kitwe town. His parents are members of the *Mutima* Church and his mother is a second wife. His knowledge of God's blessing marriages is both cultural and biblical. In Kashikishi Village where he grew up, there are many women who are in polygamous marriages. Gadina's argument is that "Women are not dehumanized in these relationships, because they are the ones who make decisions for us". On the issue of God's blessing marriages and HIV and Aids, Gadina pointed out that "there is no way that our God's blessing marriages can spread the virus because people who are involved in them are living according to God's rule".

### **6.5.1 Knowledge on God's Blessing Marriages**

As they started to comment on their knowledge about God's blessing marriages in their cultures, Petros said:

There are no God's blessing marriages practiced in my culture. I belong to the Bisa tribe. They are only done in the church and there are genuine reasons for that.

Petros did not provide an explanation as to why God's blessing marriages are practiced in the Church.

Jack admitted that God's blessing marriages are practiced among his own people, the Namwangas of the Northern Province in Zambia. He went on to say that, "But what I know is that it is a normal thing among my own people and it is called polygamy".

Chishimba had taught his members to differentiate 'polygamy' from 'God's blessing marriages'. His teaching is that in a polygamous marriage, members quarrel and there is no love amongst themselves, but in God's blessing marriages, members live, share and love one another. Owing to the fact that in most of the cases Chishimba initiates marriages, they are viewed as gifts from God because Chishimba is God's representative on earth. Both Petros and Jack had the same views on their Church's teaching about God's blessing marriages. They did not acknowledge the possibility that women are dehumanized in these marriages arguing that if the Church's teaching is that men and women were created in God's own image, then men have no reason to dehumanize women. God is seen in both the female and male images, so in God's blessing marriages, the husband and his wives are equal, because they are created in God's image. Hence, to their mind, there is no harm in allowing one man to marry two or more wives. Therefore one needs to acknowledge that for the majority of the *Mutima* Church members, there is no dehumanization of women in the God's blessing marriages since both men and women are created in God's image. Theoretically, if not in reality, dehumanizing the other would mean dehumanizing God the Creator.

#### **6.5.2 Knowledge of HIV and Aids**

The male priests, Petros and Jack however, had similar views concerning HIV and Aids. Like the female priests, the male priests are of the view that HIV is spread through heterosexual relationships, and when one person has multiple sexual partners, the risk increases. Surprisingly enough, they cannot see the dangers inherent in God's blessing marriages as practiced in their church. Even though they can see the dangers of HIV in the *Mutima* Church, they felt unable to question the issue in relation to God's blessing marriages because they believe that the rule of the Church guides and protects members in these marriages.

Both Kabimba and Bupe are involved in God's blessing marriages. Kabimba and Bupe's views on HIV and Aids are that it attacks those who will be going against God's rules. They are of the view that in many cases, especially in Kitwe town, both men and women are promiscuous.

In the *Mutima* Church, it seems unfortunate that the members cannot make their own decisions in respect as to whether they participate in God's blessing marriages or not. Once Chishimba approaches a man to take a second or third wife, there will already be a woman in Chishimba's mind awaiting her marriage.

### **6.5.3 God's Blessing Marriages and HIV and Aids**

Like the female priests, Jack also argued that "it is only when people lose faith in God that they start doing wrong things in the eyes of God". What the male priests did not mention in this respect is that, in the *Mutima* Church, there are some male and female priests who abandon their duties and decide to get married, sometimes in a monogamous marriage and sometimes in God's blessing marriages. Some priests also indulge themselves in high risk sexual behaviours that might result in them contracting HIV and Aids. The male priests also noted the impossibility of initiating HIV and Aids programmes in their Church as they felt that what they are taught is better than what an outsider brings to them.

Kabimba came to know about God's blessing marriages in the church. He pointed out that although he had seen men marrying two or more wives elsewhere, he never thought he himself could manage that. However, he did not say he was forced into this marriage, but that "It is God's wish, and whatever God plans, no human being can dismantle God's plans". He believes that with his God's blessing relationship, he has succeeded in life because he is doing what God wants him to do. Commenting on the issue of dehumanizing women, Kabimba argued that: "I have never thought that God's blessing marriages dehumanize women, what I think is that it dehumanizes men, because we have to fend for them (women)".

### **6.6 Responses from a Man in a Monogamous Marriage**

Kangwa Kasengele is 35 years old and living in a monogamous relationship. His parents are members of the *Mutima* Church. He could not remember when his parents became members of the Church. He is married to Felistus and they have three children. They were married in 1998. He completed grade 12 and is working for the municipality of Kitwe. Kangwa was interviewed on 31 July 2006.

His mother is the first wife in their God's blessing marriage. He has three mothers in all. Kangwa's knowledge of God's blessing marriages is from the Church as well as from his own experience. He commented on the God's blessing marriages that "It is God's wish and plans". He argued that one is allowed to refuse if a second woman is brought to him to be his wife, although he went on to say that:

Refusing would mean that you refuse the Word of God that is bringing to you this woman. Misfortune might affect the whole family. So even us men, we accept when the woman is brought to us, because it is the Word of God that has chosen you to care for this woman.

### **6.6.1 Knowledge of HIV and Aids**

Kangwa had more knowledge of HIV and Aids than the other interviewees because many of his workmates have died of Aids. For this reason, the municipality has introduced an HIV and Aids policy, which advises employees to go for HIV testing. He explained that the first time he heard about HIV and Aids was in the media when former president of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda announced that his late son Masuzyo had died of Aids in 1986. Although the Church's teaching on HIV and Aids is that it is God's anger, Kangwa argued that HIV and Aids is mainly based "on our own behaviours which we need to work out ourselves and change". However, he did not go so far as to say that some of God's blessing marriages might increase the spread of HIV and Aids. Perhaps this is because of the prevailing belief in the church that no one should go against the God's blessing marriages because they are God given.

Kangwa acknowledged that many of the *Mutima* Church members are dying from Aids because of lack of proper information. He also explained that, "There is need to initiate HIV programmes in our church. Education should not start with the youth, but with the entire priests". Kangwa suggested that there is a lot of promiscuity in the church but members do not want to talk about it or face the reality.

### **6.7 Analysis of the Responses**

According to Kanyoro, "Gender analysis takes into account ways in which roles, attitudes, values and relationships regarding women and men are constructed by all

societies all over the world”.<sup>191</sup> This also includes examining ways in which roles, attitudes, values and relationships regarding women and men are constructed in the church. Therefore, in order to analyse the concept of polygamy in the *Mutima* Church, I propose what Kanyoro calls a gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics because it doubles in addressing cultural issues while being critical of that culture from a gender perspective.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, during my interviews with the members of the *Mutima* Church, I noticed that the Zambian culture, which is also a patriarchal one, “...has the consequent influence on the interpretation of the Bible”.<sup>193</sup> Some women in the *Mutima* Church pointed out that polygamy is not part of their culture, but because men are perceived to be physically stronger than women, and that “they are not like us women, and they cannot live without a sexual partner for a long time,” thus having many sexual partners is interpreted as a need and not a want.

Such a view about the sexuality of men is also a *Bemba* cultural belief that has been adopted by Chishimba. Chishimba’s sexuality is not questioned as this is considered taboo. The ‘chosen priests’ therefore are disadvantaged because they cannot abstain from sex even if they wanted to. They are also denied accurate and current information about HIV and Aids.

Chishimba’s sexual practices with the ‘chosen priests’ also make it difficult for him to police infidelity among the married men in his church. He is using his authority as a church founder to potentially abuse women, whom he might not even care for. He is setting a questionable precedent for the other men in the church. He is the one who appears to be encouraging a sexual life style that has a potential of spreading HIV. Within this context of promotion of multiple sexual partners through an exploitation of religion by the church founder, one fears that the spread of HIV is being exacerbated.

As noted from the responses, there are also power imbalances between women and women, men and men and women and men. For example, the first wives exploit the other wives. Chishimba appears to encourage men in the church to marry more women

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<sup>191</sup> Kanyoro, M. A. R. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics:...* 2002. p. 17.

<sup>192</sup> Kanyoro, M. A. R. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics:...* 2002. p. 18.

<sup>193</sup> Kanyoro, M. A. R. “Engendered Communal Theology...” 2001. p. 164.

sometimes against their will. For the male priests to have to remain single is also a denial of their sexual rights while Chishimba does not subject himself to the same discipline.

According to Masenya:

...the system of *lobola* can be regarded as a double-edged sword to women. It is empowering in the sense that under normal circumstances, a woman for whom *lobola* has been “paid”, tends to be respected by the community. On the other hand, the understanding that *lobola* has been “paid” can lead to the abuse of the same woman, particularly by her in-laws.<sup>194</sup>

What I learned from the *Mutima* Church differed from what Masenya is saying. Some older female priests in the *Mutima* Church are of the view that some women are dehumanized in their homes because *lobola* is not paid towards their dowry. The female priests believe that this is the main reason why some men do not take care of their wives because they expect to be given another woman.

Zambian cultures such as *Bemba* maintain that women should be submissive and listen to their husbands. It is also a cultural belief that women need not be educated as this may encourage the woman to rule over the husband in the house. To this end, the *Mutima* Church has built its theological beliefs on an already existing oppressive culture, thereby hindering women’s abilities to negotiate safer sexual practices. None of the interviewed women, except Mable and Felistus, believed that God’s blessing marriages might lead to higher risks of HIV exposure. I would suggest that this is because of the *Bemba* cultural beliefs that are embedded in and justified by religion and which hinder more women from acquiring education.

Furthermore, it was observed that most of the women in the sample marry men who are much older than themselves. The World Health Organisation report states that:

...research from 16 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa indicates that husbands of 15-19 year-old girls are on average ten years older than their wives. Early marriage may expose girls to an increased risk of STIs [*sic*] and HIV

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<sup>194</sup> Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele). “Trapped Between Two “Canons”: African-South African Christian Women in the HIV/AIDS Era” in Phiri, I. A., Haddad, B. Masenya, M. (ngwana’ Mphahlele) (eds.). *African Women, HIV/AIDS, and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003. pp. 121-122.



infection, especially if their partners are older and have had more sexual exposure.<sup>195</sup>

This is the reality in the *Mutima* Church where Chishimba decides which man is to look after the woman/women whom he has been given. Many women who are taken as second or third wives are usually much younger than their husbands. This increases the vulnerability of women to HIV infection because their husbands might have already been exposed to unprotected sex with other women for many years. As stated by Annan:

The risk of becoming infected is two to four times greater for women than for men. For young girls, the risk can be even higher. An immature genital tract can easily tear during sexual activity, especially if it is forced or violent, raising the chance of exposure to infections.<sup>196</sup>

Although some of the *Mutima* Church members are aware that HIV and Aids result from one involving oneself with many sexual partners, they also believe that “polygamy helps to prevent or reduce unfaithfulness and prostitution...”<sup>197</sup> Here they echo the views of some male theologians such as Mbiti, as noted in Chapter 2. In the interviews no one mentioned that there are many conflicts in the households and that this lead to the breakdown of families, fuels poverty and thereby worsens the spread of the HIV epidemic. They do not think that God’s blessing marriages are a high risk behaviour that can result in one contracting HIV.

The *Mutima* Church members’ theological interpretation of HIV and Aids is that the epidemic is a punishment from God. This shows that members have limited knowledge about the theological interpretation of HIV and Aids and of God’s inclusive love.

The teachings of the *Mutima* Church condemn the use of condoms and family planning because it is perceived as the murdering of the unborn. Condoms and family planning spoil God’s plan of procreation. In addition, the members claim that using condoms encourages men to have multiple sexual partners. The alternative to family planning or condom use is therefore allowing one man to marry two or more wives. This is justifiable

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<sup>195</sup> World Health Organisation: Gender and Health. *Gender and HIV/AIDS*. Geneva: Department of Gender and Women’s Health. 2003.

<sup>196</sup> Annan, K. A. “Girls, HIV/AIDS and Education”... Published by UNICEF. 2004.

<sup>197</sup> Mbiti, J. *African Religions and Philosophy*...1999. p. 143.

to the *Mutima* members because they believe that they are fulfilling God's plan of procreation.

In my opinion, the teachings of the *Mutima* Church also increase gender inequalities which results in power imbalances between men and women. Annan argues that, "Power imbalances are the cornerstone of violence against girls and women, furthering the impact of HIV/AIDS in their lives".<sup>198</sup> Women in the *Mutima* Church are taught to learn in silence. Therefore, when the husband has extra marital affairs, women are told to endure and suffer in silence. On the issue of silencing women, Annan comments further that, "A conspiracy of silence allows physical and sexual abuse of girls and young women to remain behind closed doors".<sup>199</sup> This is a traumatising experience for women in such marriages, despite their theological explanation of 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

However, not every man in the *Mutima* Church wants to practice polygamy. It can be observed from the male responses that polygamy is forced upon them by Chishimba's faulty theology of polygamous marriage.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the responses from the members of the *Mutima* Church on the issue of God blessing marriages and HIV and Aids. Although, some members were of the view that women are not dehumanized in the God blessing marriages, it is suggested that for a man to marry two or more wives, he is considered to be superior to women. Even though they argue that both men and women are created in God's image, the fact that they pointed out in some of the interviews that a man is responsible for his wives appears to indicate that men believe that they are more favoured than women in the Church.

This chapter has also suggested that there are power imbalances and inequalities between men and women in the *Mutima* Church. It is also interesting that some priests in the

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<sup>198</sup> Annan, K. A. "Girls. HIV/AIDS and Education"... Published by UNICEF. 2004.

<sup>199</sup> Annan, K. A. "Girls. HIV/AIDS and Education". ..Published by UNICEF. 2004.

*Mutima* Church feel no need for information or guidance on issues of HIV and Aids. Both female and male priests appear to play a passive role in sexual relations. By being restricted to remaining single, they are denied their sexual rights to enjoy and celebrate life as full human beings. The following chapter outlines a theology of HIV and Aids for the *Mutima* Church.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THEOLOGY OF HIV AND AIDS IN THE *MUTIMA* CHURCH

#### 7.1 Introduction

*The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy.  
I have come in order that you may have life-life in all  
its fullness.*<sup>200</sup>

This chapter highlights the significance of life as a gift from God. It emphasizes human sexuality as a gift from God. Finally it discusses the proposed theology of HIV and Aids for the *Mutima* Church. The first issue that needs to be examined is that of HIV and Aids as a punishment from God. The second one is a discussion of human sexuality. In the *Bemba* culture, issues related to sex are rarely discussed between children and parents, thus the section on human sexuality will help us understand why the *Mutima* Church has adopted this cultural stance. Thirdly, the proposed theology of HIV and Aids for the *Mutima* Church, which adopts the method proposed by “ANERELA+ Positive + Interfaith Talk”<sup>201</sup> will be discussed.

The following quotation from John’s Gospel comes in the context of the early church struggle against false prophets with false messages.

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep”.<sup>202</sup>

The quotation is an even clearer reference to the false prophet, the ‘stranger’ who comes to lead the sheep astray. Therefore, the “life in all its fullness” that begins the

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<sup>200</sup> John 10:10. *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*. Collins: The Bible Societies.

<sup>201</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, A Newsletter of the African Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS. Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. p. 1.

<sup>202</sup> John 10:3-7.

chapter is rooted in Jesus rather than the false prophet. One cannot get to the ‘life’ of John 10:10 without going through the ‘gate’ of John 10:7.

In the context of this study, this life in all its fullness as mentioned in the Biblical passage quoted above, I would suggest that Chishimba in the *Mutima* Church, appears to take on the role of the false prophet because of the control he brings to bear on the church. Chishimba is a false prophet because he puts his members in polygamous marriages, thus increasing their risk of contracting HIV. He uses his authority to put people’s lives in danger. He chooses which man should marry which woman and allows one man to marry two or more wives. In this sense, when polygamy in the *Mutima* Church is combined with lack of adequate education in both men and women, it puts them at a high risk of HIV exposure.

## 7.2 Is HIV and Aids A Punishment from God?

The *Mutima* Church members’ view is that God is angry with people living with HIV. Why do they believe this?

In her article *HIV/AIDS: An African Theological Response in Mission*, Phiri asks why many faith communities and churches assert that HIV and Aids is a punishment from God. She says that the reason why this is so is that “HIV and Aids was linked to the mode of transmission of the virus in Africa...In Africa it is predominantly through heterosexual multiple relationships”.<sup>203</sup> Having sex outside marriage is considered to be a sin. Therefore, if one has HIV, the assumption is that one had sex outside marriage and God is punishing the person for that. The question this raises is: Is everyone who has sex outside marriage punished with HIV? A secondary question is: why is it that some people who have had sex with one partner, in a marriage relationship contract HIV?

The issue of sexuality in many parts of Africa is not commonly talked about in homes, in the church and in the society. According to Poku Nana, “HIV/AIDS is linked to sex, blood and death—issues that are culturally difficult to handle, often taboo and stigmatized”.<sup>204</sup> In the *Mutima* Church, for instance, issues concerning HIV and Aids are

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<sup>203</sup> Phiri, I. A. “HIV/AIDS: An African Theological Response in Mission” in 2004. p. 424.

<sup>204</sup> Poku, N. K. AIDS in Africa:... 2005. p. 74.

rarely discussed because they are associated with sex and death. Issues on sex are only discussed when some members are getting married. No campaigns have been created for open discussions on human sexuality. Denis supports this by saying, “Aids touches on the intimate area of human existence, sexuality”.<sup>205</sup> Among the *Bembas*, blood, sex and HIV and Aids are issues that touch on the intimate area of the people and thus are rarely discussed.

God created man and woman in God’s own image. Therefore, every person on earth is called to celebrate and participate in being agents of changing their attitudes and those of others so that both men and women should enjoy life in abundance. But God created human beings because of God’s love for them. To what extent then, can HIV and Aids be God’s anger? HIV and Aids is a pandemic that is calling on local and urban communities, whether male or female, to care for those infected and affected. To some extent, the pandemic allows human beings to be agents of its eradication by caring for one another. “HIV and Aids is an enduring disease in the sense that it totally denies people self-realization and complete freedom.”<sup>206</sup>

The 2005 HIV and Aids report states that “HIV is a virus (albeit extremely dangerous to human beings), but not a divine punishment for sin”.<sup>207</sup> This is in contrast to the teachings of the *Mutima* Church on HIV and Aids. Whilst the *Mutima* Church members are taught that HIV and Aids is God’s anger to humanity, the report states that HIV is a dangerous virus to humanity, and not a punishment from God. This means that it is not a punishment from God but something that calls on humanity to take action, be accountable, responsible and celebrate God’s gift of sexuality in a mutual way.

In the light of the discussion in this section, the *Mutima* Church’s theology that HIV and Aids is a punishment from God is inaccurate. What is a danger to the people is a false

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<sup>205</sup> Denis, P. “Sexuality and Aids in South Africa”...2003. p. 75.

<sup>206</sup> Moji A. Ruele. “Facing the Challenges of HIV AND AIDS in Southern Africa: Towards a Theology of Life” in Musa Dube. (ed). *HIV AND AIDS and the Curriculum Methods of Integrating HIV AND AIDS In Theological Programmes*. Geneva: WCC Publications. 2003. p. 81.

<sup>207</sup> “HIV- and AIDS-Related Stigma: A Framework for Theological Reflection” in *A Report of a Theological Workshop Focusing on HIV-and AIDS-Related Stigma*. Windhoek, Namibia: UNAIDS. 2005. p. 3.

prophet who preaches a theology of marriage that puts lives in danger of contracting HIV.

### 7.3 Human Sexuality as a Gift from God

According to the 2005 HIV and Aids report:

God created us as unique persons and differentiated beings. God delights in our differences, and invites us to do the same. God created us as sexual human beings in all our differences. This is to be celebrated, enjoyed and treated responsibly...God's gift to us is the capacity to enjoy one another as sexual beings, and it is we who have squandered that gift. God created us for one another and for God, and wants us to celebrate the gift of sexuality through which God's Creation unfolds.<sup>208</sup>

According to Christian teaching, human bodies are the temples of the Lord, and if they are misused, they are defiling the temples of the Lord. God has given humanity a free will, so that they might celebrate and enjoy sexuality as God's gift to humanity in a perfect way. The *Mutima* Church members also acknowledge that "our bodies are temples of the Lord" and that their marriages, whether polygamous or monogamous, are blessings from God because men and women are created equally in the image of God. In addition, "men and women are created equally. In honoring one another as sexual beings, we are honoring life itself".<sup>209</sup> The gift of human sexuality means that in a marriage, there should be one man and one woman to celebrate and enjoy God's gift.

In his article titled *The HIV and AIDS Pandemic: Changing Perceptions on Sexuality in Faith Communities*,<sup>210</sup> Manoj Kurian begins by stating that "Sexuality needs to be recognized as one of the many precious gifts from God. It enables us to lead full and responsible lives – including a satisfying sex life within a relationship..."<sup>211</sup> Kurian is of the view that among God's gifts to humanity, sexuality has widely been ignored and misused by human beings. Therefore, he tries to break the silence surrounding the causes of HIV and Aids, such as the issue on sexuality, so that people can formulate awareness campaigns where these can be discussed.

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<sup>208</sup> "HIV- and AIDS-Related Stigma:...UNAIDS. 2005. p. 3.

<sup>209</sup> "HIV- and AIDS-Related Stigma...2005. p. 3.

<sup>210</sup> Manoj Kurian. "The HIV and AIDS Pandemic: Changing Perceptions on Sexuality in Faith Communities" in *The Ecumenical Review: Human Sexuality*. Vol. 56. No. 4. 2004. p. 432.

<sup>211</sup> Kurian M. "The HIV and AIDS Pandemic"...2004. p. 432.

Kurian pointed out that the reality is that many communities do not openly address issues of sexuality with children. He argues that HIV and Aids is an eye opener in communities because it is challenging people to discuss issues concerning sex education. Comparing human sexuality with fire and the fire-place in a home, Kurian states:

Human sexuality and the physiological urge to procreate to be intimate with those we love may be compared to the “fire” within the house. It is passionate and brings warmth to the home. The knowledge of sexuality and responsibility of exercising this gift may be compared to the “fire-place”, a place where the fire can burn, keeping the home warm without burning the house down.<sup>212</sup>

Kurian’s argument gives us the insight that human sexuality is something that needs both men and women to be aware about so that their rights are celebrated freely. It is a warm phenomenon that brings joy in the house. Without joy, there is misery and this may lead to human exploitation. My experience is that the *Mutima* Church members who are involved in polygamous marriages do not always enjoy the warmth in their houses because the first wife controls the sexuality of both the husband and the other wives. The first wife makes decisions as to which wife her husband should have sex with.

In her article titled *Human Sexuality: Meaning and Purpose in selected Communities in Contemporary Kenya*, Violet Nyambura Kimani outlines a variety of functions of sex in the African context. These include religious, ritual and social obligations.<sup>213</sup> Among these, her paper outlines “...the socio-cultural regulations that govern human sexuality and its meaning and function in contemporary Kenyan communities”<sup>214</sup> focusing on the Luo community and compares this community with other Kenyan communities such as the Akamba. She points out that certain groups perceive sex differently. For example, the youth regard sex as a source of pleasure and not procreation. Sex is also used as a game by some girls to win over men. For instance, some girls have sex with men so that they can get married to them. On the other hand, Kimani notes that some groups of women

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<sup>212</sup> Manoj, K. “The HIV and AIDS Pandemic”...2004. p. 433.

<sup>213</sup> Violet, Nyambura, Kimani. “Human Sexuality: Meaning and Purpose in selected Communities in Contemporary Kenya” in *The Ecumenical Review: Human Sexuality*. Vol. 56. No. 4. 2004. p. 404.

<sup>214</sup> Kimani, V. K. “*Human Sexuality: Meaning and Purpose...*” 2004. p. 404.



emphasize the role of sex for procreation and that other functions of sex are for the strengthening of marital relationships.<sup>215</sup>

During the interview with the *Mutima* Church members, it was observed that although some of them were open about issues relating to sex, and HIV and Aids, they did not talk about themselves, but rather referred to people in other denominations and judged them. Beverley Haddad contends that:

For the church to become a place that models redemption, it must live by openness and honesty. For too long, the church has pronounced judgment over people's sexual activity, without simultaneously celebrating human sexuality as a gift from God.<sup>216</sup>

The *Mutima* Church has acknowledged God's gift of human sexuality by naming polygamy as "God's blessing marriages". The gift of human sexuality in the *Mutima* Church is exploitative towards its members. Given this, what theology of sexuality is suitable for the *Mutima* Church during this era of HIV and Aids? In order to propose a theology for the *Mutima* Church, I have to explain the meaning of the ANERELA+ method.

#### **7.4 Lessons for *Mutima* Church from ANERELA+**

ANERELA+ stands for African Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS. ANERELA+ was born in an attempt to accommodate and support religious leaders living with "HIV and AIDS as they were the worst stigmatized".<sup>217</sup> ANERELA+ sought to offer support and to empower religious leaders living with HIV and other religious leaders that have been affected by HIV without imposing judgment on them so that they are empowered as they come to terms with their own HIV status.<sup>218</sup> Christian Aid states that:

ANERELA+ is a network of more than 1,400 faith leaders in Africa, many of whom are living with HIV. This pioneering interfaith group joins together Christians, Muslims, Hindus and other faith leaders to challenge stigma and discrimination.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Kimani, V. K. "Human Sexuality: Meaning and Purpose..." 2004. p. 406.

<sup>216</sup> Beverley Haddad. "Reflections on the Church and HIV/AIDS: South Africa" in *Theology Today*. Vol 62. 2005. p. 34.

<sup>217</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 1.

<sup>218</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 1.

<sup>219</sup> Christian Aid. "Christian Aid's Work on HIV"... 2003.

ANERELA+ seeks to eliminate and prevent all illnesses related with Aids so that African people should celebrate and enjoy life freely in the African environment.

#### **7.4.1 ANERELA+: HIV and Aids Preventive Methods**

ANERELA+ has observed that the Abstinence, Be faithful and Condomise (ABC) method of HIV and Aids preventive measures are not enough. Therefore, it has formed another alternative that seeks to help people living with HIV and Aids enjoy life in its fullness.

We have seen that abstinence as a way to prevent the spread of HIV and Aids is a difficult option in the *Mutima* Church. Some members in the Church, such as the younger female priests, some men and ordinary women would be willing to abstain from sexual practice, but it is difficult for them to do so. However, as noted in this study, this is difficult for the female priests because they believe that it is a blessing to engage in unprotected sex with Chishimba and have children with him. It is also difficult for some men because wives are chosen for them, even when one is not yet ready to get married. In the case of some ordinary women, Chishimba appoints whom one should get married to.

Faithfulness in a marriage relationship is one of the teachings of the *Mutima* Church. While some women in both polygamous and monogamous marriages try to be faithful to their husbands, they would not know if their husbands are being faithful to them because Chishimba controls the sexuality of his members. In addition, both men and women in the *Mutima* Church are forced to marry partners chosen for them. Therefore, there is a high probability that men would not be faithful to their wives and vice versa. So if members involved in polygamous marriages contract the virus they will definitely spread it to the others.

The use of condoms is not allowed in the *Mutima* Church because the Church believes that condoms promote immorality amongst the members. Condoms are also perceived as a means to prevent God's gift of procreation. To this end, the teachings of the *Mutima* Church have forbidden its members from using condoms.

The ABC method means that people should abstain from immoral practices; if they fail to abstain, then it is better that people remain faithful; if people fail to be faithful, then it is important for people to use condoms. However, Christian Aid states that:

ABC is not well suited to the complexities of human life. Many women are faithful but still vulnerable to HIV because of their partners' sexual behaviour. Another of ABC's weaknesses is that it focuses purely on sexual transmission and doesn't acknowledge other factors, the transmission of HIV from mother to child, for example.<sup>220</sup>

The ABC method does not address other modes of HIV transmission including the use of the same syringe for medical or drug use on many people, and unscreened blood transfusion. Abstinence, faithfulness and using condoms are not effective solutions to the members of the *Mutima* Church. In order to come up with some methods that are better suited for the *Mutima* members, the other method of HIV and Aids prevention introduced by ANERELA+ should be engaged. This is an alternative preventive approach to HIV that is called 'SAVE'.

#### 7.4.2 The 'SAVE' Method

Instead of promoting the ABC method, ANERELA+ has developed a more approachable method that is being adopted by many partners. The 'S' of SAVE stands for "safer practices in relation to all modes of transmission".<sup>221</sup> According to Christian Aid, this includes using:

Condoms; be faithful; practice abstinence. Use sterile needles if you inject, and make sure blood transfusions are tested for HIV. Use standard hygiene precautions, such as gloves and clean needles for all patients.<sup>222</sup>

ANERELA+ is of the view that abstinence and faithfulness are the key important HIV preventive measures in SAVE. It emphasizes the importance of abstaining from sex, especially with the religious leaders. Abstinence and faithfulness are effective when two sexual partners have never engaged in any sexual activity until they are married. In marriage, the man and the woman should be committed to each other as faithful sexual partners. According to ANERELA+, "religious leaders need then to get the correct and non-stigmatic facts on safer practices and share them with their followers".<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Christian Aid. "Christian Aid's Work on HIV". [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk) accessed 26 April 2006. 2003.

<sup>221</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

<sup>222</sup> Christian Aid. "Christian Aid's Work on HIV"... 2003.

<sup>223</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

The A of 'SAVE' "refer to Available Medications such as anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy for PLWHAs and medical needs for opportunistic infections and pathological tests".<sup>224</sup>

Every person living with HIV has the right to medication. However, the availability of medication includes "nutrition, clean and adequate water supply for PLWA".<sup>225</sup> For the *Mutima* Church members, the A method do not apply. The fact that HIV is considered as God's anger to humanity makes many infected *Mutima* members live in silence, thereby making it even more difficult for them to access medication.

The V of 'SAVE' refers to "Voluntary Counselling and Testing"<sup>226</sup>. ANERELA+ believes that every person has the right to voluntary testing and counseling. If one goes for an HIV testing and is found to be living with the virus, it is easier for that person to "protect his or her HIV status".<sup>227</sup> This also means that a person who knows his or her status has made a first step to HIV prevention than a person who does not know. This is because the person who is living with HIV "can avoid transmitting HIV to others".<sup>228</sup> For the *Mutima* members however, this does not apply because there are very few members who are aware of the HIV testing centres in Kitwe. Moreover, as one of the interviewees explained that, "I do not think the HIV and Aids programmes would be allowed in our church..." This poses a danger to many members in the Church with very little education because they will remain ignorant about HIV voluntary counseling and testing.

The E of 'SAVE' refers to "Empowerment through education".<sup>229</sup> SAVE has provided safer practices that can help prevent many modes of HIV transmission. As already noted in this study, many members in the *Mutima* Church are not educated. Generally, many women have not reached a standardized level of education in Zambia because of the unequal power relations that exist between men and women in the country.

ANERELA+ has pointed out that:

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<sup>224</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

<sup>225</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

<sup>226</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

<sup>227</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

<sup>228</sup> Christian Aid. "Christian Aid's Work on HIV"... 2003.

<sup>229</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

It is not possible to make an informed decision without all the facts. Misinformation and mis-action by most religious leaders are the greatest factors that have driven HIV and AIDS related stigma. How can we ask our women to abstain or be faithful, or use condoms without empowering them?<sup>230</sup>

In relation to the teachings of the *Mutima* Church, it is the religious leaders that are conveying inaccurate information to the members. Whilst the women in the *Mutima* Church are being asked to abstain and be faithful to their husbands, they are not being empowered with the rightful education about HIV and Aids that they need. For example, information such as “Polygamy are God’s blessing marriages and HIV and Aids is God’s anger” mislead people and contributes to the stigmatization in the *Mutima* Church.

Christian Aid states that:

HIV is about information, ignorance and power. People who know about HIV and can make informed decisions about sex can protect themselves and others. Empowerment, especially of women, is key to stopping HIV.<sup>231</sup>

Equal access to education is the key to secure better social and religious environments. Women need to be empowered by educating them and making them become aware of their own rights to make their own decisions. Peter Piot suggests that:

The benefits of education will spread beyond the school walls to undo the social disparities that would otherwise continue to leave young women at risk of HIV/AIDS.<sup>232</sup>

ANERELA+ comments that everybody is equal in the eyes of God, both the infected and the affected. Therefore, all people should be treated with equal respect and dignity.<sup>233</sup>

The *Mutima* members’ theology which considers HIV and Aids as a sign of God’s anger must come to a halt. Instead they need to believe that God is present with the vulnerable and, in a special way, with the PLWH. They should open their eyes and see God’s wonders in the lives of the children and older people living with HIV. By doing this, the *Mutima* Church members will experience the presence of the mercy and love of God in this era of HIV and Aids.

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<sup>230</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 4.

<sup>231</sup> Christian Aid. “Christian Aid’s Work on HIV”... 2003.

<sup>232</sup> Peter, Piot. “Call to Action”.

[http://unicef.org/publications/files/Girls\\_HIV\\_AIDS\\_andEducation\\_\(English\)\\_rev.pdf](http://unicef.org/publications/files/Girls_HIV_AIDS_andEducation_(English)_rev.pdf) accessed 29 January 2007. Published by UNICEF, 2004.

<sup>233</sup> ANERELA +, Positive + Interfaith Talk, Johannesburg: ANERELA+. ND. 2004. p. 5.

## 7.5 A Proposed Theology of HIV and Aids for the *Mutima* Church

What does it mean for the *Mutima* members to have life in abundance? ANERELA+ introduces the 'SAVE' method as preventive hints for HIV and Aids. The 'SAVE' method is one that supports life. Therefore, in order to come up with another theology for the *Mutima* Church, it is important to look at the theology that sanctifies life.

Ruele takes it further when he argues that many people who are living with HIV have a spiritual crisis because they tend to ask whether HIV and Aids is a form of punishment upon them by God. He argues that, "in the HIV/AIDS epidemic believers question their beliefs, and sometimes lose faith, or even doubt the existence of God who is known to be the giver of Life".<sup>234</sup>

Maluleke discusses extensively that a theology of AIDS need not remain silent, but that the silence must be broken. He states that "those with full-blown [*sic*] AIDS are "speaking" loudly and clearly. They are speaking to us and speaking in us".<sup>235</sup> Therefore, our main aim is to listen to God speaking to us through PLWH and provide them with the necessary support, through prayer, listening, caring and responding to them. By speaking to us, Maluleke means that God has given life in the PLWH, and that God is speaking to us, but we cannot respond loudly.

Therefore, a theology of HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church should promote and equip its members with means to enjoy life in its fullness. Ruele has pointed out that a theology of life is one that:

Calls us to revisit our faith, beliefs and relationships with others and, more importantly, our way of doing theology in the context of HIV/AIDS. They call us to revision the role God plays in our lives in this epidemic. Such an approach to theology will assist us in developing a theology that affirms the sanctity of life.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup>Ruele, M. A. "Facing the Challenges of HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa: Towards a Theology of Life" in Musa Dube. (ed). *HIV AND AIDS and the Curriculum Methods of Integrating HIV AND AIDS In Theological Programmes*. Geneva: WCC Publications. 2003. p. 79.

<sup>235</sup>Maluleke, T. S. "The Challenge of HIV/AIDS For Theological Education in Africa: Towards an HIV/AIDS Sensitive Curriculum" in *Missionalia*. No. 29. Vol. 2. 2001. p. 133.

<sup>236</sup>Ruele, M. A. "Facing the Challenges of HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa...2003. p. 80.

Similarly, a proposed theology of HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church should be a theology that *equips its members with life; life in its fullness*. The members need to revisit their faith, as well as the relationships with others and the way they do their theology in the context of HIV and Aids. God is not punishing people living with HIV and Aids, God is calling people to be in fellowship and responsible and to celebrate each other's life.

In my opinion, the *Mutima* Church's polygamous marriages are a result of a thief that has come to 'steal, kill and destroy' the Zambian women. It is the content of the role of the leader that is putting people at risk. The leader has too much power over the people and he is leading them astray with his teaching on marriage and sexuality. His example of leadership by having children with the female church leaders is wrong for it demeans the humanity of women and promotes multiple sexual partnership which creates a favourable environment for the spread of HIV. Polygamous marriages in the Church result in high risks of exposure to HIV. Many women in the *Mutima* Church are not celebrating and enjoying fully God's gift of sexuality. As Phiri argues, "Anything denying full life of a woman in our culture and church is oppressive".<sup>237</sup> The *Mutima* Church needs to revise its theology and come up with one that gives hope to people and recognises the full life of its members so that it ceases to be oppressive.

It is wrong for the *Mutima* Church to believe that since their sexual relations are legal as far as their church is concerned, then that means they are safe from HIV. Their case is a clear example of unsafe sex which, as far as they are concerned, is theologically correct. It is the argument of this dissertation that the theology of polygamy and HIV is faulty.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Despite their practice of polygamy, the *Mutima* members have developed a misleading theology of HIV and Aids and polygamy. I have attempted to uncover the theology that the *Mutima* members have concerning HIV and Aids. The members in this church believe that HIV and Aids is God's anger to humanity.

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<sup>237</sup> Phiri, I. A. 2006. Lecture Notes. Gender, Tradition and the Church in Africa - THEO8CD.

In this chapter, I have discussed the reason why many people and religious denominations believe that HIV and Aids is a punishment from God. I have included the issue on human sexuality by citing how different authors have viewed human sexuality as a gift from God. I have also introduced ANERELA+, a religious group that aims to empower people living with and affected by HIV, to show that people should not be living in silence but speak out to empower others. I have used ANERELA+'s approach of 'SAVE' in order to help me come up with a theology of HIV and Aids that can bring life to the *Mutima* members. The theology of HIV and Aids that has been proposed for the *Mutima* Church is one that brings life to humanity, as Jesus said "*I have come in order that you may have life-life in all its fullness*".<sup>238</sup> In the next chapter, I will present the recommendations and conclusion to this study.

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<sup>238</sup> John 10:10. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version...*



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 8.1 Conclusion

The task of this study was to investigate and outline the reasons why the *Mutima* Church practices polygamy in the context of HIV and Aids. Additionally, the following objectives guided the study, to: **(1)** find out the members' basic cultural and religious beliefs on polygamous marriage; **(2)** examine the members' knowledge of high risk activities about the spread of HIV and AIDS; **(3)** examine their theological interpretation of HIV and Aids; **(4)** assess their views on the spread of HIV and the practice of polygamous marriages; **(5)** investigate whether or not the members of *Mutima* Church perceive the practice of polygamy as a high risk behaviour in the spread of HIV and Aids.

In this chapter, I will outline the summaries of the issues discussed in other chapters. I also intend to give a summary of the objectives of this study before discussing the recommendations.

Chapter 1 looked at the context of the study, by examining the HIV and Aids crisis in Zambia. The chapter revealed the estimated population of Chimwemwe Township, Kitwe as well as Zambia. By examining the gender roles between men and women in the Zambian society, I found out that socio-cultural roles, such as those of the *Bembas* put women at a great risk of HIV exposure. This is the main reason why many women in the country are living with HIV.

Chapter 2 discusses the preliminary literature study, research problem, the objectives and hypothesis of the study. In addition, the theoretical framework, definitions of culture, polygamy and HIV and Aids are outlined.

I looked at polygamy as an African concept of marriage in Chapter 3. I explored some of the reasons that contribute to the practice of polygamy in some African societies. For instance, one of the reasons why the *Bemba* chiefs in Chinsali district of Zambia practice polygamy is that it is a sign of prestige. Chapter 3 also explored some views contributed by male theologians concerning polygamy and HIV and Aids. Although some male theologians like Denis and Mcetywa are of the view that polygamy cannot contribute to

the spread of HIV and Aids if well maintained, polygamy, as perceived in the *Mutima* Church in Zambia, is one factor spearheading the spread of HIV and Aids. I affirmed this by paying attention to what the UNAIDS; the WHO and the African women theologians such as Phiri, Kanyoro and Labeodan have discussed in relation to multiple sexual partners.

Chapter 4 briefly examines issues on African Christianity and the history of some African Initiated Churches (AICs) such as the Lumpa Church of Zambia and the *Mutima* Church and their doctrinal teachings on polygamy.

Chapter 5 focused on the research design and methodology. The qualitative approach was employed in this study. A snowball sampling method was used in order to collect data. Furthermore, oral interviews were conducted in Bemba language and later translated to English. Typed guiding questions were used during the face-to-face interviews. My analysis agrees with the hypothesis guiding this research, for I was able to ascertain that polygamy in the *Mutima* Church contributes to the spread of HIV and Aids. The Church's misplaced theology, lack of education about HIV and Aids, and their disempowerment as members is the real problem that puts members at a high risk of HIV infection.

I presented the findings and analysed them using a gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics in Chapter 6. Some of the major issues that came up in chapter 6 include the belief by the *Mutima* members that HIV is God's anger to humanity and that polygamy is a blessing from God. Applying the concept of gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics revealed the fact that in the *Mutima* Church, women are subordinated both in their homes and in the church.

Chapter 7 focuses on the theology of HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church by first adopting the method of HIV prevention initiated by ANERELA+. I proposed a theology that gives life in abundance to both men and women in order to seek the right theology of HIV and Aids for the *Mutima* Church.

Chapter 8 summarises the whole study. The chapter includes comments on issues relating to polygamy and HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church and offers recommendations.

Regarding the first objective which was to find out the members' basic cultural and religious beliefs on polygamous marriage, it was found out that the *Mutima* Church's teaching on polygamy is that since God has humbled Godself in creating humanity, members should also be humble and meek. Members are taught to 'love your neighbour as you love yourself'. Abiding by this commandment fulfils one's acceptance of living in a polygamous marriage. It was also found out that some of the members who were interviewed do not practice polygamy in their culture, but only do so in the church and it is called 'God's blessing marriages' (*Amapaalo*) since these marriages are argued, by the leader of the *Mutima* Church, to be initiated by God. Furthermore, the members are of the view that God's blessing marriages are biblical, as they emphasize that "as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be".

The second objective focused on the members' knowledge concerning high risk activities and HIV and Aids. It was found out that the *Mutima* members are aware that factors such as multiple sexual partners and using same syringes during drug use contribute to the spread of HIV and Aids. The members explained that in Zambia, particularly in Kitwe, the most known factor that contributes to HIV and Aids is engaging oneself in casual unprotected sexual relationships.

With regard to the third objective which was to examine their theological interpretation of HIV and Aids, it was observed that the *Mutima* Church's teaching and interpretation of HIV and Aids is that 'it is God's anger to humanity'. Since God had already destroyed the earth with the floods during the time of Noah,<sup>239</sup> and also used fire to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah,<sup>240</sup> no one knows what God's weapon is during our time. God is angry with us because there is too much immorality in the world today and therefore, the theological interpretation of HIV and Aids is that it is God's anger at humanity.

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<sup>239</sup> Genesis 6; 7 and 8. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*. Collins: The Bible Societies.

<sup>240</sup> Genesis 19:23 and 29. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*. Collins: The Bible Societies.

The fourth objective aimed at assessing the *Mutima* Church members' views on the spread of HIV and the practice of polygamy where it was found out that some members do not admit that there are cases of HIV and Aids in some polygamous homes in the Church. However, two female members were of the view that some polygamous marriages are breeding grounds for HIV and Aids. It was also learnt that the lower levels of education that are faced by both men and women in the Church hinder the members' knowledge of sex and HIV and Aids.

The fifth objective aimed at investigating whether or not the members of *Mutima* Church perceive polygamy as high risk behaviour in the spread of HIV and Aids. Most of the members do not realise that their God's blessing marriages might be one of the leading factors for the spread of HIV. They believe that only those who do not keep God's temples, (human bodies) can contract HIV and Aids. They also believe that only those who are living in what are called polygamous relationships can contract HIV, but since their marriages are not polygamous, but blessings from God, they cannot contract HIV in these marriages.

The *Mutima* Church members argue that introducing HIV and Aids programmes in their Church is not necessary as they already teach their youth on issues relating to HIV and Aids in the church. The youth are taught many topics in the church; some of which concerns HIV and Aids and how to take care of themselves.

The *Mutima* Church still practices polygamy basing its theological argument on the Bible. They argue that polygamy does not contribute to the spread of HIV and Aids. Due to this, I join Adekunbi Labeodan in asking this question: "...what can be done to protect the interest and life of women who are already in the polygamous institutions?"<sup>241</sup> In order to answer this question, a number of recommendations are given to suggest what can be done to protect the interests and lives of women who are living in polygamous marriages in the *Mutima* Church.

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<sup>241</sup> Adekunbi H. Labeodan. "Sexual Cultural Practices and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in Amoah E., Akintunde, D. & Akoto, D. (eds.). *Cultural Practices and HIV/AIDS: African Women's Voice*. Accra – North: SWL Press. 2005. p. 33.

## 7.2 Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

Education, as a means of effective communication, should be introduced to the members of the *Mutima* Church. The Zambian government has introduced free education in government schools and has offered grants to orphaned children. Therefore, those members who are looking after orphaned children should register them at government schools. The more members get educated, the more they get "...the incentive to have an HIV test to find out their status. This creates a climate of openness".<sup>242</sup> Education will also empower some women to negotiate for safer sex. Labeodan also states that "Education is a powerful means through which change could be brought about. Women need to be given the knowledge and life skills to make responsible decisions and positive choices in life".<sup>243</sup>

It is only when more and more women continue to be educated that gender inequalities between men and women in the *Mutima* homes, and church will be achieved. The inclusion of *Mutima* Church female members in Church-based education will bring about an environment of change on behaviours such as sexuality.

The *Mutima* Church does not open up to ecumenical debates. As such, there is no dialogue from the micro to macro level with other denominations. This is because the teachings of Chishimba have influenced the members into believing that their church is a 'living church chosen by God' and everything that they are taught are directly from God. This is a wrong theology. For this reason, the church should allow its members, especially lay people, to work and dialogue ecumenically and introduce themes related to HIV and Aids in the Church.

There is also need to conscientize women in the *Mutima* Church, on issues relating to HIV and Aids. Many women in this church have argued that there is no harm in having two, four or six women married to one man. While they are aware of how HIV and Aids is spread, they do not think that it can affect even those who are in polygamous marriages. Conscientizing both women and men will prevent the spread of HIV in the

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<sup>242</sup> HIV and AIDS: Prevention, Care and Treatment. Khomanani. 2005. p. 14.

<sup>243</sup> Labeodan, A. H. "Sexual Cultural Practices and..." 2005. p. 34.

Church. Fulata Moyo recognizes that it takes both men and women to campaign against HIV and Aids. She argues that:

Time has come for the women and men in the church to purposefully release the sexual power to women so that women take their part together with the men in the fight against HIV/AIDS.<sup>244</sup>

The key words in Moyo's quotation are: time, women, men, church, sexual power, fight, and HIV/AIDS. It is clear from these key words that there is need for a movement of inclusiveness. This should involve both men and women who will draw up measures against HIV and Aids in the Church. In order to prevent the spread of HIV and Aids in the *Mutima* Church, women need to understand that the sexual power is not only attributed to men, but also to women. This is the time for the *Mutima* Church to start looking at the *Zambian* culture and the church's doctrines with gendered lenses and for them to realise that the fight against HIV and Aids concerns both men and women in their society and Church.

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<sup>244</sup> Fulata L. Moyo. "The Red and White Beads and The Malawian Women's Sexual Freedom" in Amoah E., Akintunde, D. & Akoto, D. *Cultural Practices and HIV/AIDS: African Women's Voice*. Accra – North: SWL Press. 2005. p. 73.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **Questions for individual interviews**

#### **Section One**

##### **Demographic Information**

Name.....  
Gender.....  
Age.....  
Position held in your church.....

#### **Section two**

##### **Polygamy**

When were you married?  
How long have you been in a polygamous marriage?  
How many people are involved in this Polygamous marriage?  
What made you to be involved in a polygamous marriage?  
What does your culture teach about polygamy?  
What does your church teach about polygamy?  
What is your personal view about Christians practicing polygamous marriages?  
In what way does polygamy dehumanise women?

#### **Section three**

##### **HIV and AIDS**

What is HIV?  
What is AIDS?  
How is HIV spread?  
What does your church teach about HIV and AIDS?  
What is your personal views about what the church should be teaching about HIV and AIDS?  
Do you think women are more prone than men to HIV infection?  
If yes, why?  
If not, why not?

#### **Section four**

##### **Polygamy and HIV and AIDS**

Does polygamy put men and women to be at high risk for contracting HIV?  
If yes explain why.  
If not, explain why not?  
How can polygamous marriages be made safe from HIV?

## APPENDIX II

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	AGE	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Ruth Kamwili	44	20/07/2006
Grace Longwe	42	20/07/2006
Sharon Nkaka	72	22/07/2006
Liless Kasonde	70	22/07/2006
Petros Chibwe	39	23/07/2006
Jack Chewe	45	24/07/2006
Jack Chewe	45	24/07/2006
Macushi Kabimba	35	25/07/2006
Mary Kabimba	45	25/07/2006
Gwen Bupe	38	26/07/2006
Rita Bupe	43	26/07/2006
Felistus Kasengele	29	27/07/2006
Gadina Bupe	48	28/07/2006
Chanda Kabimba	50	28/07/2006
Mable Kabwe	36	29/07/2006
Kangwa Kasengele	35	31/07/2006